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The Freethinker

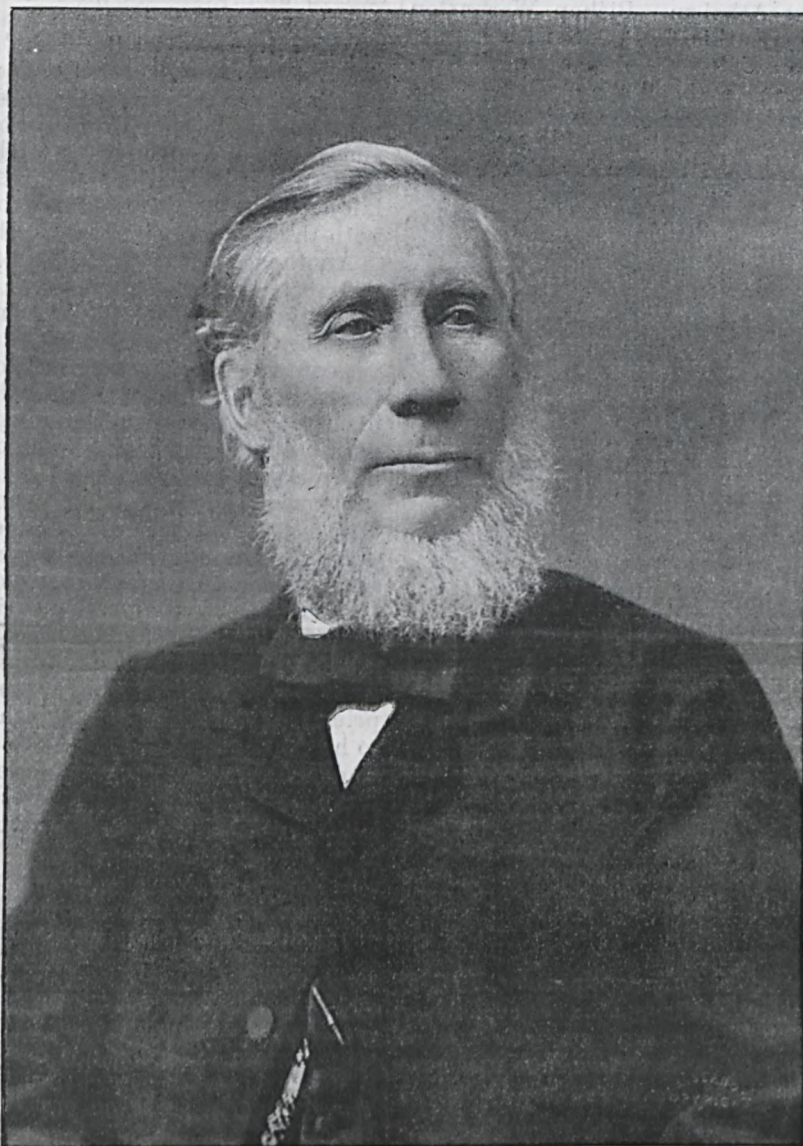
Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

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PROFESSOR TYNDALL.

BORN 1820. DIED 1893. (See p. 804)

GUTTER CHRISTIANS.

CHRISTIANITY has had its saints and its men of genius. Freethinkers will appreciate the beautiful character of a St. Francis or a William Law, and admire the writings of an Augustine, a Pascal, a Hooker, or a Taylor. Such men were endowed by nature with great minds or gracious tempers. They would have adorned any system to which they gave their adherence. Christianity did not produce them; it simply made use of them, as it made use of the architects who planned its cathedrals, or the artists who painted its madonnas.

Christian writers, however, are not all men of genius, nor is every Christian advocate a saint. The great majority are common in mind and character. Their work is entered upon in a professional spirit. They

simply earn their bread in that way. One young man takes "holy orders" just as another becomes a doctor or a lawyer. Very little intelligence is needed to see through the cant language of the men of God. They talk of "calls," but it means that they are accepting a better situation. What laymen speak of as a good berth, the clericals describe as a greater sphere of usefulness. But it means the same thing in the end; better pay, higher station, and a larger share of all the good things of *this* world.

Within the lowest deep there is a lower deep—to use the paradoxical expression of John Milton. The most intolerable, and often the most despicable, of all Christians, is generally the Christian controversialist. When he bows his head in prayer he looks the meekest of men, and when he sings a hymn he looks seraphic. But let him catch sight of an opponent, and he becomes

filled with envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness. Evil passions gleam through his eyes, and sometimes foam upon his lips. He becomes a more or less rank embodiment of the spirit which came not to send peace but a sword.

Confining ourselves to England, as we have not time to look abroad, let us note a few cases in point. Bramhall's replies to Hobbes, for instance, are perfectly ludicrous. Lord Clarendon, as a layman, criticised the philosopher with courtesy, and even with deference; but the bishop criticised him as though he were an idiot and a ruffian. Bishop Berkeley himself, who had "every virtue under heaven," declared that Anthony Collins—a man as good as himself—deserved to be denied the common benefits of light and air. Slashing Bentley replied to the same Freethinker with all the absurd arrogance which is displayed in his Boyle Lectures against Atheism. Bishop Warburton was Bentley's equal in this kind of ill-behavior. "Bully to Sneak," wrote Coleridge on a copy of Warburton's correspondence with Bishop Hurd. An appalling collection of controversial slang might be made from the author of the *Divine Legation of Moses*. Dr. Johnson himself, who loved an argument, grew rabid at the mention of Rousseau and Voltaire, and said that they deserved hanging above any prisoner at the Old Bailey. Christian answers to David Hume were ridiculously insolent. Critics of more gentlemanly temper, like Campbell and Beattie, wrote as though they had the great Scotchman up with his hands behind his back. The replies to Thomas Paine were chiefly the work of Christian ruffians. Bishop Watson was the only one who attempted to answer his arguments. The others only called him names; apparently on the principle that to charge a Freethinker with drunkenness is equivalent to proving the Bible to be the Word of God. What has been written and said, in our own age about Charles Bradlaugh, is well known to most of our readers. Christians assailed him with every conceivable calumny. They are now—at least some of them are—busily engaged in forging and circulating an idle story of his death-bed conversion to their contemptible faith.

It has been wittily said that prophecy is a subject which generally finds a man cracked, or leaves him so. Change "cracked" into "malicious," and the same predication might be made of Christian Evidences. By a curious fatality, the defence of the Christian religion nearly always brings out the worst elements in a man's nature. It makes him quibble and sophisticate for certain; it often makes him guilty of misrepresentation and lying; and he is very fortunate if it does not make him a thorough-paced blackguard, ready to use the vilest insults and the blackest slanders against his opponents.

Christian Evidence lecturers in this country—and they appear to be of much the same breed in America—spend most of their time in calumniating Freethinkers. The staple of their speech is vulgar personality. This is the only element their audiences find interesting. When they attempt argument they are as dull as ditchwater and as dry as a remainder biscuit.

During the last two or three years there has been a positive competition in blackguardism amongst them. One loosens his vicious tongue, and gains the applause of the baser sort of Christians. Not to be outdone, another "goes one worse," and becomes the dirty hero of the hour. But we fancy the bottom is now reached. It seems impossible to exceed the brutal and reckless vulgarity of the latest champion of the meek and lowly Jesus. Freethinkers should not condescend to advertise a Christian ruffian. By going to his meetings, by opposing him, above all by debating with him, they only help to play his game. Surely the line should be drawn somewhere; and should it not be drawn at ignorance, conceit, malignancy, lies, and Billingsgate? An honorable combat in a fair arena is a thing to be welcomed; but what is gained by fighting a chimney-sweep in the gutter?

G. W. FOOTE.

CHRISTIANITY AND THE SOCIAL PROBLEM.

SOME of the warier among the men of God are sedulously seeking to ally themselves to the growing cause of labor. If their professions counted for anything, there should be no problem awaiting solution, for Christianity should have solved it long ago. Only when the democracy has, by hard struggle against clergy-supported privilege, gained some share of political power, and the social question is in the air, Christian ministers, discerning some profit to be gained by patronising the working classes, wake up to the fact that there is a social problem. Here, for instance, is his eminence Cardinal Vaughan, the head (in England) of a Church which may justly be described as an organisation of political schemers, who have used their power to keep the masses in ignorance, and by threats and promises ground out their hard-earned pence, proffering, in the December *Humanitarian*, "A Key to the Social Problem." Holding up Anarchist Communism as a dreadful bugbear, the Cardinal offers his Church as supplying the true key. It is, of course, to be kept and applied by the Pope through the bishops and clergy, though in view of the threatened wreck of Society, the volunteers will also be enrolled, as the laity "must be called out and organised to co-operate with the clergy under the direction of the bishops."

Another eminent Christian, of a very different kind and sect, the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes, though when in conference with Church big-wigs in Jerusalem Chamber he deprecated any definition of a living wage, yet contending that salvation for the workers is to be found in the West London Wesleyan Mission, and that his form of Christianity, including suppression of all public houses and music halls, offers the true solution of the social problem.

I confess I regard these men as typical humbugs. This attempted reconciliation of the interests of the priests and the people, the laborers and the parasites, seems to me no better than a canting dodge. Is the language too strong? Christ said of his disciples, "By their fruits ye shall know them." Look at their lives. Do they believe what they preach, or preach what they believe? Is there a more grasping, greedy set than the priests, even on the Stock Exchange? Who so ready to hear the call of the Lord to a higher salary, and who so deaf to the plainest injunctions of the gospel, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth"? They profess to follow a teacher to whose precepts their daily lives give the lie.

I have no belief in going back nineteen centuries to solve the problems of to-day. At the recent Holborn Town Hall Conference, Mr. Fletcher, the editor of the *Daily Chronicle*, declared: "The greatest political economist who ever walked this earth was the young Workman of Nazareth, who not only laid down the principle of the living wage, but showed them how it could be applied in the parable of the vineyard. This parable laid down that there was a minimum wage below which there could be no discussion, that there must be the same pay for the same work." As a writer in the *Westminster Gazette* pointed out, the moral of the parable is quite different. "What 'the householder' of the parable did was to establish a *maximum* as well as a *minimum* wage. He utterly declined to give any worker more than a penny, no matter how many hours he had worked, and his justification was that of the ruthlessly competitive employer, 'didst not thou agree with me for a penny?' and 'is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?' The parable teaches, says Mr. Fletcher, that 'there must be the same pay for the same work' On the contrary, the pay for the one hour's day was the same as for a twelve hours' day! Would the British workman relish that form of 'Christian economics'?"

The *Daily Chronicle* sneered at "the young man" of the *Westminster Gazette*, and reminded him that Ruskin had written *Unto this Last* upon the doctrine of this parable. But the young man was entirely in the right and Mr. Fletcher entirely in the wrong. The whole meaning of the parable (Matt. xx. 1-16) is that heavenly wages does not depend upon conduct. A death-bed repentance will secure the same heavenly bliss as lifelong diligence and devotion. The Lord

does as he will with his own. If it has any earthly application, it is that the toil-worn laborers have no rights beyond their contract. In vain they plead that they have borne the burden and heat of the day. Those who work but one hour are paid as much as those who have worked twelve. Here and elsewhere Christianity teaches, not equity, but arbitrary authority. It inculcates, not proportion between merit and reward, but the hope of reaping without sowing, and attaining bliss by the merits of another.

