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[PRICE TWOPENCE.



JOSEPH MAZZINI WHEELER.

(See page 718.)

THE PARLIAMENT OF RELIGIONS.

THE Parliament of Religions recently held in Chicago may be said to have been a unique gathering. One is a little puzzled as to its object, but not at all as to its final results, for it has ended in "sound and fury, signifying nothing." Of talk there was plenty, and as etymologically that is what the word Parliament means, so far the Assembly may be said to have justified its name. The religion set forth was a veritable hodge-podge, the miscellaneous and incompatible ingredients of which will no more mix than will oil and water. There was no discussion in the shape of controversy, a characteristic which is usually very much to the front in modern parliaments; neither was any legislation attempted, which is generally looked upon as another essential of a parliament in modern days. Each speaker gave his own views, or the views of the religious sect to which he belonged, on subjects about which, from our standpoint, they had no means of knowing anything, and therefore, the talk might have been endless but for lack of time. If each person present had been permitted the privilege of combatting the opinions of the other, we can readily imagine what a confusion of things would have been the result. As it was,

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persons had to sit and listen to doctrines and sentiments, which most present believed to be utterly false, with no opportunity given for even the most moderate kind of a reply. It is only fair to say that they endured this (which to them must have been terrible torture) with the spirit of Stoics. Once only did the crowd give vent to their feelings in hisses bespeaking their indignation, and that was when an American convert to Mohammedanism advocated polygamy. This appeared too much for the various bodies of Christians to endure. They might tolerate a plurality of Gods, but a plurality of wives they would not have under any consideration. It would, however, be difficult to show that polygamy is not a scriptural doctrine. Abraham, the friend of God, practiced it, as did most of the other worthies of the Old Testament; and Solomon, whose wisdom is said to have eclipsed that of all other men, had a thousand wives of the first and second degrees—that is, if the Bible account is to be credited. By the way, where was the representative of Mormonism when this disturbance took place? Evidently he was not present, or he might have made things a little lively. Perhaps the Mormons, like the Second Adventists, were not invited. And yet could it be possible that Dr. Barrows, a staunch Presbyterian—with whom the idea of the Parliament originated—should invite Buddhists, Jews, Parsees, Theosophists,

and the followers of Confucius to a Conference, and exclude some of his brother Christians? The Mormons at least profess to be Christians, and to be guided by the Bible, with of course the addition of some small revelations of their own, which they also maintain are justified by scripture, and are in accordance with its teachings. But no Latter Day Saint was present, though Early Day Saints abounded in infinite variety.

The Archbishop of Canterbury stood aloof from the Parliament, and condemned the whole affair on the ground that to meet in such an Assembly and take part in its proceedings, was to place Christianity on a level with other religions, and this was what no real Christian could do. He shared the opinion of the orthodox editor who wrote in reference to the Parliament, thus: "How, then, can Christians consistently join in any such polytheistic symposium as that at Chicago? If Christianity is not the sole true and perfect religion, and if all others are not consequently false and pernicious, it is based on delusion. If it is not merely the best, but also the only religion whereby men can be saved, it is an imposture. If it contains only a part of the truth, sharing that priceless possession with many other religions, its source is not as it proclaims it to be. Christianity is either the sole and complete revelation of Divine truth from God himself, and hence the only and absolute truth, or it is a fabrication of men, the more worthless because it seeks to bolster itself up by false pretences. If God did not come down from heaven and take on the form of a man in order to show man the only way to salvation, thereby making all other religions false and profane, Christian theology is a sham; it is built on fiction." The Archbishop and the pious editor may be right viewing things from their standpoint, but all the rest in the Assembly might have argued in the same way, and then we should have missed the greatest farce connected with the World's Fair at Chicago. Besides, Roman Catholics were there, and to them Dr. Benson is indebted for any sacerdotal grace that he may happen to possess, since the English Church can claim nothing but what it received from its mother, the Church of Rome.

Now the question arises, what was the object of the whole affair? It was not to discuss the difference of the many conflicting bodies with a view of finding some points of agreement, which could be made the basis of union. For no such end was aimed at or even suggested. Indeed, hardly any one present would have been willing to give up the smallest portion of his belief for the purpose of conciliating the rest. They all came together with their opinions fixed, their creeds settled, and with no intention of wavering one jot from the faith which they brought with them. Clearly, therefore, it was a meeting for talk, and nothing else. No information worth naming was imparted by one to another, for at starting each knew the opinions of the others, and in most cases held them in contempt. To listen to a long harangue upon doctrines and theories which one believes to be false and pernicious, is by no means a pleasant task under any circumstances, and in this case the objectionable nature of the position was enhanced by the fact that no reply or even criticism was allowed. There could not possibly have been the smallest amount of pleasure experienced by any person present in listening to long and prosy essays setting forth views which the listeners had already made up their minds were not only erroneous, but were calculated to send men's souls to perdition.

Christians are enthusiastic over their missionary work. They spend enormous sums of money in sending men to convert the heathen, and yet in this Parliament they sat patiently to listen to the most accomplished heathens defending those very doctrines which all their missionary efforts are intended to destroy. Evidently this could give them no sort of pleasure or satisfaction, it might teach them endurance, but it surely could not be agreeable. Think of a Roman Catholic, with the infallibility of his Church at his back, listening to an oration in defence of Presbyterianism or Methodistic heresy—damnable heresy he would call it—or to the Devil's doctrine, as

he would term it, of Brahmins, Parsees, and Theosophists. His pious soul must have been filled with horror, and each sentence must have been enough to cause his hair to stand on end. Unless he looked upon the trial as a penance for his sins, it is impossible to comprehend his position.

Nor can it be truly said that the object of the Parliament was to bring out the features of agreement amongst them, inasmuch as it would be exceedingly difficult to discover such features. Besides, if points of agreement could have been found, they would have been so infinitesimal in comparison with the points of difference, that no good could have come of the meeting. The whole thing was a gigantic farce, and one of the most amusing side-shows at the World's Fair. If it had any object in view, it must have been to throw dust in the eyes of the rest of the world, by pretending to a sort of unity that had no existence. The public, however, are too shrewd to be thus fooled, and can only laugh, as doubtless many of the delegates did, at this sham of the nineteenth century.

CHARLES WATTS.

BYRON AND SHELLEY.

II.

WITH respect to democracy, which is a kind of John the Baptist to Mr. Brooke's form of Christianity, there can be little doubt, we think, that it has been chiefly indebted to science, which has in three centuries, since the days of Copernicus and Galileo, done more to advance the brotherhood of man than has been done by religion from the "first syllable of recorded time." Mr. Brooke does not concern himself with science, however; but he nearly agrees with us in the matter of chronology. A vast alteration in thought, due to whatever causes, had been going on for centuries. It was a change "from exclusiveness to universality," and it "took a literary and philosophical form in the eighteenth century writers in France, and finally emerged a giant in the French Revolution." In that mighty upheaval "the whole of the ideas of the old society perished for ever and ever," and what seems to be left of them is "but their ghosts, a host of pale-eyed, weary phantoms."

This is true and well expressed, but it should be added that most of the eighteenth century writers in France, particularly those who may be called philosophical, were vehemently opposed to Christianity, as were most of the eminent actors in the Revolution. Several of them were downright Atheists, who would have regarded the "liberal theology" of Mr. Brooke as a sign of mental feebleness.

Out of the Revolution sprang the vivid conception of the Brotherhood of Man, and it was this, Mr. Brooke says, that made possible "the conception of God's universal Fatherhood." In other words, a change in human ideas rendered necessary a change in theology. Still, we have Mr. Brooke's word for it, the Churches and Sects were the last to move. "In England," he declares, "the resistance offered to these ideas by the religious bodies has been always steady and often rancorous." It was another class of men who seized upon them. These were the Poets, the "most emotional, the most imaginative, the most prophetic, and the most clear-sighted of men." Sometimes they kept the name of Christians, but more often they were called "heretics or infidels, blasphemers or atheists." Occasionally they *were* Atheists, as in the case of Shelley, though it could hardly be expected that Mr. Brooke would emphasise the fact.

After some pithy criticism on William Blake, who was a forceful protestor against the old theology, Mr. Brooke passes on to Burns and Cowper. Of the exquisite satire of *Holy Willie's Prayer*, despite its "irreverence and immorality," which are after all but matters of opinion, Mr. Brooke says that it "weakened the worst doctrines of Calvinism far more than ten thousand liberal sermons have done." Cowper weakened Calvinism too, though he did so unintentionally. The pathos and horror of some of his poems, written under the heavy shadow of this awful creed, did a great deal to discredit it amongst thoughtful and

sensitive readers. The poet was asked how he felt when dying. His answer was, "I feel unutterable despair." These terrible words prompt Mr. Booke to write as follows:—

"They are words which all the good deeds of the professors of Calvinism will never get over. 'He was mad,' they say; but what drove him mad? Did Jesus teach in order that men might become insane? for Cowper is one among millions whom this doctrine of God has ruined morally, intellectually, or physically. But they have perished, unknown, unheard. This man was a poet, and his words have told. His personal acceptance of the horror revealed, as the mockery of Burns did not, the idolatrous foulness of this doctrine concerning God."

Coleridge's one specific contribution as a poet to a wider theology, in the opinion of Mr. Brooke, was the closing verse of the *Ancient Mariner*—which, by the way, is not the closing verse, but the antepenultimate.

He prayeth best who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us
He made and loveth all.

Mr. Brooke holds that Wordsworth did a far ampler work by his doctrine of immanence, which is perilously near Pantheism. Understood, however, in the spirit of "liberal theology," it will not only finally govern, but also "bring about at last the complete reconciliation of science and religion." But we must remind Mr. Brooke that this is sheer prophecy. It is simple enough to utter the counter prophecy that Wordsworth's doctrine will do nothing of the kind.

