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Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

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TWO-FACED CHRIST.

Suffer little children to come unto me.—MATT. XIX. 14.

Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace but a sword.—MATT. X. 34.

THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM.

MATTHEW, or whoever was the author of the first Gospel, had a rare eye (or nose) for portents and prodigies. He seems also to have had exclusive sources of information. Several of the wonderful things he relates were quite unknown to the other evangelists. They were ignorant of the wholesale resurrection of saints at the crucifixion, and also of the watch at the sepulchre, with all the pretty circumstantial story depending upon it. At the other end of Christ's career they never heard of the visit of the wise men of the east to his cradle, or of Herod's massacre of the innocents, or of the star which guided those wise men to the birthplace of the little king of the Jews. That star is the sole property of Matthew, and the other evangelists took care not to infringe his copyright. Indeed, it is surprising how well they did with the remnants he left them.

Matthew was not a Jules Verne. He had no knowledge of astronomy. Consequently he did not make the most of that travelling star. It was seen by wise men "in the east." This is not very exact, but it is precise enough for a fairy tale. Those wise men

happened to be "in the east" at the same time. They were really "Magi"—as may be seen in the Revised Version; that is, priests of the religion of Persia; and it requires a lot of faith to see what concern they could possibly have with the bantling of Bethlehem. However, they saw "his star," and they appear to have followed it. They must have slept by day and journeyed by night, when the star was visible. At the end of their expedition this star "stood over" the house where little Jesus was lying. Truly, it was a very accommodating star. Of course it was specially provided for the occasion. Real stars, rolling afar in the infinite ether, are too distant to "stand over" a particular spot on this planet. This was an ideal star. It travelled through the earth's atmosphere, and moved according to the requirements of the gospel Munchausen. What became of it afterwards we are not informed. Probably it was born and died in Matthew's imagination. He blew it out when he had done with it, and thus it has escaped the attention of Sir Robert Ball.

Those star-gazing magi went into "the house," which, according to Luke, was an inn; Jesus Christ having been born in the stable, because the "pub" was full, and no gentleman would go outside to oblige a lady. They opened their Gladstone bags, and dis-

played the presents they had brought for the little king of the Jews. These were gold, frankincense, and myrrh. No doubt the perfumes were very welcome—in a stable; and very likely Joseph took care of the gold till Jesus was old enough to spend it on his own account, by which time it appears to have vanished, perhaps owing to the expenses of bringing up the numerous progeny of the Virgin Mother. Then the Mahatmas—we beg pardon, the Magi—went home. Perhaps they are there still. But no matter. We leave that to the Christian Evidence Society, or the Theosophists.

Candid students will see at a glance that the whole of this story is mythological. Like other distinguished persons, the Prophet of Nazareth had to make a fuss, not only in the world, but in the universe; and his biographers (especially Matthew) duly provided him with extraordinary incidents. Not only was he born, like so many other "saviors," without the assistance of a human father, but his birth was heralded by a celestial marvel. There was a star of his nativity. The wise men from the east called it "his star." This puts him in the category of heroes, and bars the idea of his being a god. It also shows that the Christians, amongst whom this story originated, were devotees of astrology. Fortune-tellers still decide your "nativity" before they cast your "horoscope." We are aware that many commentators have discussed the star of Christ's birth from various points of view. Some have thought it a real star; others have had enough astronomy to see that this was impossible, and have argued that it was a big will-o'-the-wisp, created and directed by supernatural power, like the pillar of day-cloud and night-fire that led the Jews in the wilderness; while still others have favored the idea of a supernatural illusion, which was confined to the wise man—and thus it was that the "star" was not seen or mentioned by any of their contemporaries. But all this is the usual mixture of Bible commentators. There is really no need to waste time in that fashion. The Star of Bethlehem belongs to the realm of poetry, as much as the Star of Cæsar, to which the mighty Julius ascended in his apotheosis.

Thousands of sermons have been preached on that Star of Bethlehem, and these also have been works of imagination. We have been told, for instance, that it was the morning star of a new day for humanity. But this is a falsehood, which the clergy palmed off on ignorant congregations. The world was happier under the government of the great Pagan emperors than it has ever been under the dominion of Christianity. For a thousand years the triumph of the Cross was the annihilation of everything that makes life pleasant and dignified. The Star of Bethlehem shone in a sky of utter blackness. All the constellations of science, art, philosophy, and literature were in disastrous eclipse. Cruelty and hypocrisy abounded on earth, toil and misery were the lot of the people, and bloodshed was as common as rain.

Religions, said Schopenhauer, are like glow-worms; they require darkness to shine in. This was quite true of Christianity. It was splendid when it had no competitor. To be visible—above all, to be worshipped—it needed the sky to itself.

One by one, during the past three hundred years, the stars of civilisation have emerged from their long eclipse, and now the sky of humanity is full of countless hosts of throbbing glories. The Star of Bethlehem is no longer even a star of the first magnitude. It pales and dwindles every year. In another century it will be a very minor light. Meanwhile it is drawn big on the maps of faith. But that little trick is being seen through. Once it was the Star of Bethlehem first, and the rest nowhere; now it takes millions of money, and endless special pleading, to keep its name on the list.