What was Christ's method of dealing with poverty? "Sell that thou hast and give to the poor." "Give to him that asketh, and from him that would borrow turn not away." He might well say "the poor ye have always with you," for this mendicant, monkish method is well calculated to make poverty universal and perennial. Its effect was exemplified by Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, who followed her master's method, and thereby turned her dominions into a nation of paupers. The Christian method of almsgiving has never been anything better than a palliation, a substitute of charity for justice. Its mitigation has enabled a few to live without work, and others to work for less than they would otherwise accept.

The young workman of Nazareth who gave up carpentering for preaching, as Prof. F. W. Newman points out, never inculcated industry. On the contrary, he taught to take no thought for one's life, for food or raiment, but to take example from the ravens and lilies. How would the workers find this work out? Like the lilies and ravens, they would die wholesale in severe weather. We have not only to take thought for the morrow, but anxious care. He never taught the cultivation of the intellectual faculties, of art or science, or indeed the homely but all-important practice of the domestic affections. Indeed, he never refers to them without discountenancing their exercise. The doctrine of Jesus is the doctrine of mendicant monks living from day to day in expectation of the speedy end of the world, and it is only fit for such. The sooner this is frankly recognised the nearer shall we be to some solution of the social problem, based not on the well-meaning ignorance of the past, but on the science of to-day and the accumulated experience of the ages.

J. M. WHEELER.

A LAY LAY.

[The other day the Prince of Wales laid the foundation-stone of St. Bride's Institute and said, after having rapped the stone three times, "I declare this stone well and truly laid in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost."]

THE Prince, it is said,
Declared a stone laid
In the name of the F. S. G.,
And making no odds
With three equal Gods,
He rapped with a one, two, three!

If God's name improves
A stone, it behoves
Each "fixer" to see that he
Ne'er fails to invoke
Each name with a stroke,
The lot with a one, two, three!

If giving a tap
Makes God care a rap
For what a stone's fate may be.
All masons that fix,
And layers of bricks,
Should tap with a one, two, three!

That is: they should say,
With each brick they lay—
Whilst rapping a one, two, three—
"This brick, I declare
Laid truly and fair,
In name of the F. S. G.!"

The best kind of wall
Is that whose parts all
Are good in the same degree;
So, builders! I pray,
Remember to lay
Each brick with a one, two, three!

G. L. MACKENZIE.

A CATHOLIC SAVIOR OF SOCIETY (?)

ABOUT forty years ago Napoleon the Third, also known as "the man of December," went to France professing to be her deliverer and her Savior. It is said that he took in his pocket certain proposals for the extinction of pauperism; but instead of endeavoring to carry out this object, he devoted his time in seeking to obtain, by the most unscrupulous means, supreme authority over the French nation. He trampled under foot the Republic he had sworn to protect, and he crushed that freedom whose glories he had so frequently proclaimed. This perjurer and destroyer of liberty was afterwards described as "the eldest son of the Church." To this same Church belongs Dr. Vaughan, the Archbishop of Westminster, a Cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church, and the duly appointed representative in England of the Pope. This distinguished agent of the unprogressive party delivered, last week, a special address at Coventry upon the occasion of the opening of a new Catholic church in that town. In his address, this man of many titles, proved himself a master of all the tricks of speech, and he gave utterance to such a series of fallacies that probably have never been surpassed, even by a theologian. From first to last his statements, as reported in the local press, were the very opposite of fact, and a shameful perversion of history.

This pious Archbishop professes to have discovered that Atheism, Anarchy, Socialism, and Communism all belong to one family, and that the object of each is to produce by illegal methods a reckless revolution and the destruction of civilised society. He also particularly desires that it should be understood that the Roman Catholic Church has always sought to promote the physical and intellectual improvement of the working classes by lawful means. Now, if there ever existed a man who, more than another, represented Atheism in this country, it was Charles Bradlaugh, of whom it can be truly said that, Atheist though he was, he never had but one policy, and that was of peace, law, and order. Further, we allege that the thousands of Atheists in England to-day who follow him have no desire to depart from his policy. It is the height of absurdity to suppose that the Catholic Church has favored peace and justice even within its own domain, to say nothing of its relentless and cruel treatment of "heretics." What name can be cited of any ruler who has held high office in any Catholic country, who has been denounced by the Church for his tyranny and violence in dealing with those persons who were unfortunately at his mercy or in his power?

But we are told that "the Church is in favor of improving the condition of all men," and yet we are assured by the same authority that unrest and suffering prevail in all civilised societies throughout the world! Surely no sadder and more complete confession of weakness and worthlessness of the Christian "remedy" for the evils that have so long dominated society could possibly have been made. The Roman Church claims to have had, for nearly two thousand years, an organised force of unparalleled power and influence over the minds of men and women; and yet one of its chief defenders candidly acknowledges that it has been impotent to prevent the "unrest and suffering" that now so extensively exist on every hand. We are informed by the Archbishop that the method adopted by the Church in seeking to improve the condition of the people, has been that which was sanctioned by Jesus Christ. If this be so, the failure that has resulted clearly shows that Christianity itself is incapable of counteracting the wrongs of life. Dr. Vaughan did not mention what "the method of Jesus" was, whereby the poor could be provided with greater comfort, knowledge, and social freedom than they now possess. We deny that, according to the New Testament, Jesus ever mentioned such a method, much less provided for its application. The Cardinal's opinion of the mental acquirements and historical knowledge of the people of Coventry, to whom he addressed these words, must be of the lowest order, or else his own information is exceedingly limited. What can we say of a public teacher who asserts that education was general and cheap when the Roman Church was mistress in

England? Unhappily we know too well what the wretched condition of the masses was in "the good old Catholic times." Education then, among the toiling classes, was comparatively unknown, science was ignored, philosophy was discouraged, mental freedom was crushed, and the dark clouds of almost universal ignorance prevented the sunshine of knowledge and the blessings of personal liberty from illuminating and elevating the general community.

But perhaps the most wild and extravagant statement made by the Archbishop was, that "the Catholic Church had always been the distinct friend and promoter of both knowledge and liberty." If we were to suggest a character for the Cardinal to assume when next he appears before the public, it would be a well-known part in the drama entitled *London Assurance*. As to the Church being "the friend of liberty," if the ghosts of Bruno, Galileo, Descartes, and a host of other victims of Catholic despotism and cruelty, were to walk the earth, as it is said the ghost of Hamlet's father did, we should not envy Dr. Vaughan's experiences at the bewitching hour of night. Monuments of Roman Catholic liberty were to be found in the Spanish Inquisition, the Bartholomew's Day in the cells of Italy, and, in fact, in the history of all the prisons of Europe. Well may Liberty exclaim, "Save me from my 'friend' the Church." It is indeed news to us, to be told that the Catholic Church abolished slavery, and made woman equal with man. If there were one word of truth in either of these statements it might, to some extent, mitigate our abhorrence of a Church that has fostered superstition and practised persecution through all the ages of its existence. The doctor admits that the great Pagan civilisation was broken up by the Christian revolutionists, and he appears to contemplate that an attempt will be made in modern times to overthrow "Christian civilisation"; but he feels certain that the Catholic ship will sail safely into port with Christ on board.

After asserting that the Catholic Church is not opposed to the educational measures of the past forty or fifty years, the Archbishop described our National Board Schools as "a social and national calamity." But why? Here the cat comes out of the bag. He urged all his hearers to "promote Christian and Catholic education." Moreover, he indulged in the little pleasant prophecy, that when the nation recognised that man's temporal and eternal interests were bound up with Roman Catholic education, then the real progress of Society would go on in the right direction. As the main point in Dr. Vaughan's discourse was the subject of education, it may be profitable to glance at the state of the means of education before the "social and national calamity" was inaugurated in 1870. Statistics show the following proportion of day scholars to the population. In 1818 the children at school were 1 in 17; in 1833, 1 in 11; in 1851, 1 in 8. Of 4,908,696 of children, between the ages of three and fifteen, in England and Wales in 1857, 2,861,848 were receiving no instruction whatever. Further, while 600,000 children were absent from school, but in some employment, over 2,000,000 were absent from causes that could not be discovered. Besides, of those who were at school 64 per cent. attended only a year or less, and but four per cent. attended during five years. To alter this state of things was, we are told, to involve the nation in a "social calamity." After 250 years of voluntary Christian education, England then having no National system, Horace Mann found the country in a most ignorant and deplorable condition.

Now the very thing that for years prevented the removal of this blot from the country was the apple of discord, called religion, the very evil Dr. Vaughan wants to raise from the dead. Prince Albert, at a conference on the subject of education, said that if the differences among sectarians had to be discussed, he could not preside at the conference. He would be happy to meet those who were favorable to education on mutual grounds, and he was happy to find that such mutual ground existed. Fortunately it is becoming more and more recognised that it is wise to teach the rising generation how to become useful citizens without introducing the perplexed question of theology.

The Archbishop, however, would alter the plan that has worked so well, and that is now producing such good results, by once more fettering education with the wild speculations of religion. The blind may lead the blind, but Englishmen, who have had their eyes opened by the declarations of Rome, will no doubt maintain their common sense and their public schools.

Despite Cardinal Vaughan's assertions to the contrary, the Roman Catholic Church stands condemned at the bar of history as being the inveterate enemy of all progress outside her own circles. She has done her best to crush the elements of modern civilisation at their very inception, and the united efforts of all reformers to-day should be directed to prevent the nightmare of Rome from ever again existing in our midst.

CHARLES WATTS.

A FREETHINKER AT LARGE.

XVI.—STRANGE HAPPENINGS AT A WELSH CHAPEL.

MANY years ago, when a small and guileless child, I was frequently commissioned by an aged printer to purchase for him at tea-time a farthing's worth of milk. The "dairy" to which I invariably went in discharge of this important duty was managed by people of the Welsh persuasion. At the threshold the customer was barred by a half-door, adorned with a vivid representation of a very red and utterly impossible cow. In the dim recesses of the house even my childish eye could detect certain framed engravings, portraits of Welsh clergymen, men of austere and forbidding aspect, with their throats swathed in very stiff white cravats. In dark corners of the living-room I often saw silent, morose-looking young men (probably lodgers), who looked as if the eyes of the white-chokered parsons were very much upon them, and as if they consequently dared not smile upon pain of eternal damnation.

It is strange how such infantile impressions cling to one in later life. Certain it is that I from that time regarded the Welsh conventicle as a place too dreadful to be entered. Some three or four years ago I essayed to visit one; but my courage oozed out as I approached the steps, and it all came to nothing. But on a recent Sunday I overcame those ghostly tremors, and boldly marched into a Welsh chapel for morning service, after taking an affecting farewell of my family.

Of course there was nothing very dreadful about the place after all. The chapel is a comparatively new one, and is bright, inside and out, with a truly Batavian cleanness. The polished pine pews and galleries shine like glass; the massive carved pulpit looks as if it has just come from the workmen's hands; every inch of the distempered and decorated walls is as "fresh as paint." The chapel is a small one, not capable of accommodating more than two hundred people; and at morning service on that Sunday it was less than half filled.

When I arrived—half an hour late, for the Welsh begin their devotions at 10.30—I found the service well advanced. The pulpit was occupied by the "parchedigion" (minister), a dark, solemn-looking person with a depressing style of oratory. As I entered he had just concluded a long extempore prayer, the greater part of which I faintly heard through the glass-door as I stood cooling my heels on the stone steps. Then he gave out a verse of a hymn. Two gentlemen, who were evidently the singing leaders, left their seats in the front row, entered a railed enclosure before the pulpit, and stood facing the congregation. By the aid of a tuning-fork one of them determined the pitch and started the voices right away. Of instrumental music there was none; but the singing was so full and true, every part was so accurately and feelingly rendered, that the effect was singularly impressive. It was genuine "congregational singing," for all appeared to join in it; and throughout I could not detect one false note or laggard voice.