It is in relation to Byron and Shelley that Mr. Brooke really comes to the point of his essay. Wordsworth and Coleridge turned their backs upon the Revolution. They were disenchanted. They failed to see that the throes of birth were not the end of the progressive process. One sought refuge in Toryism, modified by benevolence; the other in metaphysical moonshine and esoteric theology. Byron, on the other hand, while not in the least constructive, or enamored of the more advanced ideas in religion, politics, and sociology, was filled with a bitter hatred and satiric contempt for the old order of things, with its lies, hypocrisies, and oppressions. He embodied what Mr. Brooke calls "the destroying element of the Revolution," which in him was "directed by great mental force and a reckless daring." Among other things, he struck at "the ancient, accredited doctrines of theology, and he struck savagely." Mr. Brooke is of opinion that the poet "brought free inquiry on theology to the surface of society." But we think the critic is mistaken. Free inquiry on theology had been going on in England for more than a century, and it culminated, on the popular side, in Paine's *Age of Reason*. How far Byron aided the movement is easy of estimation. To tell the truth, he hinted disbelief, and scattered doubt over his pages; but he did no more, he never faced any question manfully; on the problems of religion his mind was chaotic to the very end. It is this phenomenon which leads Mr. Brooke to infer that Byron believed in the arbitrary, vengeful God whom he depicted in *Cain*. "He believes," Mr. Brooke says, "hates what he believes, stamps with fury on his belief, and yet clings to it." Such a conclusion, however, is one we cannot accept. Byron did not believe; his prose, and his letters, prove that conclusively. But he had not the courage to disbelieve and to proclaim his disbelief boldly like Shelley, who had a hundred times more real courage than his attitudinising friend. *Manfred* is terrible posing; Mr. Meredith calls it "an after dinner's indigest"; and *Cain* is rather skimble-skamble stuff, though Mr. Brooke calls it "the most powerful, the most human, the most serious thing he ever wrote, and the most effective"—which is surely a most inept criticism. Byron rarely succeeded as a serious poet; when he did so it was only in short flights. He found the proper field for his genius in *Don Juan*. His province was satire, and the *Vision of Judgment* is at the top of English achievement in this direction. A creative imagination he did not possess, any more than a profound intellect; and it was the perception of this fact which prompted his impertinent sneers at Shakespeare. But he had imagination enough to give wings to his satire, and an inexhaustible wit which

played like lightning around the objects of his indignation or contempt. Never did he reason like Shelley, and it is clear that he was afraid to; he attacked in his own way what he felt to be false and despicable, and the sword he wielded was ravishingly (or terribly) brilliant, though it never cut deep enough. One loves to think of him at last, however, laying down his life, as he gave his substance, for the freedom of Greece. With all his faults, no pious or cowardly fear of death ever haunted his mighty spirit. How gloriously he would have died on the battle-field, fighting desperately for the cause of the people! The last verses he ever wrote showed the troubled stream of his life running pure at its close. Noble and sincere in its language, it was a fitting farewell to the world; and although the poet did not find his "soldier's grave," he died none the less for the cause to which he had pledged his fortune and the remnant of his strength.

"Shelley did also a work of destruction," says Mr. Brooke, "though in a very different way from Byron." We should think so indeed! The "also" is singularly weak in this instance, for Shelley attacked the Christian superstition directly, and *Queen Mab* had far more readers than *Cain*, the cheap, pirated editions being circulated extensively among the working classes.

"He began," says Mr. Brooke, "by being an Atheist, he ended by being what we call an Agnostic." But is this any more than a verbal distinction? It appears to us that Shelley's principles are the same in *Prometheus Unbound* as in *Queen Mab*. The change is in their presentation; the passionate vehemence of youth is succeeded by the restrained power of manhood. It is true that Shelley sang the praises of Love—"immortal" Love, if you choose to call it so; but Mr. Brooke has to admit that he did not "give it a personal life." Shelley also "thinks Immortality improbable," yet, Mr. Brooke says, he "glides into words in his poems which continually imply it." But this we deny. Allowing for personification and emphasis, without which there can be no poetry, we venture to affirm that there is not a single passage, line, or phrase in Shelley's later poems which is not in essential harmony with his belief in the mortality of man and the practical immortality of the race. It is one of the offences of theologians ("liberal" or otherwise) in relation to Shelley, that they try to turn metaphors into logical propositions, in order to make the poet give evidence against himself.

In one respect, however, we quite agree with Mr. Brooke. "Liberal theology" has not yet "reached the level of Shelley's thought," nor can it ever do so until it ceases to be Theology and becomes simple Humanity. Mr. Brooke may flatter himself that he has "a higher faith than Shelley had," but we think he is mistaken. Substitute "blinder" for "higher" and the expression would be more accurate. Shelley did believe that Love—not alone, but co-operating with Knowledge—would achieve the salvation of mankind; but he resolutely refused to talk about man's "destiny in God the Father," which seems to afford such comfort to the devotees of "liberal theology." For this he deserves the gratitude of all scientific Humanitarians, who should protest with all their might against the attempt to emasculate him into a prophet, or even an advance agent, of some new form of Godism. "Liberal theology" should beget its own poet, if it can; it should not try to steal the poet of Humanity.

G. W. FOOTE.

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- (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.
- (5) Display, or get displayed, one of our contents-sheets, which are of a convenient size for the purpose. Mr. Forster will send them on application.
- (6) Distribute some of our cheap tracts in your walks abroad, a public meetings, or among the audiences around street-corner preachers.

HISTORIC DOUBT.

"The application of Science, and above all of scientific scepticism to History, has yet to be made; it will be fruitful in results."—GEORGE HENRY LEWES.

WITH a view to casting ridicule on those who deny the historical accuracy of the Christian gospels, Archbishop Whately wrote a famous treatise entitled *Historical Doubts Relative to Napoleon Buonaparte*.* As a *jeu d'esprit* it was undeniably clever, but as an *argumentum ad absurdum* it overshot its mark. It was a two-edged weapon, as likely to cut the user as those it was used against. If doubt could be thrown, as Whately showed it could, upon some of the actions attributed to Napoleon, *à fortiori* scepticism is even more justifiable in regard to supernatural events said to have taken place a very long way off and a very long while ago, and for which there is no contemporary or monumental evidence whatever. Because some obscurity envelopes events comparatively near, is certainly no reason for concluding that those which are remote are all distinct as daylight. On the contrary, plain common sense declares that if, in the days of newspapers and general education, not only bias and exaggeration prevail, but downright fables and legends arise, these errors must have abounded when the mass had no education and even the learned no criticism, when superstition prevailed, and writers told what they pleased with none to check the truth of their statements.

Accuracy in historical narrative is the result of high literary civilisation. The early history of any race is little better than fable. A noble ancestry for living potentates occasioned much fiction. Some chiefs and kings even boasted of descent from gods. In the last century the Rev. Dr. Robert Henry began a large *History of England*, for the first volume of which he mainly relied on such uncertain authorities as Ossian. He but lived to complete six volumes, and arrive at the age of Henry VIII., that is, when printing enabled something like certainty to begin. How much more cautious was Leopold Ranke, who takes up the *Lives of the Popes* from the beginning of the sixteenth century. Go but back to the reign of Richard III., and what a quagmire of uncertainty you get in. Mr. Clements R. Markham shows the Hunchback had no hunch, and, following Horace Walpole and Caroline Halsted, makes him quite an estimable character for his time, a just, generous, and chivalric monarch, and a good uncle. He even suggests it is likelier that it was Henry VII. who murdered the princes in the Tower! The Tudor writers are no more trustworthy concerning Richard of Gloster, than those of the Restoration concerning Cromwell. It seems inevitable that the farther you go back the greater the obscurity, yet those who admit they are in a fog as to events five hundred years back, will profess the utmost certainty as to those alleged to have taken place one, two, or three thousand years ago. They know of no Hebrew MSS. earlier than the tenth century, but they are quite sure the Hebrew Bible was translated into Greek above a thousand years previously.

That testimony becomes less certain the further we are from its source, was so felt by the Rev. John Craig, an able mathematician and friend of Sir Isaac Newton, that he wrote a curious treatise, *Theologie Christiane Principiâ Mathematica* (1699), in which he showed that, although the evidence for the gospel story was overwhelming when first stated, on the theory of probabilities the evidence would be so weakened by its transmission through several hands that by the year 3144 it must diminish to zero.

Montaigne shrewdly observes: "When men repeat an improbable story they find out its weak points and supplement it by inventions." This was apparently done in the case of the gospels. The writers of the Synoptics, taking the Church theory that Christ was the substitute for the Passover, made the ridiculous mistake of having him crucified on that day, in flagrant violation of the law of Moses. This absurdity was altered by "John." The stories of the watch at the

sepulchre and the Ascension, not found in Mark, were probably invented to answer the sceptical question, What became of his body? It must never be forgotten that our sacred books have descended to us through the hands of interested corporations.

When the Church militia took up history all was falsified to support their bigotry. Men like Marcus Antoninus were execrated as persecuting monsters, while murderers like Constantine were extolled to the skies. They invented martyrs and persecutions, forged donations and charters. Many of these interested lies have been exposed. But probably many more of the less flagrant fables remain. If we look at the state of Europe in the Middle Ages we shall see how difficult it must have been for any honest chronicler to give other facts than those connected with his own monastery and neighborhood. Geography was so imperfect that the maps placed Jerusalem in the centre and grouped other places round it, according to fancy and the reports of pilgrims.* These reports and letters, carried by couriers to the parties interested, were the only sources of information. Even when disposed to tell the truth, the chroniclers could not be assured of accuracy.

I keep an amusing letter from the late W. J. Birch, telling me of the astonishment of his niece, that he, who had spent the whole of his long life among books, did not know of the burning of the Alexandrian Library by Omar. No, he did not know of it; no more did any Arabian chronicler, who knew such an act was opposed to the very spirit of their religion. Another erudite bookman, the late M. Octave Delepierre, proved the story was an unauthenticated fiction. Yet the historical text-books continue to repeat it as though it were as certain as the siege of Paris in 1871. M. Delepierre, by the way, showed there was also reason to believe that Joan of Arc, instead of having been burnt as a witch at Rouen, lived at Metz to a good old age, and was happily married to a nobleman of rank and reputation!

Our own early historians were as careless as their readers were credulous. There is scarcely a single word of truth in the history of Geoffrey of Monmouth. Even Milton, in his *History of England*, admits the fable of Trojan Brutus and his line with the whole progeny of kings to Julius Cæsar, though it is easy to see he had little faith in it. Why do we discredit it? Not because it is impossible or absurd, like stories of a man walking on the water, and turning water into wine, but because we know the authors who handed it down were without authentic sources of information. This is a sufficient reason for discrediting also the uncorroborated early history of the Jews. Niebuhr recast the early history of Rome by simply picking out its mythological elements, and Kuenen, Oort, Wellhausen and others, have made a start in the same direction with the Jewish narratives. It may be doubted if they have gone far enough. There is a general disposition to hold on to as much as possible of the old beliefs. It is usually argued, for instance, that passages which show the lateness of date in a Bible writer, are interpolations. This provides a convenient exit from many uncomfortable situations. If it is pointed out that Genesis xxxvi. refers to kings of Israel, so could not have been written by Moses, it is replied, that is an addition or interpolation. If it is shown that Jesus makes Peter the head of a church which did not exist, the believer will say that is a prophecy; while the semi-rationalist, like Dr. Pfleiderer, puts it down as an interpolation. But where are the marks of interpolation? These passages, with many other signs of late date such as "unto this day," are incorporated with the rest of the books; they appear as part of the whole, are found in the earliest manuscripts known, and have no philological marks to distinguish them from the rest. If interpolated, when, where, how, why, and by whom? The questions are unanswerable, and in such a case the safer plan is to take the so-called interpolations as signs of the late date of the whole document.

History properly signifies investigation or research, and implies a narrative based on inquiry as to facts

* As early as 1817 J. B. Perez, librarian of Agen, wrote, "Comme quoi Napoléon n'a jamais existé. Grand Erratum, source d'un nombre infini d'errata à noter dans l'histoire du dix. Siècle."

* See e.g. the map from Hereford Cathedral in the King's Library British Museum.