Christ himself is coming more and more to be regarded as a fanciful figure; not God, not even a man, but a construction of early Christian imagination. "Why," asked a Unitarian of a Positivist, "why is not Christ in your Positivist calendar?" "Because," was the reply, "the calendar is for men, not for gods."

G. W. FOOTE.

PEACE ON EARTH.

ONE of the finest texts of the Christian legend is the utterance of the angels to the shepherds—"Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, goodwill to men." Doubtless this text is an improvement of the translators. All the ancient versions, the Sinaitic, the Alexandrian, the Vatican, and the old Latin, read, "Peace on earth to men of goodwill," and this, interpreted as goodwill towards the Church, is all the peace that Christianity has ever tended to bring. No sooner had it the sword of power than it used it. The texts of the Church became, "I come not to send peace but a sword," and "Those mine enemies that would not that I should reign over them bring hither, and slay them before me." To it may be applied the phrase of Tacitus: It made a solitude and called it peace.

A faith which proclaims there is no salvation outside its pale, and sums up the world into so many sheep who are to be eternally blest, and so many goats who are to be eternally damned, could not fail to bring division and hatred in its train. It has been dominated by the spirit of the Old Testament, whose pages ring with war, and proclaim that the Lord is a man of war, the Lord of hosts is his name. The religion of the cross has been the religion of the sword. Were there no other condemnation of Christianity than this it should suffice. Instead of bringing peace and goodwill it has brought strife and persecution. No baptism of repentance can wash away its crimes. Rather would they the multitudinous seas incarnadine, making the green one red.

Peace on earth, goodwill to men. 'Tis a beautiful text. What is the practical comment? Here are a few facts and figures worth pondering. The number of soldiers in Christian Europe is close upon twenty-two millions. On a peace footing there are 3,747,600 men constantly under arms. The direct cost of the armies and navies of Europe is over two hundred millions yearly, and the interest on war debts amount to a similar sum. Since 1869 our own naval and military expenditure has increased from £24,227,000 to £33,190,000, while that of Russia, Germany, Italy, and Switzerland has more than doubled. According to calculations made by Dr. Engel, an eminent German statistician, the number of lives lost in war between 1851 and 1885 was over two and a quarter millions. Since the fall of Napoleon this country has been engaged in no fewer than seventy-seven wars, great and small. Have the bishops and clergy ever raised their voices or used their influence to arrest or rebuke this bloodshed? Take one illustration. In '57 we had a war in China, known as the "Lorcha Arrow War"—a war which involved us in a further Chinese war in '60. The foremost statesmen, including Lord Derby, Lord John Russell, Mr. Gladstone, and Disraeli united with Mr. Cobden in speaking and voting against it. Lord Derby appealed to the bishops to use "their great and legitimate influence to stay the uplifted hand of violence and oppression and rebuke the shedding of innocent blood." But in the division eighteen bishops voted for the war and five against it. They have consecrated banners, put up prayers and thanksgivings for victory, but on no occasion have they denounced the horrors and atrocities of warfare. This has been done by Freethinkers, who, from Voltaire to Frau von Süttner, have stigmatised war as a barbarism unworthy reasonable civilised beings.

I know what can be said for war—"school of heroism," "surplus population," and so forth. One widow's tears, nay, the agony of but one wounded horse, outweigh a shoal of such flimsy stuff. The simple truth is, that war is so utterly horrible and abominable, it cannot be truthfully described without making humanity shudder. In modern warfare courage no longer has place, and instead of eliminating the unfit, it takes the flower of the race, the fittest to survive. That sovereign and statesmen should have the power to embroil millions of unoffending people in deadly combat, is, like the doctrine of God's sending his creatures to eternal hell, at once an absurdity and an atrocity.

And it has come to this after eighteen centuries of the divinely revealed religion, that the only hope men

can see for the cessation of multitudinous murder to military music, lies in science making it so utterly deadly and devastating, that every one will know there can be no victories, but only defeat and death for all concerned in so risky and barbarous a method of settling disputes. To end war may be a difficult problem. But as the Pagan Greek proverb said, "The difficult things are noble." Make the people the arbiters, and wars will become difficult. Christianity has been tried, and found wanting. The phantom gods must go ere we can usher in the *régime* of human providence.

J. M. WHEELER.

"THE SONG OF THE ANGELS."

THIS is the season when, for the one thousand eight hundred and ninety-third time, according to orthodox accounts, "Peace on earth and goodwill towards men" is the song of the Christian world. We may here remark, however, that in no age, so far as we know, have Christians, as a body, striven to secure the one or to practise the other. We have known some people who repeated the most absurd stories so frequently that ultimately they believed them to be true. This is the case as regards Christmas, its origin and its object. No doubt some professed Christians are under the impression that, although "The Song of the Angels" is an unfulfilled prophecy, still it nevertheless expresses the true object of their faith. They seem to forget that Christ proclaimed that his mission was the very opposite. Matthew reports him as saying: "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law." Hence we find that wherever the Christian religion has had unbounded sway, its devotees have not adopted the principle of peace, neither have they exercised, very extensively, their goodwill towards mankind.