When the hymn was finished the two leaders returned to their places, and the solemn pastor commenced to speak. Of course I did not understand a word that he said. One easily imagined the chapel to be some place of evangelical worship in Holland, and

the occasional guttural sounds, combined with the spick-and-span air of the surroundings, strengthened the Dutch impression.

At first I thought the parson was reading a chapter from the Bible, as the word "Cornelius" frequently recurred. But gradually it became evident that he was speaking from notes half-hidden in the holy book, and that he was preaching his sermon. Reading or preaching, however, was all one to me; and, after the novelty of hearing the strange language had passed away, I turned my attention to the congregation. This consisted largely of adults—substantial fathers and mothers of families, young men of the City warehouse class, and a sprinkling of children and young persons. One and all appeared to be intensely interested in the discourse; and surely no preacher ever had a more attentive flock than the "parchedigion" of that North London chapel.

At length I was obliged to return to the preacher, whom I had for the time being forgotten. As he proceeded with his sombre periods in the (to me) unknown tongue, laying a weird emphasis on words that conveyed nothing to me, I sought to divert myself by imagining what he *might be* saying. But it was utterly useless. I had an idea how his sermon would look in print, and the solid mass of consonants weighed upon me like a pall. How is it possible for an Englishman to conceive a lofty idea or a stirring appeal to be clothed in language like this?—

"Tlodi yw eu rhan hwy. Dyma ganlyniad anocheladwy eu cydymgais am gyflogau, ac nid oes neb yn gwybod gystal a'r gweithwyr eu hunain beth yw pwysau y llygredigaeth ofnadwy a hirbarhaol a achosir, nid yn unig gan dlodi un genhedlaeth, eithr gan genhedlaethau o dlodi. Disgwylir i'r tlodion gyda'r cyfleusderau lleiaf ddangos y rhinweddau mwyaf. Rhaid iddynt ar gyflogau bychain ac ansicr, fel meibion a merched, ymdrechu dal i fynu eu hanibyniaeth, eu hunanbarch a'u henw da, a gosod ychydig o'r neilldu ar gyfer diwrnod gwlawog, yr hwn sydd yn sic'r o'u dal."*

Ever the torrent of consonants flowed on, until at length I felt confused. But gradually I began to recognise a few scattered words of my own mother-tongue shining in the midst of Welsh like street-lamps in a fog. More and more rapidly came the English sounds until I soon followed the preacher with ease and delight. He seemed to throw off his solemn mien and constrained gestures, as he spoke with ever-increasing force and eloquence. He told his hearers that the way of salvation was not through Christ or any other "Savior," but lay through honest, devoted work for mankind. When, he asked, with righteous scorn, did God help anybody who was too lazy to help himself? And if man *could* save himself—as he assuredly could—why need he trouble himself about God? "Too long," he continued, raising his arms aloft, "too long has man suffered himself to be fooled and betrayed by those who point to the sky as the place where every wrong will be redressed, every mourner comforted. Let us not deceive ourselves. You who sit beneath me and around me, you do not come here in a spirit of real submission to an imaginary God. Your presence here is a weekly hypocrisy, a regularly-recurring sham. Shame upon you! that you should kneel here whilst the world needs workers who must stand erect in order to work. Leave this place, I command you! Hasten from the slavish observance of an obsolete superstition, and take your stand amongst those who acquit themselves like men, fighting in their daily life against the forces of wrong and injustice which compass them about on every hand! *Get out, I say, GET OUT!*

As he uttered these startling sentences he stretched forth his hands, and from the tips of his fingers there flew showers of sparks. I then noticed, to my dismay, that the congregation had changed into open barrels of gunpowder. A frightful explosion instantly followed, and I was hurled into the air amidst the débris of the Chapel.

Of course, this is not exactly what happened. The sermon had simply sent me to sleep, and I had

fallen forward, striking my head against the front of the pew. Nobody appeared to notice my condition save one benevolent old Welshman, who gazed reproachfully at me as I rubbed my bruised forehead. Luckily the "parchedigion" had just finished his sermon, and my confusion escaped remark in the hymn-singing which followed. I got safely out of the chapel; and, as Shakespeare beautifully says somewhere, "I shall never go back no more."

GEORGE STANDRING.

CATCHING A TARTAR.

"A word spoken in due season how good it is."—PROV. xv. 23.

On a certain evening not long ago I was sitting by myself at the seaside, gazing at the constellation *Cassiopeia*, and wondering if the so-called "Star of Bethlehem" will ever again appear in the heavens, when a sleek and black-coated gentleman, who evidently belonged to "the cloth," sat himself down by me, and at once commenced to converse.

"It's beautiful weather," said he.

"It is indeed," said I.

"Ah, sir!"—and here the speaker gave utterance to a long-drawn sigh—"we have very much to thank God for."

"Yes, we have," I replied. "The other day a fisherman when at sea was washed overboard and drowned, leaving a widow and several fatherless children to lament their loss. We have to thank God for that, have we not?"

This was a phase of the question which my would-be-if-I-had-been-willing-to-let-him religious instructor had evidently not considered, for, looking at me with a puzzled expression on his countenance, he slowly observed: "You are a Freethinker, I suppose."

"Yes," I replied, "I am a Freethinker, if by that term you mean one who thinks for himself. I claim for myself the same rights that Martin Luther claimed for himself—the right to read, and to interpret what I read, for myself; and the right to speak out freely that which I think. I am a free speaker as well as a Freethinker. In the case I have put, which is a fact and not a mere supposition, ought we not to thank God?"

But the question was a poser, which my newly self-constituted friend was in no hurry to answer; for he had begun to realise the fact that, through his officiousness, he had performed the not-very-uncommon feat of "catching a Tartar." He did not answer my question, but evaded it by saying that "the man might have lost his life through his own negligence."

"How should that be," I retorted, "when it is taught that God is the Creator, Preserver, Governor, and Disposer of all things in the world?"

"Man is a free agent, sir," said he, in a tone of asperity as if he were uttering a truth that could not be contradicted.

"Indeed!" said I. "But if that be so, then God cannot be, as Christians teach he is, the 'Creator, Preserver, Governor and Disposer of all things in the world.' A thing may be all black *or* all white, but it cannot be all black *and* all white at one and the same moment. God must be all-in-all and Man nothing, or God must be nothing and Man all-in-all. Man cannot be free, in the true sense of the term, if God be omniscient and omnipotent."

"Indeed he can," said my blackcoated friend, "but it is a mystery that cannot be explained."

"To which I answer," said I, "that to say that a thing is and yet is not, is not a mystery but mere nonsense. But, were it true, it would not affect mankind, because the Bible teaches that God 'winketh at ignorance,' and man must necessarily be ignorant of that which 'cannot be explained.'"

"You are quite wrong," said he. "If you were not, what need would there be for the atonement?"

"Well, and what need was there for it?" I asked.

My friend looked horrified. "What," exclaimed he; "no need for the atonement to save sinners from eternal death!"

"What do you mean by eternal death?" I asked. "If by eternal death you mean annihilation, there can be no punishment in that. If by it you mean eternal

* Far be it from me to seek to impose upon the innocence of my English brethren. The quotation is *not* an extract from the "parchedigion's" sermon; it is a passage from a Welsh translation of a Fabian Tract, and is introduced merely to show the "hang," so to speak, of the printed language.

dying, then I say that such a punishment would be hideously unjust. But who are the 'sinners' to whom you refer?"

"Sinners!" he replied, turning up his eyes and clasping his hands. "Why, such as you and I, for we are all sinners. 'There is none good, no not one.'"

"I entirely object to your calling me a sinner," I answered. "And I have grave doubt that you yourself would not like to be taken at your word. Ask yourself a simple question: Have you committed any crime or crimes that would justify a magistrate in sending you to gaol for a week? I answer the question for myself by saying that no magistrate would be justified in sending me to gaol for an instant. And that being the case, it would be manifestly unjust to punish me in another world for what I have done in this. And, being of a generous turn of mind, I will assume—gladly assume—that you can answer in a similar manner the same question for yourself."

"That is very well put," said he; "but you have forgotten that we are all sinners, because we were all born in sin."

"I deny that I was born in sin," I replied. "My parents were honest, upright people, who would have scorned to do anything that was mean and unjust. To say that I was born in sin is to libel my parents, and I strongly resent anything that vilifies them."

"Well, of course, I did not mean that," said he.

"Then use words which define exactly what you do mean," said I. "But you have not answered my question yet—in the case of the drowned fisherman, ought we not to thank God?"

"No!" he replied. "I shall not try to answer it, because it is a mystery, and therefore beyond the power of man to solve. But you are out of your depth, sir, out of your depth; and I shall go home and pray for you."

"Pray do not trouble yourself to do so," said I, "for it would be simply a waste of time. Your prayer would be useless, for you have told me that you are a sinner, and the Bible tells me that God only 'heareth the prayer of the righteous.' Good night."

My blackcoated friend said "Good night," and then went away, leaving me to my star gazing."

N. M. X.

ACID DROPS.

The clericals have met at the Holborn Town Hall (after the coal-war is over) and passed a resolution in favor of a "living wage." It is a very hazy thing to pass a resolution about, and the clericals haven't got to pay it. Other people have to do that. All we get from the Churches is idle sentimentalism. Very few of the clericals know anything about political economy; fewer still have a reasoned social philosophy. All they can do is to lurch over to the side that pays them.

At a religious meeting in Canning Town on Sunday, Mr. Keir Hardie, M.P., spoke on the recent Living Wage Conference. He said "the Church had a habit of coming in at the tail end of a movement, and then claiming credit for the achieved results. . . The principle of the living wage, after all, was nothing more than that recognised by the slave-owners, to feed, clothe, and house their slaves well. Surely we might expect to see something better than this at the end of the nineteenth century out of the Christian organisation of industry." Perhaps Christian employers pay something under a living wage so as to prevent the workers from breaking Christ's command by laying up treasures on earth.

The *Methodist Times* derides the notion of opening public museums on Sundays. It also regards "the destruction of the Matabele tyranny" as a "blessing to mankind." What lovely Christian sentiments!

No wonder the London *Echo* writes angrily about the Christian Churches in relation to the Matabele slaughter. It has been partially denounced, the *Echo* says, but not by the Churches. The voices raised against it have come from Democratic clubs, Socialist platforms, and from "the Secular press."

Hugh Price Hughes, and other pious gentlemen who are so zealously calling for the suppression of the opium traffic in India, will hardly like some of the evidence given before the Commission. Sir William Moore, a Surgeon-General of over thirty years' service, has just been saying at the Imperial Institute that he has often smoked opium, and that, "As a matter of fact, one might see more immorality in a London gin-shop in half-an-hour, even on a Sunday night, than in an opium-shop during a whole year." Evidently there is no need for piety to be so anxious about the morals of the heathen. England wants a lot of cleaning.

Sir Lepel Griffin is reported in the *Times* as saying: "As in China every disturbance is due, not to opium, but missionary teaching, the missionaries are compelled to throw the odium of the popular dislike to themselves on the opium question."

Mr. Richard Le Gallienne crossed swords with Mr Robert Buchanan in the controversy on "Is Christianity Played Out?" The amiable young poet, critic, and logroller, said it wasn't played out at all. Since then he has written a book entitled *The Religion of a Literary Man*, and a notice of it in a Christian paper bears the heading of "A Vealy Religion." Poor Richard may sing after Shakespeare—

Blow, blow thou winter wind!
Thou art not so unkind
As man's ingratitude.