Scepticism is the first condition. Our best histories are those which go over the ground with most caution and discrimination. Yet nothing can make up for the uncertainty of the sources. Take, for instance, the contests of the Imperial with the Papal power. Writers of one faction tell one set of fictions; those in the interests of the other tell a different set. Later and less partial writers seek to reconcile them, discard the grossest lies, select the most probable circumstances, and reconstruct the history. Evidently the result can only be conjectural. With the utmost research and impartiality, but a certain degree of probability can be attained in regard to events so discordantly narrated. In many cases the plausible story is as unreal as the downright fable. The so-called rationalist lives of Jesus are as unhistorical as the story of sending devils into the pigs. Nay, the gospel story does throw light on the superstition of the time, while the modernisers depart from history entirely by transplanting their hero into a nineteenth-century atmosphere.

Scepticism is the safe side, but it may be overdone. We must not forget that thousands of minds have worked at the problems of history and chronology, and that, though great discoveries may be made, only little ones are probable. We have more information to-day than ever before, but our very chief sources of information, the newspapers and current periodical literature, rather hinder the acquirement of that vast book-learning and scholarship which distinguished the giants of old. Men like Scaliger and Petavius threshed out questions of chronology with erudition we cannot hope to surpass. Our main improvements on their labors must lie in method; in re-examining what they accepted in common without sufficient question; and in cautiously retracing our steps *backwards* instead of starting off with the fiction of creation.

J. M. WHEELER.

SUNDAY QUESTION IN BELFAST.

IN no town in the kingdom does the question of Sunday observance provoke more interest than in Belfast. A Company owning pleasure steamers tried the experiment of deferring to the religious feelings of the Belfast people by not running on Sundays, hoping to gain therefrom an equivalent increase of traffic on the other days. The Presbyterian Sabbath Observance Committee solemnly thanked the Company for this small mercy, and, I expect, fervently prayed the Lord to reward them for their piety. But a rival steamer appeared which ran on Sunday, and lo, the pious Company scattered Sabbath observance to the winds, and within a month of being thanked for keeping the Sabbath, they were breaking it for all it was worth.

A labor party, formed some time ago, commenced holding open-air meetings on Sundays at the Custom House steps. These meetings were broken up by a riotous organised Orange mob, which, after mobbing a member of the labor party, passed resolutions in favor of civil and religious liberty and Sabbath observance!

The excitement caused by these Sunday meetings, and the fact that a prominent Secularist had taken part in them, awakened the Methodist mind to the necessity of doing something, if it was only passing round the hat; so the Rev. R. Crawford Johnson threw himself into the breach and preached a series of sermons on labor questions, the first of which, on the Sunday question, I desire to briefly review here.

It is wonderful how the clerical mind comes lumbering up to a subject long after it has commenced to attract public attention, and their censuring of to-day mostly turns to blessing on the morrow. The Rev. Johnson cited two cases of athletic sports taking place on Sunday, one at Monasterboice, and the other at Limerick, and prophesied that under Home Rule this would be characteristic of Sunday all over Ireland. He forgets that it has long been the custom to indulge in outdoor sports on Sunday evenings in the South of Ireland, so that Home Rule does not quite apply in this case. The sports will go on with Home Rule or without it. The most fatal results, however, are summed up in a wail, weird, woeful and wonderful: "No Sabbath, no worship; no worship, no religion; no religion, no morals; no morals—Pandemonium"—Hey, presto! there you are! If Mr. Johnson

had just included no religion, no clergymen; no clergymen, no Crawford Johnson's; no C. J's—chaos,—it would have summed up the situation much more effectively, not to say honestly. Mr. Johnson next retails a little American experience, his thrill of horror at Sunday newspapers,—but he had not a word to say about pious Belfast newspaper proprietors who turn out Monday morning's paper by Sunday labor mainly. Not a word about pious master bakers' who go unctuously to church on Sunday evening, at the very time their employes are getting ready Monday's bread; not to speak of a host of other cases of Sunday work in Belfast. But these things always strike the clerical mind as evidence of wholesale depravity abroad, and simply as regrettable trifles at home.

The next awful indictment is against the Sunday labor meetings and their organiser. I may here indulge in a little pardonable vanity, by explaining that I am the "who" referred to by the dignity of Capitals: "Who is apparently the organiser and leader of these meetings. A gentleman who has favored Mr. Grubb and myself with a few copies of one of the papers published by the infidels of Great Britain. In one of these a scurrilous attack was made on our city mission, and we were held up to scorn and contempt for the cheap philanthropy of providing buns for the city arabs."

It is interesting to note how the theological mind can pervert the truth, and raise a side issue as the main question when it is inconvenient to boldly face the real issue. Turning to the *Freethinker* referred to, dated May 8, 1892, the following is the "scurrilous attack on the city mission":—

"The Methodists of Belfast run a Sunday mission in St. George's Hall, and profess a great desire to improve the condition of the poor. One of the means adopted for this purpose is to attract a large number of poor children to a Sunday service by means of buns given gratis, which is very good in its small—very small way; but when the poor laborers are goaded into resistance by the mercenariness of very Christian merchants and employers, neither Methodists, nor lack of method-ists, are ever by any chance found on the side of men, or doing anything to help them to get a decent return for their work. The Methodist mind cannot see any means beyond Sunday buns for the relief of poverty."

The rest of the article dealt with some pious lies told about the wholesale conversion of Freethinkers. Mr. Johnson, in the whole of his sermon, has not half as kind a word to say for anyone with whom he differs as that paragraph contains, and yet he dubs it scurrilous. If plain truth is scurrility, I am content to let the adjective pass. Let us, at least, have the truth, whether it is scurrilous or not. "Are there," queries the rev. gentleman, "any asylums, hospitals, refuges, almshouses, built by the disciples of Voltaire, Paine, Bradlaugh and Holyoake?" If one might, without boasting, reply to this by asserting that Freethinkers contribute as liberally as Christians do to these objects, I could do so and prove it also; but the facts are sufficient to knock Mr. Johnson's assumption of Christian support of these institutions into a cocked hat. In spite of the majority in which Christians are in the community, these hospitals, etc., are in a constant state of debt, and never-ending appeals have to be made on their behalf. If Christianity is such a benevolent thing, its followers might obviate the necessity of Secularists coming to the rescue of philanthropic institutions, as I have known them do in Belfast and elsewhere.

Socialism comes in for it next at the hands of Mr. Johnson. He asks what is Socialism, and answers it by a quotation—from a Socialist; oh, no. Mr. Johnson, you must remember, is a clergyman, and clergymen do not study the works of Socialists. He gets an answer to suit his purpose much better from an anti-Socialist, the mountebank Joseph Cook, of Boston—a caricature of the whole philosophy. The Rev. Johnson's misrepresentations may here be allowed to pass. Better men than he have erred in the same way.

I remember hearing Mr. Johnson relate a little anecdote which, I think, illustrates his narrow ethics better than making long extracts from his sermon will do.

A young man went into the office of a linen merchant to learn the business. He was told to make out some invoices for American customers of the firm, and as the duty charged by the U.S. Custom House would be on these invoices, the value was underwritten, and the invoice with correct price of the goods sent on to the purchasing firm separately. This is a little business dodge by which

many very Christian business men in Belfast have made money. The dishonesty of this proceeding struck this young man, and he refused to make out these invoices. He was sent home. But to show the moral,—a partner of the firm called for the young man, and commended his honorable motives; took him back in a higher position, and to-day he is one of the wealthiest linen merchants in Belfast.

On hearing this yarn, I waited patiently to hear if the dishonest practice was discontinued by the firm, but Mr. Johnson said not a word on that point. As the firm made a good deal of money, I am forced to conclude that the practice went on, and the young man who objected to write dishonest invoices, had no objection to share in the plunder made by the dishonesty. That is quite characteristic of Christian morality.

In conclusion, an appeal is made to working men to cling to their Sabbath, the Magna Charta of their rights. The working man has come to a pretty bad pass if he has no better plea for improvement of his condition, than keeping the Sabbath. But this nonsense will not take in a single man. The Church to-day has nothing but husks for the worker—nothing but empty formulas. The landlord, the money-grabber, the aristocrat, the exploiter, are all supported by the Church. In such a place the worker has no position. He is slowly discovering this, and the Church thinks the remedy is to throw open the pews free to all, and invite all. But it is too late for this move. The fundamental doctrines of Christianity are crumbling to pieces under the criticism of to-day. Working men know it, and no sweet singing syren music can lure them back again into the fold of superstition. They are in the open, and desire to stay in it. The reign of the cleric is over.

W. M. KNOX.

JOSEPH MAZZINI WHEELER.

J. M. WHEELER was born at London, January 24, 1850. His father was a strong Radical, and called his eldest son after the great Italian patriot. The most remarkable thing about his boyhood was his fondness for drinking cold water, which led to the prediction that he would turn out a great drunkard—a prophecy, by the way, which must be extremely funny to those who know the man that developed out of that little water-bibber. The next remarkable thing about young Wheeler was his love of reading, which clings to him still, and is not likely to leave him till he or books are abolished. J. M. Wheeler's reading was far from fruitless. As early as 1869 he wrote several articles on mythology in the *National Reformer*. In 1876 he became a regular contributor to the *Secularist*, started by G. W. Foote and G. J. Holyoake. Afterwards he wrote in the *Liberal*, in *Progress*, and in *Our Corner*. When the *Freethinker* started he wrote for that, and in less than a year he became its sub-editor, a post which he still occupies, and which it is to be hoped he will continue to occupy for many and many a year. Some of J. M. Wheeler's best articles were collected in a little volume entitled *Footsteps of the Past*, which has long been out of print, the bulk of the edition having been destroyed in the fire which took place at the *Freethinker* office seven years ago. A later and even more valuable collection is entitled *Bible Studies*—a book which is as full of matter as an egg is full of meat, and which should be in the hands of every studious Freethinker. Another work by Mr. Wheeler is the *Biographical Dictionary of Freethinkers of All Ages and Nations*. It contains more than 1,600 biographies, and demonstrates that a host of the most eminent contributors to the world's progress were Freethinkers. Mr. Wheeler has accumulated materials for a History of Freethought in England, which he hopes some day to write and publish. It will be seen, therefore, that he is a man of great industry. He has done yeoman's service to "the good old cause" with his able pen, and his writings have been especially valuable to the younger members of our party who were preparing themselves for the advocacy or defence of its principles. The editor of the *Freethinker* hopes to have J. M. Wheeler beside him as friend and colleague to the end of the chapter.

G. W. F.

A late learned and eloquent bishop was very anxious to convert a Parsee who was making some stay in London, and, meeting him on an occasion favorable for private conversation, he opened an attack upon his peculiar tenets. "I cannot think," said he, "how any man of intelligence and education, whose mind has been enlarged by travel and association with men of different opinions, can worship a created object, such as the sun." "Oh, my lord bishop," returned the Parsee, who had not been fortunate in the weather since his arrival in this country, "you should see it; you have no idea what a glorious object it is."

ACID DROPS.

The "Liberator" Relief Fund is still in want of subscriptions, and the Women Sympathisers' Branch sends us a circular to that effect, signed by the Duchess of Grafton and the Marchioness of Dufferin. All donations are to be sent to the Rev. J. Stockwell Watts, 16 Farringdon-street, London, E.C. Considering the pious character of the Liberator swindlers, and the way in which Christian bodies were used as decoy ducks, it is positively shameful that the said Christian bodies have not done away with the necessity of further appeals for the victims.