Mr. Robert Buchanan will not have the "essential" Judaism of Mr. Zangwill nor the "essential" Christianity of Mr. Le Gallienne. This is what he says in the *Star*: "I am a man who openly and frankly declines to label himself 'Christian,' because he has no sympathy whatever with the Christian program, and no faith whatever in the Christian theology or morality. I go still further than that. I affirm that the sins and blunders of orthodox Christianity, great as they have been, are venial in comparison with the hypocrisies and vanities of the heterodox, or 'essential,' Christianity; and I shall continue to preach the faith that is in me, in defiance of the 'essential' Jew with his tongue in his cheek, and the 'essential' Christian who has 'hoisted himself with his own petard.'"

The Italian composer, Leoncavallo, has been asked to alter his opera "The Medici," by the Austrian authorities before it is reproduced in Vienna. He has made Giulano Medici murdered by two priests. But Catholic Austria cannot stand this, and two noblemen have to be substituted as the murderers. This is almost as rich as the request sent to Guonod, that in his "Faust" he should strike out the character of Mephistopheles and substitute a doctor.

When the temperance movement started teetotalers were looked on pretty much as infidels. Now it has made way, in the teeth of the gospel with its patronage of wine-bibbing, "gospel temperance" is all the cry, and congregations insist on their pastors being teetotalers. Despite the fact of the pioneers of vegetarianism like Ritson, Thomas Taylor and Shelley having been Freethinkers, there is a similar and as absurd an attempt to identify Christianity with vegetarianism. In America the editor of the leading vegetarian organ, *Food, Home and Garden*, is the Rev. Henry S. Chubb, who is pastor of a church in Philadelphia, to become a member of which it is necessary to be a vegetarian.

This Church calls itself Bible Christian in the teeth of the fact that the Old Testament reeks of the bloody sacrifices of innocent animals, the Lord God himself finding a sweet savor in their immolation (Genesis viii. 21), and being particularly partial to fat (Lev. iii. 3-5). He required his votaries to bring him lambs, or two turtle doves or young pigeons, and "wring off his head from his neck," and sprinkle the blood on his altar, to keep him in good humor (Lev. v. 6-10). In the New Testament his only begotten son appears in a vision to Peter, showing him "all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air," and tells him: "Rise Peter; kill and eat" (Acts x 12, 13). Peter has not only to eat, but he his own slaughterman. And when he shows reluctance, having a Jew's natural squirming at pork, and other unclean food, he is reproved, "Yet vegetarians call themselves Bible Christians."

You can make what you please of this Blessed Book. Here is *Food Home and Garden* arguing that Jesus was probably a vegetarian. It says: "Whether the fish Christ partook of was animal or vegetable has never been clearly stated, as the word used for fish also represents many productions of the water such as the lotus and seaweed, which from time immemorial have been fished out of the water for food, the lotus being specially prized for food when cooked or broiled." We suppose Peter, Andrew, James and John, got their living by dragging the lake of Galilee for lotus and seaweed. No wonder they turned it up to become fishers of men!

A mild form of modern Inquisition, that of house to house visitation, started, we believe, in Sheffield, has extended to several towns, in the desperate effort of the sky-pilots to "compel them to come in." The racket has recently been worked at Hanley. The Rev. J. E. Radcliffe states, as an ascertained result, "A large number of people have no nominal fellowship with any church, and a large number of those who profess to attend public worship are more frequently absent than present. However, the knowledge—the more specific knowledge obtained by this visitation—will afford to the churches new opportunities of usefulness; but our difficulty will be in finding a working staff equal to the needs of the people"—i.e., the needs of the Church to pester the people.

Another house to house visitor, says, "I certainly was not prepared for the large number who frankly admitted that they attended neither church nor chapel." One person was more cautious, and on the card which was left at each house, inscribed the significant hint, "I vote by ballot."

Henry Edward Rambold, the Grimsby skipper who shot his sweetheart out of jealousy, expects to meet his victim in the next world, and says he wants to die "an English hero," so that the girl in the next world shall not poke fun at him.

The Rev. Cockburn Dickinson, vicar of Hartford, Hants, stands charged by the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, with illtreating, neglecting and exposing three of his children. The Bishop of Chester never gave the slightest evidence of his assertion that Secularists were guilty of this inhumanity, but the papers having given abundant evidence of the practice of cruelty by those who believe in Solomon's recommendation of the rod, and who hold that God punishes his children for ever and ever.

The Odessa correspondent of the *Daily News* reports that the Russian Orthodox missionaries have so failed in their proselytising efforts among the Khirgese, that the missions will probably be shortly withdrawn. Nearly the whole of the steppe tribes, generally described as "heathens," are now adopting, almost "en masse," the Mohammedan faith, which is spread among them chiefly by Tartar teachers. The Mohammedan Tartars have always enjoyed the right of free proselytism among the natives of the Khirgese steppes. There can be no doubt that Islam is better suited to certain races of men than Christianity.

Joe Cook, it seems, desires to have all the religions of the world moulded into one religion, and that the Joe Cook religion. What a world this would be! Even a very hot orthodox hell would be preferable.

In York till recently they held St. Luke's Day as "Whip Dog" Day. The boys of the city all took whips and chastised every dog they could find in the city. The custom is said to have arisen because centuries ago, at St. Luke's festival, a priest dropped the pax after consecration. It was snatched up and swallowed by a dog, who bolted off with the body, blood, bones and divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ inside him, and a persecution began against all his tribe. Those to whom such a story seems incredible should remember what the Jews have suffered for ages on account of the imaginary misdeeds of their ancestors.

Bishop Moorhouse has been having his say on Old Testament criticism. His artful lordship gives up Bible inerrancy. It is only "a progressive revelation." The Jews shared with their neighbors "this fatal mistake as to the true value of the individual man, and so we found amongst them, as we should expect, actions and institutions which corresponded to this

imperfect moral ideal. When Achan had sinned, it was not enough to punish him—his wife and children must share in the penalty of his offence. Did they ask why such an injustice was permitted under the guidance of a Divine law-giver? So it appears that God Almighty could stop the sun to enable his chosen people to slaughter others of his children, but he could not instruct them that it was wrong to slay innocent women, children, and cattle for the crime of their master.

Dr. Moorhouse went on to say "Indiscriminating punishments, exterminating wars, the *lex talionis*, the moral lapses of pious men, imperfect ethical teaching, and the like could be shown to be the necessary consequence of the hardness of men's hearts—the unavoidable incidents of a Divine education, designed for men in moral and spiritual childhood." We wonder if Bishop Moorhouse teaches his children after this fashion.

"Again," said our Manchester Father in God, "they were reminded that there were apparent or real contradictions between different accounts of the same event. He answered that it was just in such contradictions that critics discerned the best evidence of good faith." If God Almighty in his divine revelation makes uncritical slips, which in the case of an untutored savage might be taken to prove the person an ignorant liar, in his case it must be the best evidence of his good faith. When he tells us that he does not repent and that he repented he had made man, we may be quite sure he is talking in good faith.

According to a report in the *Vossische Zeitung*, the Russian Roman Catholics of Korno, only thirty miles from the German frontier, have suffered cruel persecution at the hands of their fellow Christians of the Russian Greek Church. Orders were given to close the Roman Catholic Church, and to prevent this the local Catholics assembled in the church and occupied it day and night. The Governor proceeds with soldiers, who attacked them with drawn swords, and before the building was cleared twenty persons were killed and more than a hundred wounded. The remainder then fled, but were pursued by Cossacks, and in attempting to escape across a neighboring river a large number of them were drowned. Some hundreds were taken prisoners, and are to be tried before a court-martial.

The churches seem dreadfully anxious to secure the services of Mr. Tom Mann. He reported that since he has decided not to join the Church of England, he has had a tempting offer to become a priest of the Church of Rome, which is probably quite willing to make Burns a bishop and Mann a monsignor, if only its hold on the masses might be thereby secured.

The vicar of Plumpton has made a curious discovery, which accounts for the prevalence of unbelief. He holds that pig, whether in the form of pork roast or boiled, ham or bacon, or in the shape of pies and sausages, is fatal to the religious spirit of man. Pig and piety can never walk the same road. This is why Jehovah forbade the use of the unclean animal. "Why," asks the man of God, "is the Englishman so neglectful of his religious duties? Because he loves pig." Yet several Freethinkers we know are vegetarians, and more abstain from pig in all forms, while the great revivalist, Moody, comes from Porkopolis.

The *Halifax Evening Courier* (Dec. 1), after alluding to the recent correspondence of Mrs. Bonner with the Rev. A. Rees, in a very fair manner, says: "The genesis of a misrepresentation is often of a very astounding character. When Mr. Bradlaugh was last in Halifax, he had occasion to emphatically deny the charge of an opponent at the meeting, who retailed the oft-told story that Mr. Bradlaugh had publicly challenged the Deity to strike him dead. It will scarcely be credited, but this very denial by Mr. Bradlaugh has since then grown into the myth that the last time Mr. Bradlaugh was in Halifax he challenged the Deity to strike him dead. Comment on such a glaring piece of mendacity is needless." Possibly the pious liars who circulate these tales consider they are doing a service to the Lord.

A writer in the *Cambria Daily Leader* repeats the old story that the prevalence of suicide is explained by loss of faith and reliance upon a Supreme Being. In the first case

we notice that of Mary Lewis, an aged cook, without home or food in this Christian land, a letter was left—"I hope the Almighty God will forgive me for the rash act." The next, that of George Sykes, a toy dealer, with business troubles, his son deposed that he said, "Good-bye, God bless you." To put suicide down to Atheism is an easy way of blinking the facts.

The Rev. W. Thomson, of the Plantation U.P. Church, Glasgow, deplors that Scotland is no longer godly-minded. Lamenting the prevailing disrespect and disregard of the worship of God and the observance of the Sabbath, he said that the streets of Glasgow—which, as everybody knows, is supposed to flourish by the preaching of the word and the shipbuilding trade—on Sabbath "were an abhorrent and disgusting evidence of men's depravity, of the contempt of God, of their greed of gain, of their utter destitution of the spirit of reverence and worship."

Another sign of the break-up of Calvinistic orthodoxy is the election of Prof. Story as the next Moderator of the General Assembly. Twelve years ago Prof. Story was strongly denounced for his heretical contribution to *Scotch Sermons*. Even Scotland does not stand where it did.

The Rev. Dr. Codrington had a watch and chain stolen by a person he employed to carry his portmanteau to Richmond Station. Instead of presenting him with his purse also, he gave him into custody. We have nothing to say against Mr. Codrington as a citizen, but the duties of Christianity and of citizenship are totally distinct.

On the arrival of the Spanish Marshal Campos at Malaga, he was received by the Bishop in the cathedral, who exhorted his hearers to fight bravely for the faith and the honor of Spain, and to preserve the country's African possessions, which had been won by the blood of generations of Spaniards. The congregation who filled the cathedral became transported with enthusiasm, and, forgetting the sacredness of the place, greeted the bishop's address with ringing cheers. Such is the religion of peace and good will as exhibited in Spain.

The Royal Commission on Vaccination doesn't mean to hurry itself. It was appointed in May, 1889, and its Report is still in the dim and distant future. Charles Bradlaugh was a member of this Commission. Perhaps the Report will be ready on the hundredth anniversary of his death.

Justice Grantham is ill-advised in displaying his bigotry and ignorance of human nature on the bench. Recently, on the northern circuit, he had to try a man for a serious offence against a little girl; and, because the poor child knew nothing about God, Christ, or the Bible, his lordship would not take her oath, and advised the jury to acquit the prisoner. Henceforth, if a ruffian wishes to assault a little girl with impunity, he should select a victim who is ignorant of theology, and manage to be tried by Justice Grantham.

The Onward March is "a journal of religious and social work," edited by the Rev. W. Wynn, of Earby, who contributes "Thoughts on the Wing." Here is a specimen of soaring flight taken from its December number:—"The weakness of Atheism is demonstrated by the fact that it fails to account for the Absolute in which it believes. Christianity certainly tells a man who he is, and marks out his destiny. It leaves the mind in no doubt as to the nature of God, and most certainly floods the individual with peace when once its assertions are believed in as absolute truth." Will Mr. Wynn describe to us the Absolute in which Atheism believes, and the nature of God, when next he goes on the wing?

A most disorderly parish meeting took place in the school-room at Hough-on-the-Hill, near Grantham, on Monday night, to appoint a Technical Education Committee. When the parishioners appointed their chairman, the vicar (the Rev. C. R. Andrews) asserted that no one but he should take the chair, and called for the parish constable to throw Mr. Chadwick, who had been elected, out of the room. The constable did not come, however, and the vicar put out the only two lights in the place. The chairman had to light a candle and carry it round the room while the voting for the committee was proceeded with, the vicar meanwhile following and frantically endeavoring to extinguish the flame. At the conclusion the vicar still affirmed that he was the rightful chairman, and that the meeting was adjourned.

America is the land of new faiths and cranks. A new community has started at Salem, Dona Ana, New Mexico. They are known as Faithists, and are vegetarian and spiritists, but distinctly non-Christian, believing in the revelation of Oahspe as superseding the Bible. They have 365 acres laid out in one acre lots, houses to be built as required, a reservoir with 1,600,000 gals. The community is intended especially for the rearing of children, orphans and foundlings, in the regenerating principles of the Faithists, and the land cannot be owned, being all deeded in trust for the children. One of the fundamental laws is, "Leave no place for politicians, lawyers, priests and preachers, for these are more to be guarded against than thieves and robbers."

Christian affairs don't seem so flourishing. The *Record* states that many clergymen seldom have meat for dinner and wear second-hand clothes—just like people who work hard for a living; and we notice in the *Christian World* such headlines as "A Gloomy Report" and "A Financial Crisis" It is a bad outlook for the Churches when the funds drop off.

The returns of the income of men of God given in *Crockford's Directory* do not represent their perquisites and pickings in the shape of christening, marriage, and burial fees. It appears that the average sum received by the vicar of Hampstead for burial fees at the parish cemetery, during the last ten years, has been £716 11s. 7d, yearly, a tidy addition to his ordinary income.

Mary Porter, of Pendlebury, near Manchester, was kneeling at prayer, when, by some means, her nightdress caught fire. She was fearfully injured, and died in the hospital. Her mother tried to extinguish the flames, and was herself so injured that her life is despaired of. It was a curious answer to prayer. We commend it to the attention of Christian Evidence lecturers.

Daylight, a lively paper published at Norwich, in referring to the *Freethinker* prosecution in 1883, describes Judge North as "miraculous for stupidity and prejudice." We are afraid he isn't at all miraculous. One or two other judges would have done his dirty work just as well.

Mr. Foote was a pioneer in writing his *Comic Sermons*. According to a report in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, the Press Club held a Saturday night Smoking Concert recently, and one of the performers was Mr. Arthur Helmore "whose comic sermon was appropriate to the hour when Saturday night is verging upon Sunday morning."

After leaving Sunday-school, several lads at Twickenham amused themselves by torturing a cat in a most abominable manner. Much good their religious teaching had done them.

The Church of Nôtre Dame, at Nice, has had to be reconsecrated, owing to an attempted suicide within its holy precincts. The young man who tried to kill himself had written a letter, saying that he did not believe in a God, and that "the Church serves only for the support of parties and the degradation of the people." Very true. But the writer should have lived to fight against the Church.

The Christian Endeavor Society held a meeting recently in the Town Hall at Christchurch, which was addressed by the Rev. W. C. Minife (Baptist), of Bournemouth. This man of God held forth on our old friend Jonah. After some sneers at "infidelity," he said there were whales in the Levant; he knew somebody who had seen one or two there, with mouths large enough to accommodate three or four men comfortably. Anyhow, he would believe the Bible if it said that the whale swallowed the ship. Such a whale would have a big swallow, but not so big as Mr. Minife's.

England and Wales are free countries—especially Wales. The Marquis of Bute will not allow the National Liberal Federation to hold its annual meeting in the Drill Hall, Cardiff. His lordship is absolute master of the town. Every bit of the land it covers belongs to him. The inhabitants work and pay him toll, and he decides what they shall and shall not do. The Marquis of Bute is a mere social parasite. He is also a Roman Catholic.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, December 10, Oddfellow's Hall, St. Anne-street, Liverpool:—11, "The Next Birthday of God": 3, "Christ and Democracy"; 7, "The Pillars of Priestcraft."

Monday, Dec. 12, Athenæum Assembly Room, Queen-street, Wolverhampton:—8, "Shakespeare's *Hamlet*: its Poetry, Philosophy and Lessons."

December 17 and 24, Hall of Science.

January 7 and 14, Hall of Science; 21, Manchester.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. CHARLES WATTS' ENGAGEMENTS.—December 10, Hall of Science, London; 17, Sheffield; 24, 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.

J. ROE (Bristol).—Not being marked "Lecture Notice" on the envelope, your letter was forwarded to Mr. Foote in the country, and was thus too late for last week's issue.

STANLEY JONES.—Your communication was sent on to Mr. Foote like the previous correspondent's. Please mark the envelopes in future.

C. F. EMERY.—Please send future orders direct to R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter-street, E.O.

J. EATON.—Christ's birthday was not celebrated till a long time after his death. The twenty-fifth of December was an ancient Pagan festival, which the Christian Church appropriated. No one can say when Christ was born. The day is absolutely unknown, and there is a dispute as to the year.

M. SCHROOF (Bombay).—Captain C. Pfoundes could tell you much of the T. S. A letter care of Admiralty, Whitehall, will probably find him. We should like to read your experience of the E. S.

J. W. BUSH.—The Ancient Britons were not quite so uncivilised as you imagined. Cæsar's account may be relied on. He had eagle eyes and a voracious mind. Glad to hear you intend to rejoin the N.S.S. Perhaps you will press the news-agent again to display our contents-sheet.

J. SUMMERFIELD.—We note your correction, that the Christian mob which came up from the Newcastle Town Hall to Mr. Foote's lecture in the Circus was not headed by a band. We were misinformed, but the point is immaterial.

A. MILNER.—Your letter is an ample compensation for the trouble at Ryhope. We are satisfied to influence a few reasonable men. The better sort of Christians at that meeting must be disgusted at the conduct of their rowdy co-religionists.

J. COLLINSON.—Thanks for the enclosures. We intend to give a portrait of Gerald Massey shortly, and it would be injudicious to anticipate the biographical notice; otherwise we should have been pleased to insert your communication.

J. SUNDERLAND.—We regret that Mr. Grange did not have an adversary worthy of his steel. Secularists should not give attention to vulgar, illiterate Christians, whose only weapons are unscrupulous lies and brutal personalities. To use Bismarck's expression, such persons should be allowed to stew in their own juice.

GABRIEL.—Gerald Massey is still alive. See reply to J. Collinson.

P. W. BALDWIN.—Shall appear.

J. ROBERTS.—See "Acid Drops."

A. J. H.—The matter has several times been dealt with in our columns, and may be again. Thanks.

NOAH LOT.—Shall appear shortly. The other verses shall be searched for.

CÆLESTIAL.—Amusing, but lacks polish.

E. LAMBE.—Our Tracts are published at sixpence per hundred. Order of Mr. Forder.

QUIZ.—See "Acid Drops."

E. STIEBEL.—Thanks. See paragraph.

AN OBSCURE ONE.—We have read your letter with pleasure.

A. FAGG.—Will be used as soon as possible.

F. KEWLY.—We are much obliged for the cuttings and the sketch of Thomas Paine's house at New Rochelle.

E. ROBERTS.—The one who affirms must prove.

F. W. SMITH (Cape Town).—Your indignation is natural, but contemptuous silence is the best treatment.

C. JAMES.—Inserted. We hope to hear continuous good news from Ipswich.

H. ROTHERA, Headlands, Liversedge, desires to have the address of Edwin Halliday, London, a friend of John Rothera just deceased.

E. D. H. DALY.—Thanks.

W. WARRY, who is known (rather too well known) to Free-thought open-air meetings in London, says he has been charged with being concerned in the tumult in Finsbury Park, where Miss Robins received a dangerous blow. He denies that he was present on that occasion, and further denies that he has ever aided or abetted any rough usage of Freethinkers.

MAC.—Thanks for your manly letter. We are delighted to learn that you have been so much influenced by the *Freethinker*. Your request shall be attended to.

W. SIMONS.—We note your explanation, but the matter of fact remains. The best way to keep a secret is to tell no one.

W. J. VAUGHAN.—Under consideration for possible use.

T. DUNBAR.—Pleased that you feel it your duty to join the N.S.S. The secretary will forward your certificate of membership.

G. W. WARD.—Will look into the matter.

A. F. A.—Your explanation is very probable. We don't intend to notice the paper you refer to; indeed, we never trouble to look at it. Glad to hear that some of Mr. Foote's and Colonel Ingersoll's works are in the Clerkenwell (Reference) Library.

J. RICHARDS (Ryhope).—Mr. Forder will send you the literature. Glad to hear you have got five new subscribers; also that a Christian has written to you, apologising for his conduct at the meeting. It is a sign of saving grace.

H. JONES.—See "Sugar Plums."

G. ADAMS.—We keep it for a paragraph in our next issue.

BRANCH SECRETARIES in all parts of the country are warned against relieving a man who assumes various names and pretends to have been a member of the Cheshire Branch. All such applications should be referred to the Benevolent Committee.

J. NICHOLSON.—Deut. xiii. 6—12 enjoins that if the wife of thy bosom or thy friend entices to the worship of other gods, "thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death." See too Lev. xxiv. 16. Even gathering sticks on the Sabbath was punished by stoning to death (Num. xv. 32—36).

F. A. BEARE.—The secretary will forward your certificate. Thanks for cuttings.

J. SCHOFIELD.—We quite agree with you.

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

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.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Der Lichtfreund—Boston Investigator—Open Court—Freidenker—Two Worlds—Der Arme Teufel—Western Figaro—Liberator—Liberty—Clarion—Flaming Sword—Truthseeker—Fritankaren—Secular Thought—Progressive Thinker—Twentieth Century—De Dageraad—Onward March—Weekly Bulletin—Food, Home and Garden—Westminster Gazette—Humanitarian—Church Reformer—Manchester Guardian—Birmingham Daily Argus—Liver—Selections from Oahspe—Islamic World—Crescent—Isle of Man Times—Commonweal—Countryman—El Olemor Setabena—Halifax Evening Courier—Standard—Bradford Daily Telegraph—Cambria Daily Leader—Allahabad Pioneer—Dundee People's Journal—Bradford Journal—To-Day—Dundee Advertiser—South Shields Chronicle—African Review.