The Manchester police seem to have a good deal of spare time on their hands. Of late they have been attacking a body of Anarchists, who were very innocently blowing off steam at Ardwick Green. It was alleged that they caused obstruction, but the Salvationists who did soul-saving at the same spot were not molested. The truth is, the Anarchists, who have just the same rights as other citizens, offended the pious taste of a Roman Catholic dignitary, and on his complaint the police were set in motion. And it must be admitted that their motion was pretty rapid, not to say reckless. Several Anarchists were run in, and fined heavily by the magistrates. After one of these police exploits, two members of the N.S.S. Branch—Messrs. Payne and Taylor—went up to the Police-station to bail out the two speakers who were arrested. Will it be believed that Messrs. Payne and Taylor were first chucked out of the Police-station, and then dragged back again and charged with obstruction? Nor was this all. The magistrates actually fined them forty shillings each and costs. Such is English freedom in Manchester! Yet there are some people who wonder at the occasional violence of Anarchists.

The Rev. Walter Walsh, a Broad Church Baptist at Rye Hill, Newcastle, instituted what he called "The People's Open Platform." He, however, sadly confesses it has not been a success. Mr. Walsh is very accommodating, and very sympathetic with the Labor party, but the question why the working man will not go to church is to him still an unsolved problem. He threw open church membership to all, without regard to creed. "It simply received men, without regard to dogmatic opinions, who endeavored to shape their lives after the spirit and example of Jesus Christ." But the workmen would not come. Perhaps they have a notion that to endeavor to shape their lives after the spirit and example of the Church ideal of a dead Jew of long bygone times, is about as absurd a dogma as ducking folks under water to ensure their salvation after they are dead.

The Earl of Hopetoun, Governor of Victoria, has been telling an amusing anecdote of a maladroit Presbyterian preacher. On his coming of age there was a great gathering of the Hope family at the ancestral seat adjoining Lord Rosebery's, near Edinburgh. On the Sunday following the festivities the family went in a body to church to attend a service and hear a sermon specially appropriate to the auspicious occasion. Fancy their feelings on hearing the opening words of the worthy man in the pulpit, "Why, brethren, this world is full of blasted Hopes."

They have a new Ministers' Union with a new Brotherhood Church, which puts forward the Sermon on the Mount as the cure for all the evils under which the world groans. Well, that cure is said to have been before the world considerably over a thousand years, and the only result yet achieved has been ridiculous failure. Pity Mr. Bruce Wallace and his *confrères* cannot get some new wine to put in their bottles. Poverty of spirit and non-resistance to evil have become musty long since.

The London *Evening News* observes that a gentleman named Sims—not the great G. R.—is lecturing in the provinces on the history of the Devil, and stating that Spiritualism and Theosophy are the operations of demons. Our contemporary suggests that Mr. Stead and Mrs. Besant should sue Mr. Sims for slander. Perhaps they should, though it is difficult to see why they should begin on this gentleman, when many Christians have always taught that the Devil is at the bottom of all "occult" phenomena.

In the *Pall Mall Gazette* appears an explanation of Mr. Stead's automatic writing, substantially the same as that given in the *Freethinker*, of July 30, viz., unconscious cerebration. The writer remarks that La Fontaine wrote his fable of *Les Deux Pigeons* while in a state of somnambulism. Up to now Julia's spook has not written anything that can compare with this feat.

Cardinal Vaughan has boldly formulated the demand that denominational schools should be supported from the rates. The taxpayer already does contribute more than three-fourths of their income, through the Government grants, and the Cardinal would like something more. He may find, when the question is re-opened, that those who pay will want more share of the control than he is willing to accord.

It appears from a statement of the Governor of the Isle of Man, that the oath in use for holders of office in the island, is one that may prove objectionable to Roman Catholics, and he proposes to alter it. While he is about it he might do well to consider the advisability of following the old injunction, "Swear not at all."

The other day a tailor was non-suited in the Westminster County Court because the person who had not paid for his coat gave the order on a Sunday. This may be law, but it is not conspicuous for justice. The sooner laws that can only be appreciated by swindlers are repealed the better.

The Bishop of Marlborough, while on his way to preach a Thanksgiving sermon at St. Mary's, Finchley, was robbed of his watch, chain, purse, and notes of his sermon. He did not discover his loss till about to deliver his sermon. No doubt this was the only thing he regretted. Perhaps it may convert the thief, who will find a harvest thanksgiving peculiarly appropriate.

During the recent cholera panic at Tunis a woman named Nina Boucli gave out that she had been told by an angel in a dream that whoever drank of the water in her cistern would escape the malady. In two days 20,000 persons passed through her courtyard to drink there. Their eagerness was so great that riots took place among them. The street where Mme. Boucli lived was blocked. Able-bodied adults carried their aged or paralytic parents and their infants to touch with their lips the water, one drop of which, they hoped, would be enough to act as a charm. Another woman sells bits of ribbons to be pinned on the clothes the purchasers wear. She declares them to be a sovereign preservative, and is believed by many. A third makes a mark with charcoal on the foreheads of those who come to her.

A daily contemporary says: "In the course of the marriage of Mr. Percival (son of Dr. Percival) and Miss Chaplin, the Bishop of London (Dr. Temple) made an amusing *lapsus linguæ*, which caused a general titter among the fashionable congregation. Turning to the blushing bride, his Lordship said, 'Wilt thou have this man to be thy wretched hus'—correcting himself, he added, 'wedded husband?' And the young lady, covering her momentary discomposure with a smile, murmured, 'I will.'"

According to statistics compiled by the President of the Danish Missionary Society, the total income raised annually for foreign missions amounts to £2,749,340. Towards this sum England contributes £1,228,211, or nearly half, and the United States of America £786,992. He does not say what proportion of this amount is wasted, but it is quite safe to say it would be enough to effect a vast improvement at home.

There has been a controversy in the *Spectator* about Malchus's ear. Dr. E. A. Abbott doesn't think the sole authority of Luke sufficient. Canon Malcolm MacColl defends the miracle as being no miracle at all. He cites Sister Dora as having bound a cut-off part of the finger to the stump, so that it grew again, and says, "Is it not certain that the ear, on being once restored to its place, would heal rapidly?" Luke, we suppose, forgot to mention that Jesus Christ took a needle and thread and stitched the ear on again.

Continuing the controversy on "Miracles" in the *Spectator*, Dr. E. A. Abbott writes his conjecture that the yarn in Luke

about healing the ear of Malchus comes from a mistake of a tradition based on Jeremiah xxix. 6. Other of the gospel legends are to be accounted for in a similar way.

A good instance of how the Bible can be used to defend anything is mentioned in *Alsop's Inquiry*, and also by Henry Stephens, the printer. Pope Julius II. had a peacock stolen about which he raged blusterously. Advised to moderation by a cardinal, he replied: "God could be angry and plague the world for a sorry apple, and shall not I much more for a delicate peacock?"

The Bishop of Winchester has pronounced against moustachios, which, he declares, hinder effective speaking. He admires Bishop Baring, who, in the old days, sent a razor, with his compliments, to one of the men of God in his diocese. But then the hirsute appendages are attractive to the ladies, and possibly this is quite as important as clear delivery in the pulpit.

Mr. Symes inserts in his *Liberator* a hymn for the Mammon-worshipper:

Abide with me, fast falls the bankrupt-tide,
Depression deepens, Cash, with me abide;
When other helpers fail and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, Cash, abide with me.
I fear no debt, with thee at hand to bless;
By Mammon's aid, I meet each tax and cess;
Blest Gold! Whatever else away should flee,
No rap I care, so thou abide with me!

Such is the real prayer of all those quacks and spouters who crack up Christianity.

Dr. J. R. Buchanan, a calamity-prophet, predicts in the *Progressive Thinker* that Bismarck, Gladstone, the Prince of Wales, Queen Victoria, the Pope, and ex-President Harrison will all die within two years. He has selected some aged ones, and the chances are he will be able to point to some part being right, which is sufficient ground for the reputation of any prophet. He goes on to add, "I believe that royalty in England will end with Victoria." If this proves correct, Buchanan may take his place with the sons of the prophets.

A northern parson advertises through Kelly's Agency that he wants to exchange for a southern parish. His living is worth £200 a year, the population is only 250, the church is a lovely restored one, and there are "no poor and no drawbacks." What a stroke that is—"No poor"! That is how the parsons put it when they mean business. Up in the pulpit, where they mean something else, their talk is very different.

The *Times* advertises a Yorkshire advowson for sale. Population 200, income £400, price only £1,300. Surely it ought to find a quick customer, especially as the incumbent is 73. Good old Church of England!

The Christian missionaries in Uganda seem fully to realise that their office is to act as precursors of annexation. In fighting the Mohammedans the orders given were quite in the spirit of Moses, "Spare no one." The Rev. Mr. Millar says: "All are ready for the fray, and would only be too happy to wipe out Islam from this land." And again, "Captain Macdonald wants the Mohammedans put out of existence as well as out of the country; he says, quite rightly, that there will be no peace as long as there are Mohammedans about." This is the gospel of peace as proclaimed in central Africa in 1893. It virtually means, "We cannot convert the Mohammedans, so we must exterminate them." Thus does the cause of the gospel triumph.

The Rev. C. H. Bulmer, rector of Credenhall, prosecuted a woman for stealing a pint of milk, the property of his reverence. The jury's verdict of acquittal was received with applause, and the chairman marked his opinion of the character of the prosecution by disallowing costs.

At Birmingham, as elsewhere, the arts of the showman are employed by the churches to "compel them to come in." One pastor advertises that he discourses on "Clean Bowled

for an O." Another takes for his subject "An Enterprising Burglar," and a third takes "Brummagem Brass," having an ample stock of that commodity.

It is amusing to read the clerical answers in the *British Weekly* to the question, "Are there errors in the Bible?" The only errors allowed by the Rev. Mr. Howie, for instance, are "errors of transcription." The dear Lord Almighty inspired the writers unerringly, but the poor Deity could not prevent the copyists making some blunders which it would be very wrong to charge against the firm of Jahveh, Ghost, and Company.

At the meeting of the Wolverhampton Auxiliary of the British and Foreign Bible Society, the Rev. Newman Hall asked, "If Christ believed in the authenticity of the Old Testament scriptures, why could not all Christians do the same?" A more important question is, "If Christ was mistaken in this matter, what is the worth of his authority on any other?"

At the same gathering the Rev. C. Dunkley spoke of the testimony to the Bible given by three prominent unbelievers—Goethe, Professor Huxley, and W. E. H. Lecky. This trick of quoting passages where sceptics have said the best they could on behalf of orthodoxy is a very common one. Perhaps in the long run it is not so serviceable to the Christian cause as it is fancied. It at any rate familiarises people with the fact that there are eminent unbelievers, and those best worth convincing will be apt to look up their works and examine their opinions for themselves.

Again the Mohammedans are called upon to keep the peace between rival Christians in Palestine. The most hallowed spot of the Church of the Nativity at Bethlehem has been the scene of a dispute in which one monk was killed by a shot from a revolver, and two others were wounded. This sort of thing has been going on for centuries, the cause usually being the anxiety of rival showmen to secure the gate-money for exhibiting their legendary sites.

At Gloucester last week the Rev. Samuel Gael, of that city, was charged with using obscene language in public. On account of previous convictions, he was sent to gaol for fourteen days. He might have pleaded biblical practices in extenuation.

A public hall at Exeter is used for secular purposes on week days and religious services on Sunday. Side by side are the announcements, "First appearance of the Aztecs." "Second coming of our Lord."

The Bishop of Truro has been lauding "that good man, Mr. W. H. Smith," who used to keep Zola's wicked books off the railway bookstalls. The good man used to keep everything Radical off too, as far as he could. A Freethought journal, even Mr. Bradlaugh's, was never allowed to come near his monopolist counter. Yes, he was a *very* good man, as the expression is understood by bishops.

Zola's books are sold on Smith's bookstalls now the "good man" is gone, and the bishop says that "something should be done to have those books removed." Well now, before "Truro" works away at the railway bookstalls, with which he has no more concern than any other traveller, suppose he begins with the *Church schools*. It will be time enough to get red in the face about Zola when the Bible is no longer thrust into the hands of school children. For sheer gratuitous nastiness, the Bible is the very worst book in general circulation.

"The Harness Belt Swindle" has been exposed by the *Pall Mall Gazette*, which has an American millionaire's cash behind it. Lots of victims have written letters on the subject, and several of them agree with a "Five-Guinea Victim," who says that—"The greatest offenders are the religious weeklies, the proprietors of which give publicity to the most outrageous 'puffs' provided an 'ad.' is to be obtained thereby."

The *Globe* says that Joseph Parker derives his degree from Chicago, so describes him as Dr. Porker. This is very unmannerly. Many eminent divines are entitled to their degrees, because they have paid foreign Universities for them. There are our friends Dr. Samuel Kinns and Dr. Sexton for example.

The London Congregational Union, and the London Missionary Society, have united in appointing Monday, Nov. 6th, as a day of special prayer. Jahveh is usually so inattentive, that they must all pray together to receive any notice. Possibly they think God is like the judge in the parable, who undertook to avenge the widow: "lest, by her continually coming, she weary me."

Hall Caine is about to give us a Christ of his own. No doubt it will exhibit the marks of the novelist's romantic faculty. Robert Buchanan, writing on the prospect, says, "Here, surely, is a famous opportunity for complete honesty and candor. Trimming and tinkering here is long out of date. We shall know what a professional literary man really thinks and feels on the greatest of all subjects, the one subject on which all men are so honest, and we shall be spared all the platitudes once employed to humor a world-wide reputation. Even Renan tinkered his subject a little, restoring with his left hand what he stole with his right. Even Strauss was a trimmer here and there. It is in my friend Hall Caine's power to show us that the profession of literature is the fittest preparation for the profession of Christianity."

In the case of Thomas Mooney, the Parnellite who was refused Christian burial at Tuam, to which we alluded last week, Father Curran alleges it was because he did not attend to his Easter duties. It, however, appears from the *Irish Weekly Independent*, that several prominent Parnellites in Tuam, at a mission held some time ago, were refused absolution, simply because they took part in the *mêlée* that raged on the 29th of June last over the importation of the redoubtable Dr. Tanner, in a fight about a platform, the order for the charge being given, with military precision, by one of the fighting clergy themselves.

Tom Mann has been discoursing on "The Hypocrisy of the Churches," and the Rev. C. F. Aked, of Liverpool, has been preaching on "The Hypocrisy of Tom Mann." Mr. Aked says very pointedly that Tom Mann might as well become a publican in order to advance the cause of Temperance, as become a curate in order to advance the cause of Labor. What has Tom Mann to say to this?

Writing to the Countess Hugo, the great Tom Mann says he is a Freethinker, but he is a religious one. As he means by religion "working to put down wrong-doing," it is clear that his mind is in a dreadful muddle. Tom Mann should keep quiet for a few months and get himself into a moderate state of lucidity.

Dr. Peter Bayne is writing a book on "The Political Economy of Jesus Christ." By and bye we shall have "The Geology of the Prophet of Nazareth," or "The Chemistry of our Savior," with sanguinary illustrations, or "The Biology of St. Paul," with special reference to his theory of dead seeds producing a good harvest. This is an enterprising age, and we may expect some wonderful developments of Christianity before it is finally played out.

"Johnny, did you put that money I gave you in the foreign mission box for the benefit of the poor heathen?" asked an East-end matron of her young hopeful. "No'm, I kept it. I heard you tell pa the other day that charity begins at home, and you called me a little heathen yesterday, so I thought the best thing to do was to keep it."

The words "His Satanic Majesty" occurred in a story read in one of the Toronto public schools. "How many know who is his Satanic Majesty?" said the teacher. Several hands were raised, and the first pupil named promptly replied, "The Inspector." History and Scripture were never more thoroughly mixed than by the boy who wrote—Titus was a Roman Emperor—supposed to have written the Epistle to the Hebrews; his other name was Oates."

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, Nov. 5, Co-operative Hall, Greyfriar-gate, Nottingham:—11, "The Coal War and its Lessons"; 3, "A Search for the Soul"; 7, "The Daybreak of Humanity." (Admission free.)

Monday, Nov. 6, Athenæum Rooms, Derby:—7.30, "Why I Cannot be a Christian."

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

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

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

- MR. CHARLES WATTS' ENGAGEMENTS.—Nov. 12, Town Hall, Birmingham; 19, Manchester; 26, Birmingham. Dec. 3 and 10, Hall of Science, London; 17, Birmingham.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent to him (if a reply is required a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed) at Baskerville Hall, The Crescent, Birmingham.
- H. MARGERISON.—Obituary inserted. You deserve very great credit for your action in this matter.
- F. HASLAM.—You forgot to send your address with your advice. Who are you? Is the name really your own, or are you assuming the name of a Freethought lecturer?
- H. M. MERRIDEN.—Mr. Forder has attended to your order and seen the wholesale agent who declined to supply this journal. Thanks for the information.
- F. LANE.—The next time Mr. Foote visits Manchester he will try to arrange for a week or ten days propagandist tour in South Lancashire. Mr. Watts may also put in a tour there during the winter. Thanks for your circulation of the *Freethinker* amongst your friends. Mr. Forder is sending you a parcel of tracts.
- E. CLARK.—Whenever we have accidentally seen the paper you mention we have always found it reeking with scurrilous personality. For this reason we decline to take any notice of it. The copy you forward has gone unopened into the waste-basket.
- O. R. FEATHERSTONE.—Thanks. See paragraph.
- J. K. SYKES.—Pleased to hear you are so delighted with your rare opportunities of hearing Mr. Foote's lecture.
- J. DALTON.—Good ideas, but very bad verse.
- T. NESBIT.—No doubt the wearing of some sort of unobtrusive badge would enable Freethinkers to recognise each other when travelling, but the badge would soon get to be known by outsiders, and many Freethinkers would object to such publicity. Still it might be worth trying by those who can afford to proclaim themselves. Sorry to hear you cannot find a room for Freethought meetings at Ashford.
- A. J. PAGE.—(1) There certainly ought to be a more active Freethought propaganda in Leeds. We understand there is some difficulty at present in obtaining a hall. Mr. Foote will be very happy, if any decent hall is available, to visit Leeds early in the new year. (2) Mr. Foote has never printed his lectures. He does not write them out, and verbatim reports are very costly. Besides, he never delivers the same lecture twice in the same way. He has only a few notes on one side of a small sheet of paper, and the filling in depends upon all sorts of circumstances.
- TEACHER.—The *Freidenker* is published at 470 East Water-street, Milwaukee, U.S.A., and *Der Arme Teufel* at 6 Champlain-street, Detroit, U.S.A.
- A. SCOPES.—If you arrange for lectures at Ipswich, the Organisation Committee will doubtless be able to help you by sending a lecturer occasionally from London. Mr. Foote will also be happy to pay you another visit. Maintaining a lecturer for the Eastern counties is more than the N.S.S. could undertake at present.
- J. BLAND.—The falsehood seems to be circulated by one wholesale agent as an excuse for his bigotry. The *Freethinker* has not been "threatened with a prosecution." It is most unlikely that the bigots will ever tackle it again. Your local newsagent should insist on being supplied. If one wholesale agent will not supply it, there are plenty of others who will. Mr. Forder will meanwhile post the paper to you weekly as you "can't do without it."
- A. STURDY SCOT sends, on behalf of a group of Freethinkers on board the "Royal Sovereign," hearty thanks to Mr. George Anderson for his "splendid gifts of literature." He also informs us that Freethought is spreading on board the ship. A volume of the *Freethinker* for 1883, containing the report of Mr. Foote's trial and defence, has been the means of arousing much sympathy among the honest Jack Tars.
- A. B. MOES.—Article to hand. We note your statement re your successful drama.
- H. NICHOLSON.—Glad to hear a report of your successful debate with Mr. George Wise in the new Co-operative Hall, Ox Hill. It is a trick of Christian Evidence lecturers, even the meanest of them, to "challenge" the "Freethought leaders." There are many of our men quite capable of dealing with Mr.

Wise. We do not see the necessity of calling in the President of the N.S.S. for the purpose.

G. DOEG.—Mr. Forder has handed us your letter. It is a matter on which you must decide for yourself, whether you join the nearest Branch or through the central secretary. See paragraph.

J. PARTRIDGE.—See paragraph.

W. J. OSBORNE.—We have your letter but no enclosure.

F. WARREN.—We know absolutely nothing about the matter. No report has reached us from Brighton.

H. M. RIDGWAY.—It is certainly a rare bit of cheek for Booth to send his lasses out with boxes to cadge in the streets for the "Army," and, if possible, the door to door visitation of perfect strangers is still worse.

ALPHA.—Shall appear. Glad to hear you think the portraits that are appearing in this journal are "alone worth the twopence." They are done by the most costly process, and, so far as price goes, cannot be bettered.

J. W. GOTT.—We are having some of our Cartoons printed on fly-leaves for distribution, with an advertisement of the *Freethinker*. Just the idea you suggest. An announcement will appear as soon as they are ready. We intend to maintain the character of our illustrations.

L. N. CLIFTON.—Glad to hear you intend to work "harder than ever" for Freethought.

E. D. H. DALY.—The New Jerusalem Church is a rather harmless form of superstition. Swedenborg, its founder, was a man of genius, but half insane.

J. D. LEGGETT.—Thanks for the extract. We had already made a note on the same subject.

G. ADAMS.—Will see to it.

W. HESKETH.—(1) Bethany and Mount Olivet are not so far apart, but one person could not ascend from both at the same time. (2) Papias, about A.D. 170, is the first Christian writer who mentions any Gospel at all, and he only mentions two, one being by Matthew, which he says was written in Hebrew. (3) Christians are reckoned as about 320,000,000; less than a quarter of the world's inhabitants.

N.S.S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss E. M. Vance acknowledges: E. Truelove, 10s.; J. Mosenthal, 4s.

N.S.S. GENERAL FUND.—Miss Vance acknowledges:—Manchester Branch, collection at Mr. Foote's lectures, £2 14s. 9d.

W. HOLLAND.—You cannot have followed our records very attentively if you thought that Mr. Jones was still secretary. Mr. Foote will not be able to visit Manchester again this year.