LITERARY communications to be addressed to the Editor, 14 Clerkenwell-green, London, E.O. All business communications to Mr. R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter-street, London, E.O. *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's lecture at South Shields on "Shakespeare's *Hamlet*; its Poetry, Philosophy, and Lessons" was a distinct success. Mr. Peacock and the Branch committee generally had done everything that was possible to secure a large attendance, and the Mayor (Mr. B. Readhead) kindly consented to take the chair. He is a Conservative in imperial politics, but very liberal-minded in municipal and social affairs. It was his duty, he said, to be impartial, and he could not see why a Shakespearean lecture should be any the worse for being delivered by a Secularist. Nor did he do the thing by halves, for he presided as mayor of the town, wearing his gold chain of office. At the close of the proceedings he was accorded a hearty vote of thanks, in response to which he said that he had spent a very profitable evening, and that he should be glad to hear a gentleman like the lecturer on any other subject.

The audience was a highly appreciative one, several lady students being armed with copies of the play, which they

turned over the pages of busily during the course of the lecture. The *Gazette* reported that—"The lecturer handled his subject in brilliant style, and sometimes held his audience spellbound by his eloquence and his dramatic exposition of the striking elements of the work. At the close of his oration he was enthusiastically applauded."

Mr. Foote addressed, or tried to address, a crowded meeting on Thursday at Ryhope. This large colliery town, of about five thousand inhabitants, had been put into a state of bigoted excitement by a blackguard Christian lecturer, who actually incited his hearers to resort to physical violence against the President of the N.S.S. When Mr. Foote entered the hall he was cheered by a part of the audience, and hooted and groaned at by another part. Mr. Weightman, of Sunderland, took the chair, and appealed for fair play, but he might as well have expostulated with a hurricane. The meeting was a perfect pandemonium. Mr. Foote determined he would not be driven from the platform, however; and for the best part of an hour he held his ground, speaking all the time, and getting a minute's hearing whenever possible. The scene was ten times worse than the one at Newcastle on the previous Sunday evening. Some discussion followed the lecture, and every time Mr. Foote rose to reply the disorder was renewed. Finally, some wretch turned the gas off, and threw the hall into complete darkness. It required some discretion, and a free use of matches, for the lecturer and his friends to get out of the building. Some of the bigots followed him to the miner's cottage he went to for a few minutes before walking to the station. Here they made diabolical noises, mingled with cries of "Pull him out." But they did not seem to like the idea of beginning that business, and eventually Mr. Foote walked safely to the station with the little band of Sunderland friends and two or three members of the new Ryhope Branch.

It was a wretched display of Christian temper, yet the meeting will probably do some good. In the first place, it showed that a Freethought lecturer is very hard to put down; in the next place, that those who attack Freethought most bitterly and recklessly are the most afraid to give its advocates a fair hearing; and, finally, that Freethinkers can keep cool and polite when assailed with the most virulent abuse. We have no doubt whatever that the conduct of the bigots, who took part in this organised bit of rowdyism, disgusted the better sort of Christians who were present; and some of those who applauded the more active bigots were probably ashamed of themselves the next morning.

The newsagent at Ryhope who supplied the *Freethinker* refuses to sell it any longer. Being a Christian, he is afraid of imperilling his immortal soul. But this will not injure our circulation there. Mr. Richards, the Branch secretary, will act as amateur newsagent, and he informs us that he has taken orders for several fresh copies since Mr. Foote's lecture.

On the Friday evening Mr. Foote lectured to a good audience at Chester-le-Street. He replied to the attack upon the *Freethinker* by the Rev. Hugh Birley, vicar of Pelton Fell, who tried to get this journal excluded from the Reading Room of the Miners' Institute. Mr. Birley and his curate were both present. After the lecture the vicar mounted the platform to justify himself. He had said in his circular that the "moral teaching" of the *Freethinker* was "most poisonous," and a part of the audience looked for some spicy revelations. They were of course disappointed. The mountain only brought forth a mouse. Mr. Birley argued that Christianity taught the highest morality, and Mr. Foote was opposed to Christianity; *argal*, his teaching must be poisonous. It was really, as the phrase goes, too absurd for anything. Curate Stack was worse than his vicar. He proved the poison of the *Freethinker* by quoting from Shelley, Rousseau, and other dead writers. He gravely cited D. Chatterton as a recognised leader of the Secular party. Finally he declared that Mrs. Besant had once written "a filthy" article in the *Freethinker*. On being told that this was a filthy slander, Curate Stack said he had been insulted. It is always the most reckless talkers who are the most sensitive themselves. The *Newcastle Evening Chronicle*, in reporting this meeting, says it was "somewhat lively." Well, it was, and it was none the worse for that. Messrs. Birley and Stack have improved our circulation at Pelton Fell, and we daresay they will do the same at Chester-le-Street.

Travelling southwards, Mr. Foote found a thoroughly civilised reception at Leicester. The Secular Hall was well occupied on Sunday afternoon, and packed in every corner in the evening. Mr. Sidney Gimson presided on both occasions. The lectures were followed with the keenest attention and very warmly applauded.

We are glad to hear that Mr. Charles Watts had good audiences at the Hall of Science, London, on Sunday last. In the morning a gathering, above the average in point of numbers, enjoyed Mr. Watts' lecture on his recent visit to America, and in the evening the hall was fairly filled. The proceedings were unusually long, as a lively debate followed the lecture on "Life: Secular and Theological." Mr. E. O. Smith presided. To-day, Sunday, December 10, Mr. Watts again lectures at the Hall of Science morning and evening, when, we are informed, an interesting debate will take place.

The front of the Positivist Church of Humanity, Chapel-street, Bloomsbury, has been rebuilt, and the hall re-opened with a special service by Dr. Congreve.

At New York they have a Science Sermons' Society. It does similar work to the Sunday Lecture Society.

The history of Freethought in Texas, as told by Mr. J. D. Shaw at the Freethinkers' Congress at Chicago, and repeated in the *Independent Pulpit*, is one of struggle. It began in 1873 with Colonel R. Peterson, who started the first Freethought paper, *Common Sense*, and built the first hall for lectures. Both hall and paper were destroyed by fire. In 1875 Dr. L. T. Russell started a society at Little River. The Texas Christians whipped him. Then an attempt was made to start an *Agnostic* at Dallas, and finally Mr. Shaw founded the *Independent Pulpit* ten years ago, and in 1890 organised the Liberal Association of Texas, which we trust will profit by the efforts of the past.

Mr. Foote is visiting Manchester again on the third Sunday in January, and is anxious to address larger audiences under the system of partial free admission. He will be glad to hear from any Cottonopolis friends who are ready to join in guaranteeing the expense of St. James's Hall. The whole of the risk, though there may be no loss, is too heavy to fall on one man's shoulders. Those who are willing to join in the guarantee should communicate at once with Mr. Foote, as the arrangements will soon have to be completed.

Mr. John Grange's debate with a certain "anti-infidel" speaker at Bradford is not an event that we can have any pleasure in recording. We mention it, however, because Mr. Grange bore himself with ability and decorum. The *Bradford Daily Telegraph* says that the Christians at the debate must have left the place "with mingled feelings." "Throughout the evening," it adds, "the Secularists displayed more self-possession and less intolerance than their opponents."

The Unitarians are going to memorialise the London School Board to permit no inquisition into the religious views of teachers. On this subject all the anti-clericals should unite, though we think preparing for the election of next November of more importance than presenting petitions to the present reactionary Board.

On Wednesday evening in last week a large and enthusiastic meeting was held in the Co-operative Hall, Manchester, to protest against the arrest and conviction of Messrs. Payne and Taylor, two members of the N.S.S. Branch. The only dissentients were a small and noisy band of bigots, led by one of the most ignorant and scurrilous members of what is facetiously called the Christian Evidence Society. The amendment, approving the conduct of the police, was lost by an overwhelming majority. The Christian Evidence man and his friends went home sadder, but it would be rash to add wiser.

Metropolitan Freethinkers should remember the London Secular Federation's annual dinner, which is to take place at the Holborn Restaurant on Monday, January 8, at 8 p.m. The dinner is sure to be a good one at this establishment, and those who attend will find every facility for a thoroughly enjoyable evening. Mr. Foote will preside as usual. The

tickets are four shillings each, and can be obtained from any London Branch secretary, from Miss Vance from Mr. Anderson at the Hall of Science Club, from Mr. Forder at 28 Stonecutter-street, or at the Hall of Science bookstall.

Ladies and gentlemen who helped at last year's Children's Party at the London Hall of Science, or who are willing to help this year, are requested to communicate at once with Miss Vance, at 28 Stonecutter-street, E.C.

Mr. A. B. Moss had a good enthusiastic meeting on Sunday afternoon at Wolverhampton. Mr. Stanley Jones delivers an open-air lecture there this afternoon (Dec. 10), and we hope he will have a large audience. On Monday evening, in the Athenæum, Mr. Foote delivers his lecture on "Hamlet."

In his exposition of the First Book of Kings, issued during the present year, Archdeacon Farrar says that "there is scarcely a single competent scholar who does not now admit that the Hexateuch is a composite structure; that much of the Levitical legislation which was once called Mosaic is in reality an after-growth, which in its present form is not earlier than the days of the prophet Ezekiel; that the Book of Deuteronomy belongs in its present form (whatever older elements it may contain) to the era of Hezekiah's or Josiah's reformation; that the Books of Zechariah and Isaiah are not homogeneous, but preserve the writings of more prophets than their title imply; that only a small section of the Psalter was the work of David; that the Book of Ecclesiastes was not the work of King Solomon; that most of the Book of Daniel belongs to the era of Antiochus Epiphanes." Canon Farrar would have us believe the old Book is none the less inspired on that account, only it seems funny that God took the trouble to inspire forgeries.

The *Secular Almanack for 1894* offers a varied list of contents. In addition to the Calendar, which has been brought up to date, there are the usual full particulars of the N.S.S. and Freethought lectures and organisations in other parts of the world. There are useful statistics of the Churches of England, Scotland, and Wales. Mr. Foote writes on the Past, Present, and Future of the Movement, and there are articles by Messrs. Wheeler, Watts, G. Standring, W. P. Bill, W. Heaford, A. B. Moss, and S. Standring, as well as some good verse, anecdotes of Freethinkers, and gems from Ingersoll, the last being worth all the money. As any profits go to the funds of the N.S.S., all friends of Freethought who can possibly afford it should consider it a point of duty to support the *Secular Almanack*.

WOMEN AND THE BIBLE.

(From an address at the International Congress of Freethinkers at Chicago on "Woman's Day," Oct. 4th, 1893, by Mrs. Mattie Freeman).

WOMEN did not write the Bible. If they had, it would have been altogether a different book. It would have been a better book. It would have had a higher standard of morality. Its pages would have reeked with much less profanity—much less bloodshed, vindictiveness and cruelty. It would also have been a far more sensible book. What woman would have been guilty of writing the story of the children of Israel wandering in the wilderness forty years, one suit of clothes lasting them all that time? Every mother knows if those clothes had been leather-bottomed and copper-toed they wouldn't have stood the strain. Woman has patched and darned this world too long to indict any such rubbish. Nor may man at this eleventh hour summon his usual scapegoat by crying, "Oh Lord, the woman thou didst give me, she did write that book," for its authorship is apparent on every page. I haven't time to particularise. I merely wanted to express to you my assurance and satisfaction that woman didn't write it. Man is welcome to all the glory of the performance. Woman has been too busy to find the leisure to create the creeds. Her hand has rocked the world, from the time when the cradle was fashioned from the bark of a tree, to the present when it swings a silken canopy, obeying her slightest touch. It is said her hand has ruled the world; then so long as her hand and brain are bound, the world cannot be free. Slavery in civilisation or out of it follows in the line of the mother. That woman is awakening to a sense of her responsibility gives splendid promise for

progress. And as she has never squandered her time in the past to writing bibles or making gods, it isn't at all likely that she will do so in the future. . . .