J. CLOSE.—All nonsense. The *Freethinker* is not threatened. The agent has invented the tale himself.

E. S.—(1) Of course a being "without sin" cannot sin. To have any meaning at all, the two expressions must be identical. (2) All sorts of notions have been broached as to the state of Adam and Eve before the Fall. (3) Life is not an entity; it is a condition. When matter is organised in a certain way we call it living. (4) We do not quite understand your last question.

G. L. MACKENZIE.—A poor periodical. It is often sent to us, but always goes into the waste-basket.

H. JONES.—See paragraph.

C. DOEG.—Our answer only referred to the English Bible. We are aware that Lilith occurs (once) in the Hebrew Bible. We agree with you that Evangelist Powell should be ignored by N.S.S. Branches. If the Liverpool Branch of the O.E.S. is obliged to repudiate him in the public press, it is clear that it must be a bad case indeed.

LECTURE NOTICES, ETC., should be written on postcards or the envelopes marked outside, and be sent to 14 Clerkenwell-green, London, E.C.

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—Progressive Thinker—Twentieth Century—De Dageraad—Isle of Man Times—Midland Express—Irish Weekly Independent—Morning Leader—Rugby Gazette—Darwen News—Pembroke Herald—Middlesex County Times—Weekly Bulletin—Post.

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

The *Freethinker* will be forwarded, direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One Year, 10s. 6d.; Half Year, 5s. 3d.; Three Months, 2s. 8d.

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

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

SUGAR PLUMS.

Mr. Foote delivers three lectures to-day in the Co-operative Hall, Nottingham. The bigots or the police, or both, tried to stop him by frightening the proprietors and lessees of halls, with the result that no hall in the town could be obtained for Sunday lectures if a charge were made for admission. Mr. Foote is not to be beaten so easily, however, and he is going to lecture and throw the doors open free to the public. It will not be very profitable to him, of course, but it will probably be profitable to Freethought, which is after all a sufficient consolation.

On Monday evening Mr. Foote lectures for the first time in Derby. It is a very bigoted town, but for that very reason the gospel of Freethought should be preached there.

Mr. Foote continued his new lecturing experiment on Sunday at Bristol. The large St. James' Hall was engaged, and the back seats and the gallery were thrown open free, the rest of the hall being reserved for persons who paid for admission. The result was most gratifying. There was a good audience in the morning, a better one in the afternoon, and a full house in the evening. Hundreds of people heard the gospel of Freethought who would not have done so otherwise, without any serious diminution in the gross receipts. Good meetings are naturally inspiring, and Mr. Foote was universally congratulated on being in "excellent form." The only drawback was the presence, in the morning and afternoon, of some excitable and ill-mannered Christians in the back seats, who appeared to think, with their peculiar logic, that as they came in free they had a right to be disorderly. In the evening they were not present, or else they were subdued, partly perhaps by the firm and judicious attitude of Mr. Keast, the chairman. At any rate the lecture was followed with close attention, and the great outburst of applause at the finish seemed to come from all parts of the large meeting.

The St. James's Hall directors, whose action in this respect we have always held to be foolish timidity, made it a condition that there should be no debate after the lectures, though questions might be put and answered. This condition they thought necessary in view of the existing state of the law. Of course it was explained to the audience, but the aforesaid excitable and ill-mannered Christians kept flinging it in the teeth of the Secularists, and once or twice took to making noises like animals, though they are very indignant at the idea that those animals are their distant relations. Mr. Foote was obliged to tell them, at the close of the afternoon meeting, that they were poltroons to keep up a bigoted law and yell at those who were made to suffer by it; and the rebuke was lustily cheered by the overwhelming majority.

Still, we don't despair of those disorderly Christians. They have been trained in a bad school. By and bye, when they have sat more frequently in a free seat at Secular meetings, their manners will insensibly improve. Finally, they may behave with perfect propriety, and even come forward and pay for a front seat.

Mr. G. J. Holyoake occupies the platform at the Oddfellows' Hall, Liverpool, this Sunday afternoon and evening. It is now ten or twelve years since he lectured in the Mersey metropolis, and since at his age the veteran cannot be expected to travel about quite as much as of yore, all friends in Liverpool and the neighborhood should take the present opportunity of hearing him.

The Birmingham Branch, on Sunday evening, passed the following resolution:—"That this meeting conveys to our old esteemed and true friend, Mr. Edward Truelove, its hearty congratulations on his attaining his eighty-fourth birthday, and hopes his remaining days may be long, peaceful, and happy." To which every Freethinker will say "Amen."

Mr. Truelove is retiring from business, but the Freethought books he used to sell can still be purchased through Mr. Forder.

The Finsbury Branch holds a special general meeting to-day (Nov. 5) in the minor Hall of Science at 12. The business is important, and all members should attend.

The Newcastle Branch has had to elect a new president and secretary, owing to the old officers having removed to Durham. The new president is Mr. J. G. Bartram, and the new secretary is Mr. J. W. Mein, 17 Warwick-street, Heaton.

We frequently hear of Freethinkers travelling great distances to hear a Freethought lecture. On Sunday last some persons came all the way from Swindon to hear Mr. Foote lecture at Bristol, and one locked-out miner rode in on his bicycle from Radstock. Tuesday's post brought us a letter from a Freethinker who put himself to great inconvenience to hear Mr. Foote's lecture at Dundee early in September. He left work at 6, walked two miles to the nearest railway station, and arrived at Dundee in time to enter the hall ten minutes after Mr. Foote had begun. He left Dundee at 10.30, the train only taking him across the Tay Bridge, into the county of Fife. The remainder of his journey home, a distance of eleven miles, had to be done on foot. This enthusiastic Freethinker was accompanied all the way by an equally enthusiastic lady, and both considered themselves amply repaid for their expense and trouble.

The *Isle of Man Times*, alluding to the success of the entertainments given by the Liverpool Sunday Society, asks, "Will anyone start a Sunday Society in Douglas? It would be an enormous blessing." After its report of a performance at St. George's Hall, it says: "Will the straight-laced and the bigots take note that very many of the items in the program will by no means come under the denomination of 'sacred music.' And it might be pointed out that the young people of Douglas would be much better employed if they were at an entertainment of that kind, than they are when they are prowling about the streets and the country lanes."

Secularists in Suffolk and part of Essex should support the Ipswich Branch by joining it as members and assisting it financially. This Branch has done some good work during the past year, and is anxious to do still better during the next. Communications should be addressed to Mr. A. J. Scopes, secretary, 14 Queen-street, Ipswich.

Robertson Smith was pursued for heresy, and turned out of the Free Church of Scotland about a dozen years ago. Now he is the students' candidate for the Lord Rectorship of Aberdeen University.

We are pleased to see, from the *Chatham and Rochester Observer*, that Mr. W. B. Thompson has had a good and well-reported meeting in favor of his candidature for the Gillingham School Board. London experience has shown the difficulty of raising ratepayers from their supineness on this important question, but in view of the increased activity of the clerical party it behoves all Secularists to work might and main in elections where as at Chatham a good and thorough candidate stands forward for the principle of secular education only in rate-supported schools.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton is now seventy-eight. She ascribes her good health to inheritance, good habits, and a deep and life long interest in the questions that most vitally affect the welfare of humanity. The words are just as applicable to Mr. Truelove, who has just entered on his eighty-fifth year.

The *Freethinkers' Magazine* gives as frontispiece a portrait of Dr. D. B. Wiggins, of Buffalo, who has been professor of anatomy and physiology in a Cincinnati University. It provides also a capital lot of articles from various points of view, and is well worthy support.

Prince Kropotkin, lecturing on "Savages and Barbarians," for the Sunday Lecture Society at St. George's Hall, said it was a mistaken notion that savages without religion were without morality. Even missionaries testified that they loved their children, were kind to the weak and aged, while they kept their marriage laws better than Europeans. This the lecturer attributed to the solidarity that existed in each tribe.

The Manchester Branch is following the example set at the Hall of Science. At Mr. Robertson's lectures to-day (Nov. 5) and next Sunday the back part of the Secular Hall will be thrown open free. Reserved seats will fill the front part at the usual prices, and regular attendants, who can afford to do so, are expected to occupy them.

Mr. Heaford had a good audience at the London Hall of Science on Sunday evening, and his lecture was much appreciated. To-day (Nov. 5) the platform is occupied again by Mr. Touzeau Parris, who will of course meet with a hearty welcome. The Sunday morning lecture is by E. E. Williams, a Fabian, on "Religion and Socialism." Wednesday next (Nov. 8) Tom McCarthy, secretary of the Dockers' Union, will lecture on "The Dockers' Difficulty." We hope to hear that he addressed a large gathering.

The Saturday Social Evenings in the Minor Hall of Science, will commence on November 4, at 8.30. Admission is free to members of the N.S.S., who will be allowed to introduce one friend.

Our Dutch Freethought contemporary, *De Dageraad*, gives as usual a selection of passages translated from the *Freethinker* for the edification of its readers. We trust this useful magazine, which has upheld the cause for so many years in Holland, is prospering as well as it certainly deserves.

Sunday concerts have spread as far north as Inverness. All the men of God combined to denounce the godless innovation and competition with their business. The result of this good advertisement was that the hall was filled and the concerts will continue.

We receive from Valencia, Spain, *El Clamor Setabense*, a Republican and Freethought journal, conducted by Manuel Soriano Lopez, who makes direct and unceasing war on the Church.

Angela Lopez de Agala, a Freethought writer and poetess, has been sentenced to prison, at Barcelona, for blasphemy uttered in an article in the *Nueva Cattora*.

Colonel R. G. Ingersoll, the famous American Freethinker, is a great stay-at-home, and he and his wife are like a pair of turtle doves. During his stay in Helena, Mont., it leaked out that he sent and received a telegram every day, and that these missives over the wires were tender inquiries between husband and wife.—*Licensing World*.

The *Weekly Dispatch* says: "Rouen used to be a city of priests as well as churches. The churches remain, but only as show places, and even as such they are for the most part dirty and neglected. But very few services are held in them, and of the old religious fervor scarcely a sign remains. This may be well, for it was a poor sort of idolatry and fetishism that prevailed, and it can have in no way benefited the benighted folk who practised it. It is a sign of the times, however, that clericalism, which was propped up under the Empire after being actively protected for centuries by the monarchy in France, appears to be quite losing its hold on the people now that Republican institutions, albeit still far from perfect, are firmly established."

More than 300 delegates, representing 230 groups of the French Freethought Federation, attended the National Congress at the Salle de l'Harmonie, Paris. Deputé Hubbard presented the Federation with a new hall situated in passage Saulnier.

Bath is a very sleepy and bigoted city. The ratepayers there will not have such a thing as a Free Library. On the other hand, there is plenty of drinking, and plenty of that form of vice which is so characteristic of Christian cities. It goes without saying, therefore, that the local Branch of the N.S.S. has a very uphill battle to fight. Still, it means to persevere. Taking advantage of Mr. Foote's visit to Bristol, it arranged for a lecture by him on the Monday evening, and Mr. Keast went over from Bristol to take the chair. The attendance was moderate, and the discussion was "a caution," but a good few copies of the *Freethinker* were sold, and these may lead to an increase in its local circulation.

Mr. J. Grinstead, a Bristol evangelist, who lives by soul-saving himself, yet never tires of alluding to the mercenaryness of "infidel" lecturers, went over to Bath to lecture in opposition to Mr. Foote, taking the very same title and pretending it was a reply, whereas Mr. Grinstead has never heard Mr. Foote lecture on any subject. This Evangelist begged Christians by public advertisement not to hear Mr. Foote

attack the Bible, but to hear Mr. Grinstead attack Atheism, and then it would "speedily die a natural death." It would be difficult to beat the impudent folly of this advertisement. "Don't hear what Atheism has to say for itself, but hear all we have to say against it, and you are sure to be on the right side." Such is Mr. Grinstead's style of "proving all things."

We have since learnt that Mr. Grinstead told his Bath audience that Mr. Foote only advocated Freethought for money. Yet when this Evangelist caught sight of Mr. Foote with Mr. Keast at Bath station, on the way back to Bristol, he had the indecency to hold out his hand in a quite effusive manner. So hard is it for an opponent of "infidelity" to be a gentleman.

This week's *Freethinker* should have had a Cartoon, but the one in preparation for it will not be ready till next week. Our readers will be glad to get meanwhile a good portrait, and short biography, of our sub-editor, Mr. J. M. Wheeler.

THE EUSEBIAN LITERATURE.

X.

PERHAPS I have now said almost enough on the Eusebian question. My object has been to show that the books have no testimony whatever in them as to the events of near 1600 years ago; that they consist of a system of theologic fiction which must have been devised and put into gradual execution about 400 years ago. Any student who is capable of eradicating from his mind the superstitions of education, and of reviewing the evidence for himself, will perceive that the whole of the Church Letters is involved in the Eusebian catastrophe.

The whole array of "illustrious" names is nothing but a blind which screens from us the secret activity of a comparatively small number of early scribes, who have, however, been followed by continuators and defenders down to our own day. I know not how far there may be conscious dishonesty in the writings of our present literary clergy; but certainly they will prove themselves to be dishonest if, after their attention has been called to the subject, they persist in ignoring the decisive evidence of monkish art and fraud in the whole system.

It is, on the other hand, quite pitiable to observe how bewildered honest students have undoubtedly become in trying to follow up the vestiges of purely imaginary persons, including Eusebius himself. Another ecclesiastical historian is invented and called Socrates (the impudence of it!); and then "Socrates" is made to say that Acacius, a succeeding bishop of Cæsarea, wrote Eusebius' Life; but the book has perished! Others of the gang, as a Basil, a Theodoret, etc., are made to allude to "Eusebius of Palestine" as an accepted personality. Eusebius himself is made to write some hollow nonsense about Dionysius, Bishop of Alexandria, as his contemporary, and about Paul of Samosata; and on the strength of such statements, credulous scholars try to fix the date of his birth. And then they jump over an interval (as alleged) of some thousand years, and take the statement out of "Nicephorus Callistus" that the sister of martyr Pamphilus was Eusebius' mother! One of the phenomena that long ago aroused my attention was the substantial identity of the stuff under the name of Nicephorus with that under Eusebius.

And then his brother was "Eusebius of Nicomedia," who baptised Constantine! No doubt these things are an allegory of a literary fraternity, like the title of Pamphilus and the wondrous Origen, the man of the "brazen entrails," as they call him. They perpetrate these little jests, quite secure in their knowledge of the credulity of the learned world. They delight to send us on these fool's errands to Syria and Asia Minor, while the real seat of their labors was Paris, where these books saw the light; or, in general terms, the monasteries of the West. There lies the key to the whole position.

One of the chief Eusebian books is that given in the List of the illustrious Catholics as "εὐαγγελικῆς ἀποδείξεως." libri xx." You are thus invited to believe that it was composed in *Greek*, and was of double its present

dimensions. But everyone feels that the Greek title is ungainly, while the Latin *Demonstratio Evangelicâ* is proper, and has come into common use. It reads better in Latin; there can be little or no doubt it was indited in Latin. Similar remarks apply to the companion work, the *Præparatio*.

The arguments of these books are wholly false, and as against the Jews, inhuman. They can be reduced from their bloated rhetorical form to very small compass; they are explained by the notable saying of a secular priest of the sixteenth century: "We would extirpate the Jews, but without their books we cannot go on." They are based on a false interpretation of the Jewish writings, which themselves are only matter of the sixteenth century knowledge: "sixteenth century" being itself an enormous fiction.

Our scholars have puzzled themselves over the question whether these books were written "before the Nicene Council"! The French editor, Valesius, said that the Ecclesiastical History was written a few years after the Nicene Council; later editors have contradicted him; but the monks took care to insert no exact date in the book, and doubtless foresaw the waste of labor over the question. The truth is that the tale of the Nicene Council is in the late *Life of Constantine*, which I have already exposed. The mere waxen "Eusebius" bears "witness of himself" and is "confirmed" by "Sozomen," as our credulous scholars say!

To the student of Church History the story of the *Homoousion* must be familiar. Here again the meaning stands better in Latin or English, "*of one substance with the Father*." But how ridiculous to any man of common sense the notion that by the authority of Constantine or any other emperor, a champion called "Athanasius" was permitted to overcome a set of theologians under an "Arius," at a "Nicene Council" in a hair-splitting controversy about a Theology that was never heard of until the time of the Council of Trent!

You may consult the alleged historians, Theodoret, Socrates, Athanasius, and the false *Life of Constantine* for all this: you will be forced to the conclusion that all this system of writing was put forth under the patronage and direction of the Benedictines of Paris or of some literary centre of the West. The notion that it had anything to do with Nicæa or Constantinople is decisively contradicted by evidence to be found in one of the most celebrated of the French Benedictines, none other than Dom Bernard Montfaucon.

It would be, in my opinion, a weakness to labor the point, if my readers are satisfied, after attending to the evidence, that the *Life of Constantine* cannot be regarded as other than one of the later fictions of the system launched upon the world about 350 years ago. At the same time, I cannot but admire, in a sense, the intense zeal with which these fabulists have tried to persuade the world of things that were not and could not have been.

They would have you believe that in the year 330 (!) the great Constantine handed over to Eusebius, as the most learned bishop of his time (!), the task of copying the sacred MSS. for the use of the churches of Constantinople (!); and that the same Eusebius wrote to the same emperor about the mystic feast of the Passover, and about the Holy Sepulchre; and that the bishop and the emperor were madly infatuated with mutual admiration, each for the other (!) Alas! the drollery of it all is lost to the world, and will not be appreciated until the wit arises who shall competently write the Comic Church History!

The editors are such dull fellows, it is not easy to extract amusement out of them. But those who thirst for instruction may profit from the following passage in the French editor, Valesius (1659), rendered from the Latin, and interpreted in plain terms. The monks of the Order of St. Benedict put forth under the name of Eusebius a brief work called *History of Chronic Canons*; that is, they pretended to lay down an outline of time-reckoning, and to denote in terms of time something that never did occur in time or space: the Advent and the Passion of Christ. They drew up a list of imaginary bishops in four imaginary principal

churches; also a list of imaginary illustrious literary churchmen; also a list of imaginary heresies and persecutions by which an imaginary Church was vexed. Then, little by little, they improved this compendium into the *Church History*, and brought it down to the imaginary year 325 of our imaginary Christian era. Yet in neither of these works is there any mention of the Nicene Council!

Valesius wondered at this; and his wonder, like that of the rest of the hypnotised editors, seems to me to have been sincere. He tried to invent a reason for Eusebius' silence: Eusebius was afraid to expose the "seditions and tumults of the bishops," and the rows and the riots they kept up with one another! He wanted (honest man) to pass over that rowdy business, and to bring his work to a glorious and illustrious end! He took a hint from Dionysius of Halicarnassus in his comparison of Herodotus and Thucydides! So he finished with the splendid peace after bloody persecution, the peace that Constantine gave to the Christians!

Well, the whole of the story thus gradually elaborated and foisted upon a yielding and credulous public is very poor twaddle, that no person of taste could be really interested in, were it not for the immense influence acquired and still possessed by the circulators of the great fable. With a certain pride we literary men reflect upon the achievements of our order; yet also with a certain sense of shame, when we reflect on the mischief wrought by pen and tongue.

I am as firmly persuaded that all these tales about Oriental Churches are of modern origin as I am of the existence of printed books; and it is equally clear to me that the connection of the Church with printing and with writing is the affair of the West, and by men of the West should be explored. I quite agree with Hardouin (so far as the layman can agree with the priest) that the design was to impose upon the world a system that was started among us; and which we should not have believed in had we known it to have been contrived as it were under our very noses!

It was all done. I have no smallest doubt, after the Turks had taken Byzantium and when there was great interest felt in the Greek refugees and their splendid Letters. I have no hesitation in believing that the whole of the Church Letters in Greek were forged among us in what my Jesuit friend called the "impious workshops" of the monasteries.

I suppose it to be true (as the same author suggested) that the Translation of the Empire to the East was feigned so that the Bishop of Constantinople might believe himself to be a patriarch, an ecumenical, a peer of the Roman pontiff; and that the Sultan might boast of being the successor of Constantine, and therefore emperor of both East and West. It appears that Annals of the early sixteenth century (or so described) represent Soliman in that capacity.

I have no doubt again, that Greek refugees of low culture were hired to turn the French and Latin compositions of the monks into Greek; and that this explains the fact that in the Libraries of Paris, the Royal and the Colbertine, many more Greek MSS. were to be found about 200 years ago than in the whole of the East. Here again it may occur to the attentive student that there are many French idioms in both the Latin and the Greek books of the Church. In short, all the evidence steadily points to the conclusion that the Greek books were carried to the East, not brought thence; and that we have been pertinaciously duped into believing exactly the reverse.

Here the large view of the subject opens out. It is, as I have insisted over and over again, the secret history of a great Corporation which we have to discover as far as possible from its published literature. There is no other way; for no mental faculty of intuition will enable any man to say *how* old our oldest church buildings really are in any part of Europe. Apart from the buildings, the great Corporation itself cannot be said to fall within the scope of critical thought.

In conclusion. If the date of the French printed edition (1544) be correct, I have shown that before that time there is no vestige of proof that the reading world had ever before heard of the *Church History* or of the two companion volumes, the *Demonstratio* and

the *Præparatio*; there is decisive proof to the contrary. Again, there is proof that these books were written in Latin, under the influence of French idiom. It is a Frenchman who puts out a very improved Latin text a hundred years later, with a Greek text, emended from newly discovered MSS. Finally, it is a Frenchman, the Abbé J. P. Migne, who once more edits the Latin and Greek after his countryman Valesius, in the *Patrologia Græca* 1857.

When I remind my readers that these books are *not* based on the New Testament (Stephanus edition of the Greek New Testament being dated 1550), but were composed by men in the secret of the composition of the New Testament, they will understand how the whole question of Church Letters is here involved. For simplicity's sake it may be said that to write the literary history of Paris on strict critical principles, is to re-write the whole history of Christendom. The explosion of the "Library of Cæsarea," is the explosion of the whole fallacy and delusion concerning the Oriental origin of the religion.

EDWIN JOHNSON.

CHRIST'S VANITY.