There were no church mothers either. And I am glad of it, too. The church fathers perpetrated all the frauds. The popes, the cardinals, the bishops and the priests were all men, and responsible for all the wickedness. They incarcerated women in dungeons, they bound them to racks, they burned them at the stake. In France, in Germany, in Spain—in all Europe, thousands of women were sacrificed at the command of the dear old church fathers, the Christian saints of civilisation. And yet in face of the fact that for centuries it was demanded that woman should believe or die, wonder is expressed that she is inclined to conservative views. The chains welded in the hot heat of a thousand years of suffering do not crumble at a touch.

A GARGANTUAN MEAL.

HOW CHURCH DIGNITARIES DINED.

An odd communication, throwing light on seventeenth century manners, has been made to the Archæological Society of Gers by M. Chabrol. It is the menu of a repast following the first All Souls' Mass celebrated on Nov. 1, 1682, by Canon Chabrol, of the Chapter of Notre Dame de Lacroix de Marciaç. This mass meal was given by the Canon to welcome the entrance of a new member into the Chapter, and members of that body alone sat down to table. The first course was a dish of boiled hash, composed of four capons, a loin of mutton, a shoulder of sucking veal, and a ham, accompanied by two kinds of soup, one being of cabbage seasoned with forcemeat made of game, and the other of mashed carrots in milk thickened with flour. There were besides on the table three pies of hare, of larks, and of veal, and three other dishes—namely, of sliced boiled ham, rashers of fried ham, and mutton chops fried and left to cool in jelly. On the sideboard were placed for the same course nine pigs' feet, a cold joint of roast veal, a calf's head, and a cold turkey stuffed with savory meat and chestnuts. The second course, a hot one, comprised two young pigs roasted, two leverets arranged in a cross along with four capons, three pairs of pullets, and five pairs of young pigeons. A great hot pigeon pie, spiced and savory, was set on the middle of the table. The smaller dishes were truffles served whole, four calves feet placed cross-wise with onions boiled in milk for sauce, two fowls fricassées in oil with Spanish tomatoes and garlic, pullets grilled à la chasseur and garnished, one with stewed celery, and the other with endive. Three large basins figured at the dessert. They were filled with Muscatel grapes. The smaller dishes were pears boiled in wine, baked pears, quinces in syrup, baked Rennette apples, unbaked apples and pears, chestnut purée, and two pies made of cheese and batter. The Chapter was composed of an archdeacon, a vestry priest, twelve canons, six minor canons, and twelve prebendaries.

ABERDONIANA.

Here are two clerical anecdotes. The first is told by a resident Aberdeen minister, and the second by a visitor to the city.

John called on his minister one day, telling him that he was going to be married, and requesting his services on the occasion. The minister congratulated him and added—"I hope you are getting a nice thrifty housewife, who will make you comfortable." John was quite sure he was getting that. "But," said the minister, "that's not everything, John; I hope she is also a good woman." "Oh aye," replied John, "she's a great favorite with the Lord." "That's well; but remember, John, the Lord puts up with a lot of people that you and I could not put up with."

The following is told by the late Rev. Hugh Stowell Brown:—"At Aberdeen, James Abernethy, a most sedate elder in the Free Church, told me that in Scotland the ministers are, or have been, so negligent as not to baptise the children for years. The children are great swearers, picking up the accomplishment from the sailors who frequent these islands. A child, four years of age, was brought forward for baptism, and when the water was sprinkled in his face, exclaimed, 'Damn it! what's this?'"

Mrs. Dash—"Oh, doctor, your sermons are so lovely!" Dr. Dash—"But, my dear madam, I always note that you go to sleep." Mrs. Dash—"Yes; but I have such lovely dreams!"

THE LATE PROFESSOR TYNDALL.

PROFESSOR TYNDALL, who died on Dec. 4, was an instance of the rise to fame and fortune from the lower ranks. He was born at Leighlin-bridge, Co. Carlow, Ireland, in 1820. A bent for mathematics enabled him in 1839 to join the Irish Ordnance Survey, and presently he became a railway engineer. This position he changed (1847) for that of master at Queenwood College, Hants, where he devoted himself to chemical research. He afterwards studied science in Germany, and in 1853 was appointed to the Chair of Natural Philosophy in the Royal Institution. As an exponent of scientific discoveries he soon made his mark. In 1856 he accompanied his friend Professor Huxley to Switzerland. This resulted in a joint work on *The Structure and Motion of Glaciers*, a subject on which he afterwards wrote largely. Among his discoveries and experiments was that of separating light from heat. He contributed to the *Fortnightly Review*, notably an article on "Miracles and Special Providence." In 1872 he went on a lecturing tour in the United States, and his *Lectures on Light* ran through numerous editions. In 1874 he was President of the British Association at Belfast, and his inaugural address, in which he assailed the attitude of religion to science, and declared that matter had the promise and potency of all life, fluttered the theological doves very considerably. Late in life Professor Tyndall made an aristocratic marriage, and for some time retired on his well-worn laurels, chiefly distinguishing himself for his opposition to Home Rule from the Ulster Protestant standpoint. Professor Tyndall resented being called an Atheist, but he rebuked the prejudice that Atheists were bad men. He said that he had seen some of the most pronounced among them, not only in life but in death, with no dread of the hangman's whip and no hope of a heavenly crown, and yet the best of husbands, fathers, friends, and citizens.

OBITUARY.

On Sunday, November 26 last, there died at Dukinfield, in Cheshire, at the age of seventy-four, one who may be described, with reverence, as of "the old brigade." Mr. William Winterbottom had taken his part as a humble soldier of progress in the troublous Chartist days, and he was proud to know that he had helped what he could to the obtaining of the free press by constantly selling, in defiance of the law, newspapers without the prohibitive stamp. For this "offence," in common with Abel Heywood and other minor martyrs, he had suffered imprisonment. His figure was well-known on the platform of all Mr. Bradlaugh's lectures in his own neighborhood. He was a Secularist and Radical to the end. His funeral took place at the Dukinfield Old Chapel (Unitarian), on November 29, when the Secular Service, from the "Manual of Songs and Ceremonies," was read by Mr. Percival Percival, of Failsworth. Mr. James Ramsbottom, of Stalybridge, to whom the deceased had often confided his wishes, conducted all the arrangements, with the entire approval of the widow and family.

It is my sad duty to record the death of Mr. John Rothera, the President of the Heckmondwike Branch of the N.S.S. He died, after a protracted illness, on November 27, aged seventy-one. He was interred in the Heckmondwike Cemetery, November 30. Austin Holyoake's Secular Burial Service was delivered in a very impressive manner by Mr. Samuel Wood, a well-known and very popular local gentleman. Mr. Rothera was a thorough Atheist for upwards of fifty years. He was a most ardent admirer and supporter of the late Mr. C. Bradlaugh, whose regrettable and untimely death he felt very acutely. He was well-known and widely esteemed in the district. He took a prominent part in politics, especially during the agitation of Feargus O'Connor, and other Chartist leaders. Impelled by a strong sense of duty, he took a high and serious view of life, and he never faltered with it. His mind was noble; his temperament was sweet; and his feelings were tenderly sensitive and affectionate. He was devoid of egotism and conceit. He was, indeed, proud and resolute, but at the same time he was constitutionally humble and simple. No man was ever less thoughtful of himself or more considerate for others. No man was ever more genuine. In singleness of purpose, in devotion to moral and intellectual beauty, in allegiance to Freethought, in poise of character, in cheerful patience, in benignity and sweetness, in fidelity to duty, in simplicity and dignity of life, he was unexceptionable, an honor to human nature, and a blessing to his time.—H. ROTHERA, Sec.

If there is anything of value, it is liberty. Liberty is the air of the soul, the sunshine of life. Without it the world is a prison and the universe an infinite dungeon.—*Ingersoll*.

If anyone can convince me of an error I shall be very glad to change my opinion, for truth is my business, and right information hurts nobody. No; he that continues in ignorance and mistake, 'tis he that receives the mischief.—*Marcus Antoninus*.

"SUPERIOR SOIL."

In an hospital ward two sick men lay,
Nigh unto death—both passing away.
One was a Christian (so I am told),
The other an Atheist. Neither were old.

The Christian was praying, and calling on God
To receive him, and mete out his promised reward.
He had lived as a Christian (far better than some).
His very last words were, "Jesus! I come."

The Atheist, though suffering, did not on God cry.
As an Atheist he lived—as he lived he would die.
A Christian friend knelt by his bedside to pray;
Said he, "What absurdity." Then passed away.

To the mortuary the bodies were taken to lay,
And there were prepared for the funeral day.
Their close likeness, the official put in a fix—
To know who was who, to tell which was which.

So the Christian was guessed at, and as usual it failed,
For his name to Atheist's coffin was nailed;
And with prayer and with cant, he so much hated,
The Atheist was buried in ground consecrated.

The Christian, in coffin, with Atheist's name,
Was buried in ground that appeared much the same.
Geologically it was so—and was quite as high rated;
But that ground, be it said, was unconsecrated.

Now a question arises, without much reflection,
How will they stand at "the great resurrection"?
Will the Christian, who served his Lord here so well,
Be sent down for ever, to ramble in hell?

And the Atheist upstairs, be sent safe and sound,
As reward for reposing in such holy ground?
Will he play golden harps, and with wise virgins seven,
Dance him wild can-cans on the door-mats of heaven?

Of course you say "No! they'll be judged by the worth
Of the things said and done by them while on earth."
Then I say:—consecration is simply rot,
And defy all good Christians to say it is not.

P. T. WHELAN.

INGERSOLL ON THE ATONEMENT.

If there was no general Atonement until the crucifixion of Christ, what became of the countless millions who died before that time? And it must be remembered that the blood shed by the Jews was not for other nations. Jehovah hated foreigners. The Gentiles were left without forgiveness. What has become of the millions who have died since, without having heard of the Atonement? What becomes of those who have heard but have not believed? It seems to me that the doctrine of the Atonement is absurd, unjust, and immoral. Can a law be satisfied by the execution of a wrong person? When a man commits a crime, the law demands his punishment, not that of a substitute; and there can be no law, human or divine, that can be satisfied by the punishment of a substitute. Can there be a law that demands that the guilty be rewarded? And yet, to reward the guilty is far nearer justice than to punish the innocent.

According to the orthodox theology, there would have been no heaven had no Atonement been made. All the children of men would have been cast into hell for ever. The old men bowed with grief, the smiling mothers, the sweet babes, the loving maidens, the brave, the tender, and the just would have been given over to eternal pain. Man, it is claimed, can make no atonement for himself. If he commits one sin, and with that exception lives a life of perfect virtue, still that one sin would remain unexpiated, unatoned, and for that one sin he would be for ever lost. To be saved by the goodness of another, to be a redeemed debtor for ever, has in it something repugnant to manhood.

"Sorrow may endure for a joy," so an Irish clergyman is reported to have read with the utmost feeling; "but night cometh in the morning!"

First Cornish Miner—"I thout thee was converted. Where's thee faith?" Second Miner (rolling up his shirt-sleeves)—"Thee call me a liar again and I'll show thee where my faith is."

The grave announcement is made by a spiritualistic periodical that it has secured the "exclusive" collaboration of William Shakespeare in the spirit world, and that any alleged communications from the dramatist appearing elsewhere are spurious.

The Squire—"Well, Smith, I want your advice. Hadn't we better let them have their way this time?" Smith—"No, no, sir. Stick to your rights. What I say is, 'Give such people a hinch and they'll take a hell,' if you'll pardon my usin' such strong language."

TALMAGE'S HYMN.

LET all creation hold its tongue
Whilst I uplift my Sunday song,
And bang the Bible, fierce and fell,
And shake the sinner over hell!

Damnation! 'tis my thrilling theme!
With fires infernal all a gleam;
I love the glorious tale to tell,
And shake the sinner over hell!

Your father was Adam—bad lot;
Eve damned you ere you were begot;
Of hope and joy I ring the knell,
And shake the sinner over hell!

The Almighty left you in the lurch;
Your only chance is in the church;
Be saved, or, with an extra yell,
Talmage will drop you into hell!

G. M.

HOW TO HELP US.

- (1) Get your newsagent to exhibit the *Freethinker* in the window.
- (2) Get your newsagent to take a few copies of the *Freethinker* and try to sell them, guaranteeing to take the copies that remain unsold.
- (3) Take an extra copy (or more), and circulate it among your acquaintances.
- (4) Leave a copy of the *Freethinker* now and then in the train, the car, or the omnibus.
- (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.

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.O.: 11.15, Charles Watts, "A Glance at the Social and Political World" (free); 6.30, musical selections; 7, Charles Watts, "Protestantism: True and False" (admission free; reserved seats 3d. and 6d.) Monday at 8.30, debating class, W. J. Ramsey, "The Poor Laws: a Socialistic Experiment—a Folly and a Failure" (free). Tuesday at 8.30, athletic class. Wednesday at 8.15, J. Harvey Wilson (Hon. Sec. Railway Reform Union), "Railway Reform, and Purchase of Railways by the State." Thursday and Friday at 8, dancing classes. Saturday, in the minor hall, social evening (free).

Battersea Secular Hall (back of Battersea Park Station): 7.45, A. Johnson, "Socialism v. Individualism" (free). Tuesday at 8, social gathering. Wednesday at 8, dramatic club.

Bethnal Green—Libra Hall, 78 Libra-road, Roman-road: 7.30, G. Lansbury (S.D.F.), "Why I Left the Radical Party" (free).

Camberwell—61 New Church-road, S.E.: 11.30 (in small hall), debating society, Sam Standing, "Is England Ripe for a Republic?" 7.30 (in large hall), H. Snell, "Freethought Novels." Friday at 7.30, free science classes in chemistry and astronomy.

East London—Swaby's Coffee House, 103 Mile End-road: 8, a lecture.

Edmonton—Angel Assembly Rooms, Silver-street: 7, Sam Standing, "Man's Place in Nature" (free).

Finsbury Park—91 Mildmay Park: D.c. 14, at 8, members' general meeting.

Hammersmith Club, 1 The Grove, Broadway: Thursday, Dec. 14, at 8.30, Touzeau Parris, "Christianity a Fraud" (free).

South Essex Secular Society, 33 and 35 Salway-road, Stratford, E.: 7.15, "Christianity and the Workers—What Hopes?" (free).

Wimbledon—Liberty Hall, Hartfield-road Coffee House (Broadway entrance): 7, J. Rowney, "The Teachings of Jesus" (free).

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Battersea Park-gates: 11.15, F. Haslam, "Civilisation and Progress" (in the hall if the weather is unfavorable).

Hyde Park (near Marble-arch): W. Heaford, 11.30, "The Jargon of Theology"; 3.30, "The Devil and all his Works."

COUNTRY.

Aberdeen—Oddfellows' Hall Buildings (Room No. 6): 11.30, Mr. Barclay, "Christianity and its Effects."

Birmingham—Baskerville Hall, Crescent, Cambridge-street: 11 and 7, Stanley Jones will lecture.

Blackburn—"Haymarket," Cort-street: 6.30, Mr. Titherington, "The Marriage Question"; at Lee's House, at 3, business meeting.

Bradford—Unity Lodge Rooms, 65 Sunbridge-road: 6.30, O. Trumper, "Jesus Wept."

Chatham—Secular Hall, Queen's-road, New Brompton: 11, members' monthly meeting; 2.45, Sunday-school; 7, vocal and instrumental entertainment, concluding with dramatic sketch.

Fairsworth Secular Sunday-school, at 10 and 2; 6.30, P. Percival, "The Gospels."

Glasgow—Ex-Mission Hall, 110 Brunswick-street: Mrs. Frederika Macdonald, 11.30, "The 'Infamous,' According to Voltaire"; 2.30, "The Return to Nature Led by J. J. Rousseau"; 6.30, "Theosophy: a Renaissance of Superstition."

Hanley—Secular Hall, John-street: 7.30, Professor Dale, "Secularism v. Christianity." Thursday at 8, improvement class, "The Labor Question."

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

Hull—St. George's Hall, 8 Albion-street: 8, H. Russell Smart will lecture.

Hull Sunday Association, St. George's Hall, Storey-street: 2.30, H. Russell Smart, "Socialism and Drink."

Ipswich—Co-operative Hall, Cox-lane: C. James, 3, "Heresy: a Plea for Mental Freedom"; 7, "Confucius, Buddha, and Christ."

Leicester—Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate: 6.30, F. J. Gould, "Better Uses for Religious Energy" (free).

Liverpool—Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street: G. W. Foote, 11, "The Next Birthday of God"; 3, "Christ and Democracy"; 7, "The Pillars of Priestcraft."

Manchester N.S.S., Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints: C. Cohen, 11, "The Scientific Basis of Morals"; 3, "The Rise of Christianity"; 6.30, "Science and Superstition." Monday from 8 to 10.30, dancing (6d.) Tuesday at 8, debating circle, C. Bome, pianoforte recital.

Newcastle-on-Tyne—Eldon Hall, 2 Clayton-street: 7, James Clare, "Thomas Paine: his Place in History."

Nottingham—Shortland's Café, 3 Derby-road: 7, J. Hooper will lecture.

Portsmouth—Wellington Hall, Wellington-street, Southsea: C. J. Hunt, 11, "Mind: a Function of Matter"; 3, "The Ethics of Secularism"; 7, "The Teachings of Christ."

Reading—Foresters' Hall, West-street: 7, Mr. Soper, "The Old and the New Faiths."

Sheffield—Hall of Science, Rockingham-street: 7, a local gentleman, "The Origin of Man: Creation or Evolution—Revelation or Science?"

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

Sunderland—Bridge End Vaults, Bridge-street: 7, The Librarian, "Nature and the Gods."

Wolverhampton—Athenæum Assembly Room, Queen-street: Monday at 8, G. W. Foote, "Shakespeare's *Hamlet*: its Poetry, Philosophy, and Lessons"; an extraordinary general meeting of members after the lecture.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Wolverhampton—Snowhill (near the Villiers' statue): 3.15, Stanley Jones, "Miracles and Medicine" (if wet or very cold, in the Midland Tramway Coffee House, 35 Snowhill).

LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

C. COHEN, 12 Merchant-street, Bow-road, E.—Dec. 10 to 17, Manchester; 24, m., Battersea; e., Camberwell; 31, Leicester.

C. J. HUNT, 48 Fordingley-road, St. Peter's Park, London, W.—Dec. 10, Portsmouth.

STANLEY JONES, 53 Marlborough-road, Holloway, London, N.—Dec. 10, Birmingham; 17, Hanley.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Oredon-road, Rotherhithe, London, S.E.—Jan. 4, 1894 Hammersmith.

TOUZEAU PARRIS, Clare Lodge, 32 Upper Mall, Hammersmith, London, W.—D.c. 10, Grimsby; 31, Camberwell; Jan. 21, 1894, Hall of Science. Feb. 4, Camberwell.

H. SNELL, 6 Monk-street, Woolwich.—Dec. 10, Camberwell; 17, Deptford Liberal Club.

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BOOK CHAT.

Schopenhauer, the Frankfort pessimist, is said to have found his Boswell in the person of Dr. Baehr, who has recently died, leaving behind him a volume of conversations with the philosopher, which will now be printed.

A nice specimen of biblical insanity has reached us with the title, *The Lion of the Tribe of Judah has Come Down from his Thicket to Conquer the Twelve Princes of Ishmael*, by James Miller, Thornaoy-on-Tees. Only a pietist is capable of the utter rubbish put forward by Mr. Miller. He tells us *Malkezedick* (*sic*) signifies "the nine leading principles of mind in man and woman, wherewith the Great Creator bequeathed upon our first parents, four in man, five in woman." We have looked over much religious trash in our time, but for senseless drivel, *The Lion of the Tribe of Judah* fairly takes the cake.

Messrs. Cassell and Co. are now issuing the select works of George Combe, which did much for the diffusion of sound secular sense in the early part of the century.

Mr. Charles Godfrey Leland, the translator of Heine, has edited *The Life and Adventures of James P. Beckwourth* a popular American book on one of the early explorers and trappers who told some stiff yarns. Of this characteristic Mr. Leland tells the following story: "There was a camp of miners in California to whom Beckwourth was well known, and when his life appeared they commissioned one of their number, who was going to San Francisco, to obtain stores to purchase the book. Not being very careful, he got by mistake a copy of the Bible. In the evening after his return, the messenger was requested to read aloud to the rest from the long-expected work. Opening the volume at random, he hit upon and read aloud the story of Samson and the foxes, whereupon one of the listeners cried, "That'll do; I'd know that story for one of Jim Beckwourth's lies anywhere."

BIBLE HISTORY.

A considerable number of what are called "Bible stories" do not repose on souvenirs, and it is a false route to painfully extract from them some historic residue. No, they are religious lessons "illustrated" by examples; that is to say, if you please, conduct in action. The exodus from Egypt is the Omnipotence of the divinity forthdrawing a little people whom he has chosen from the bondage of a powerful monarchy; the conquest of Canaan and the massacre of Joshua, is an invitation to shun all mixture with the impure stranger, and so on. There is then, according to us, in the Bible an enormous portion due to free composition, to the creation of the writer with his fertile and powerful imagination.—*Maurice Vernes, "Essais Bibliques,"* p. 129.

THE WORST EVIL.

As evil a thing as poverty is, it is not by any means the worst evil that might befall humanity. When it shall have passed away, the race of man shall be wiser, happier by far than had it never come into the world. For the thing that has really hindered our progress during all these thousands of years is not poverty, but superstition. The pain of poverty is Nature's kindly warning of the deeper evil that inflicts us, as the pain of burning is her warning against the fire that would consume us. Seeking the cause of poverty, we find it in superstition; we learn that superstition must be extirpated before poverty can cease to be. But had the terrors of poverty never assailed us, we might have clung to our superstition to all eternity, and awakened never to the possibilities of freedom.—*H. O. Pentecost.*

Dr. Granberry and family are Presbyterians. In the family is a baby boy of two years. M's. G. had been drilling the boy in the Shorter Catechism. Young two-year-old, becoming unmanageable in the absence of his father, had been subjected to a mild application of the rod. When the doctor returned, and noticed the boy was in trouble, the following conversation took place: Father—"What is the matter, my son?" Son (weeping)—"Mother whipped me." Father—"What for, my boy?" Son (sobbing)—"For her own glory."

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