"He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned."—*Jesus Christ.*

O CHRIST! thou witless monster of conceit!
Thou blind and blighting leader of the blind!
Dost think thy words can lead a healthy mind,
Though backed by threats, when proofs are incomplete?

The fact that thou hast built thy sickly scheme
On bribes and threats, instead of reasoned facts,
Doth prove thy system false, and counteracts
The germ of goodness in thy morbid dream!

O foolish man! most foolish of our kind!
To try to bribe belief! O brainless wight!
As well attempt to bribe and threaten sight:
To blame the seeing eye, and praise the blind!

A mind accepts precisely what it must;
All sane belief obeys but one behest;
Not that of bribes and threats, nor worst nor best,
But *evidence*, that knows not fear nor trust.

Bring evidence, if thou would'st converts make,
And ev'ry normal mind must needs believe,
Without the help of hopes that might deceive,
And fears of hell's most horrid, torrid lake.

O ruthless, truthless, truthful, ruthless swain!
Believe in thee! benign ecstatic one!
Believe in thee! malign erratic one!
O foolish Christ! thou vainest of the vain!

G. L. MACKENZIE.

HE WAS ONE OF THEM.

"The board will please remain after the congregation is dismissed," said the Rev. Mr. Harps.

After the congregation had filed out the minister observed that a stranger still kept his seat.

"Ah, my friend, did you wish to see me?" asked the good man.

"Not particularly," replied the stranger.

"Then, pardon me, but why are you waiting?"

"Because you asked me to stay."

"I am sorry, but you are mistaken. I asked the board to remain."

"Well, I am one of the board."

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, Ernest E. Williams (Fabian), "Religion and Socialism" (free); 6.30, musical selections; 7, Touzeau Parris, "The Messianic Prophecies" (admission free; reserved seats 3d. and 6d.) Monday at 8.30, debating class, Mr. Garton, "Individualism." Wednesday at 7, Tom McCarthy (Sec. Dockers' Union), "The Dockers' Difficulty." Saturday, Nov. 4, in the Minor Hall, social evening (free).

Battersea Secular Hall (back of Battersea Park Station): 7.45, A. Westcott, "A Modern Inquisition," with limelight effects (free). Monday at 8, A. Johnson, "Individualism; Laissez Faire" (free). Tuesday at 8, social gathering (free). Wednesday at 8, dramatic club (members wanted).

Bethnal Green—Libra Hall, 78 Libra-road, Roman-road: 5.30, public tea (tickets 8d.); 7.30, free entertainment.

Camberwell—61 New Church-road, S.E.: 7.30, A. Liddle, "Has Christianity Promoted Civilisation?" Friday at 7.45, free science classes in chemistry and astronomy.

Hammersmith Club, 1 The Grove, Broadway: Thursday, Nov. 9, at 8, musical selections; 8.30, Touzeau Parris, "Christianity a Form of Devil Worship."

Islington—Wellington Hall, Almeida-street, Upper-street: Thursday, Nov. 2, at 7.45, music; 8, Touzeau Parris, "Christianity a Form of Devil Worship." Nov. 9, at 8, H. Snell, "The Gospel of Freethought." (Free; front seats 6d.)

South Essex Secular Society, Enterprise Club, 33 and 35 Great Eastern-road, Stratford: 7.15, C. Ivatts, "The Immortality of the Soul" (free).

Wimbledon—Hartfield-road Coffee House (Broadway entrance 7, W. Heaford, "Is the Bible a Safe Guide?" (free).

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Battersea Park-gates: 11.15, W. Heaford, "Christian Evidences: what are they worth?"

Camberwell—Station-road: 11.30, B. Hyatt, "It is Finished."
Hyde Park (near Marble-arch): 11.30 and 3.30, St. John will lecture.

COUNTRY.

Aberdeen—Oddfellows' Hall Buildings (Room No. 6): 11.30, songs, recitations, etc.

Birmingham—Baskerville Hall, Crescent, Cambridge-street: 7, G. Bayliffe, "Nature."

Brighton—Eagle Assembly Rooms, Glo'ster-road: 7, A. Guest will lecture.

Chatham—Secular Hall, Queen's-road, New Brompton: 11, A. B. Moss, "Voltaire and Paine"; 2.45, Sunday-school; 7, A. B. Moss, "My Path to Freethought."

Derby—Athenæum Rooms: Monday at 7.30, G. W. Foote, "Why I Cannot be a Christian."

Fairsworth Secular Sunday-school, at 10 and 2; 6.30, P. Percival, "An Ideal City."

Glasgow—Ex-Mission Hall, 110 Brunswick-street: 12, discussion class, members' impromptu speeches; 6.30, J. Wallace, "Liberty."

Hanley—Secular Hall, John-street: 7.30, public discussion, "The Creation Story" (continued).

Hull—St. George's Hall, 8 Albion-street: 7, Mr. Ackroyd, "The Creative Method."

Ipswich—Co-operative Hall (small room), Cox-lane: 7.30, members' meeting.

Leicester—Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate: 6.30, W. Utley, "Modern Problems and their Solution" (free).

Liverpool—Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street: 11, Tontine Society: 3, G. J. Holyoake, "What would Happen if Christianity were Effaced—were that Possible?"; 7, "Where Freethought Ends and Secularism Begins."

Manchester N.S.S., Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints': J. M. Robertson, 11, "The English Church in English History"; 3, "The Eight Hours' Question"; 6.30, "The Progress of Freethought"; instrumental music morning and evening. Monday from 8 to 10.30, dancing. Tuesday at 8, debating circle, Mr. Burrows, "Soap Bubbles."

Newcastle-on-Tyne—Eldon Hall, 2 Clayton-street: 7, J. Clare, "Heinrik Ibsen: his Lesson to this Age."

Nottingham—Co-operative Hall, Greyfriar Gate: G. W. Foote, 11, "The Coal War and its Lessons"; 3, "A Search for the Soul"; 7, "The Daybreak of Humanity."

Portsmouth—Wellington Hall, Wellington-street, Southsea: 3, discussion class and chess club; 7, a meeting.

Sheffield—Hall of Science, Rockingham-street: 7, original readings by local literary gentleman, "A Rich Young Swell" and "Ambition."

South Shields—Thornton's Variety Hall, Union-lane: Mrs. Thornton Smith, 11, "Secularism: what it is"; 3, "Responsibility from a Freethought Standpoint"; 7, "The Meaning of Malthusianism."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Brighton (on the Level): 3, A. Guest will lecture.

Wolverhampton—Snowhill (near the Villiers' statue): 3, J. M. Stanley, "The Reward of the Poor" (if wet or very cold, to be delivered in the Midland Tramway Coffee House, 35 Snow-hill).

LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

C. COHEN, 12 Merchant-street, Bow-road, E.—Nov. 4, South Shields; 5, Blyth.

O. J. HUNT, 48 Fordingley-road, St. Peter's Park, London, W.—Nov. 12, Lotus Club; 15, Hall of Science. Dec. 10, Portsmouth.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Oredon-road, Rotherhithe, London, S.E.—Nov. 5, Chatham; 19, Leicester. Dec. 3, Birmingham.

TOUZEAU PARRIS, Clare Lodge, 32 Upper Mall, Hammersmith London, W.—Nov. 2, Wellington Hall, Islington; 26, Camberwell

H. SNELL, 8 Monk-street, Woolwich.—Nov. 12, Camberwell; 14, West Norwood Reform Club. Dec. 10, Camberwell; 17, Deptford Liberal Club.

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NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.

MONTHLY Executive Meeting, held at the Hall of Science, Oct. 26; the President in the chair. Present: Messrs. R. O. Smith, G. Standing, E. Truelove, W. Heaford, E. Bater, F. Davis, J. Marshall, J. Potter, G. Ward, C. W. Martin, G. H. Baker, J. M. Wheeler, and E. M. Vance, asst.-sec.

Minutes of previous meeting, and those of Organisation Committee, were read and confirmed.

The President reported that the Directors of the National Secular Hall Society, in reply to the application made to them at the last meeting, had, in view of the exceptionally bad year just passed, consented to an abatement of £50 on the coming year's rental.

A recommendation from the Organisation Committee for the formation of a new Branch at Dundee was accepted, and permission granted.

The Finsbury Park Branch having offered the whole of their library to the Executive for use at the Hall of Science, Mr. Hunt moved and Mr. Heaford seconded "That the offer be accepted with thanks," and Mr. J. M. Wheeler kindly offered to present fifty volumes.

The President reported Mr. F. Smallman's generous donation to the Benevolent Fund, and the Treasurer reported that the new departure at the Hall of Science was successful, there being an important increase both in the attendance and money taken at the doors.

A communication from the National League for the Abolition of the House of Lords was adjourned for discussion until next meeting.

Mr. Wheeler moved "That a Circular upon Secular Education be printed, and placed at the disposal of Secular candidates for the School Board." This was seconded by Mr. Bater and finally remitted to the Organisation Committee.

The President instructed the Secretary to send a list of the attendances made by members of the Executive to their respective Branches every six months.

The meeting adjourned until Nov. 30.

E. M. VANCE, Asst.-Sec.

WILLING TO OBLIGE.—A Chinese witness, asked in what form he would swear, said: "Kiscee bookie, blowie matchee, blackee saucee, shelpie Bob, allec samee."

OBITUARY.

ONE more gallant member of the party of progress has gone to rest—John Haynes (boiler-maker), of New Terry, Cheshire, aged 48 years, and a member of the Liverpool Branch of the N.S.S. The funeral took place at Bebington Cemetery, Aug. 22. The Church of England Burial Service was read by his mother's wish. The Home Secretary granted permission to remove the body to a private grave on Sept. 12, when a very impressive Secular service was rendered by Dr. Small, B.S., of Bootle. Haynes had been a Secularist for eighteen years, and was all you could expect in a good man. He was kind and just to all, and respected by all who knew him. A gravestone has been placed over him, with the ninth verse from the seventh chapter of Job.—HENRY MARGERISON.

DIED at Madrid, Oct. 15, Eduardo Ramon Chies y Gomez, one of the leaders of Spanish Freethought and editor of *Las Dominicales del Libre Pensamiento*. Born Oct. 13, 1845, Ramon Chies was educated by his father, a distinguished Republican, without religion. At the age of twenty he went to Madrid, and followed a course of law and philosophy. His life became devoted to Republican and Freethought propaganda, for which he made many sacrifices. He took an active part in the Revolution of 1865, and at the proclamation of the Spanish Republic in 1873 was made Civil Governor of Valencia. He was an able lecturer as well as writer, and at the time of his death was a member of the City Council of Madrid, and a friend of the leading Republican statesmen. Pi y Margall, Salmeron, and the principal Freethinkers of Madrid, took part in his funeral, which was a Masonic one. Don Fernando Lozano, his coadjutor on *Las Dominicales*, will continue the publication of that organ of Spanish Freethought.

A vicar and a curate of a country parish, where there was to be a burial, were not on very good terms with one another. The vicar not coming in time, the curate began the service, and was reading the words, "I am the resurrection," when the vicar arrived, almost out of breath, and, snatching the book out of the curate's hands, with great scorn, cried, "You the resurrection! I am the resurrection!" and then went on with the rest of the service.

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