We are now on the eve of Christmas Day, which is set apart by church-goers for a solemn commemoration of the birth of "Jesus of Nazareth." The fact, however, is that they really observe the day as a festival, with all the embellishments with which its Pagan origin has endowed it. The feast at the table and the flowing bowl have a far greater influence on the day's proceedings than has the memory of the Carpenter's Son. True the Roman Catholic Church has its procession, with music and palms; but blankets, beef, and plum-pudding are considered as being more important at this time than thoughts of infallibility and transubstantiation. If we had reached the state of society as indicated in the angelic song, soldiers and policemen could be dispensed with, the poor would be constantly fed and cared for, and the rich would never fail to exercise benevolence and goodwill towards their unfortunate fellow creatures. This would indeed change the entire aspect of Society. But supposing such conditions did obtain, we should then be far from realising that Secular idea of manliness and independence which mainly distinguishes a true man of dignity from a mere dependent on the world's charity. Here we are actually becoming polemical, whereas we desire to be allowed, at this season of the year, for a brief period at any rate, to give our critical faculties a rest, while we join in the song of the immortal Shakespeare:

Heigh ho! sing heigh ho! unto the green holly:
Most friendship is feigning,
Most loving were folly;
Then heigh ho, the holly,
This life is most jolly.

This Shakespearian amusement may delight many, but probably there are some who will prefer to exclaim—

Hark, the herald angels sing,
Glory to the new-born king,

and children will be singing—

While shepherds watched their flocks by night,
All seated on the ground.

This recalls to our mind the days of our youth, when, surrounded by Christian influences, we were in the habit of joining in this vocal exercise, with the snow up to our knees, while we had to keep blowing our

fingers to prevent them being frozen. Of course the plum-cake and the inevitable hot elderberry wine followed the choruses. We also remember, when our knowledge of geography and biblical criticism was exceedingly limited, that we sympathised with the poor old shepherds whom we thought must have had to sit on the icy ground, with their noses exposed to the nipping frost, and we wondered if they were clothed in wool, like the sheep they were said to watch during the unpleasant hours of night. Moreover, we felt delighted that we were born in a Christian country where the sheep are, as a rule, penned up in severe weather.

At that period of our life we had no idea that the hero of our song was *not* born on Christmas Day, or that he might have been a solar myth as easily as "the sun of righteousness." We had not then read in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* that the "25th of December is observed by the Christian Church in memory of the birth of Jesus. There is, however, a difficulty in accepting this as the date of the Nativity, December being the height of the rainy season in Judea, when neither flocks nor shepherds could have been at night in the fields of Bethlehem." Nor had we the remotest notion that our celebration had anything to do with the month of March and the birth of another Spring, a new birth of Nature. Still more remote from our mind was the idea that "the new born king" was to inaugurate an improved social and political system, giving peace and prosperity to all the nations of the world, beginning at Jerusalem. Such blissful ignorance has passed away during the last forty summers. Yet those of us who are free from dyspepsia and other maladies can heartily join in the Christmas festivities. If we no longer sing vespers, we can cheerfully exclaim, "Be happy while you can." If grey hairs are rapidly appearing upon some of us, and if the elasticity of our limbs is not so apparent as it once was, we still remain open to the charms of the season, and we are as delighted as ever to pay due homage to the mistletoe bough. Johnson, referring to the poet Campbell, said that, although he was never seen to go inside a church, he never passed one without raising his hat. In like manner we bow to "Father Christmas" and partake of his hospitality; we also share in the pleasing associations of his reign, independent as they are of the churches, and necessarily having no connection with any form of supernatural religion. By the way, what a comment on all this parade of a Christian era of peace and goodwill, which is alleged to have been started at Palestine, is the recent report that rival Christians on the sacred spot had to be kept from killing each other by the soldiers of the "false prophet." Furthermore, how great are the changes that the secular progress of the world is making even in that remote corner of the earth! How the poetical soul of the saintly pilgrim must be shocked when he hears the railway porters shouting—"Any more going on? Take your seats for Jerusalem." The iron horse has invaded the Holy Land, and the shrill whistle of the train is heard where once the valleys echoed with the songs of the angels. As the poet has said, "Lord, we know what we are, but know not what we shall be."

Many of our friends in different parts of the country will, we fear, find it hard to be joyful this Christmas. The effects of the social war, and the commercial disturbance which recently prevailed in our midst, will no doubt be felt by many of our readers. They have our cordial sympathy, and we fervently hope for better times. We feel assured that Secularism has been found capable of sustaining its adherents in hours of trial, enabling them to look at the brightest side of a gloomy prospect, and also inspiring them to do their best under adverse circumstances. In spite of the clouds that may darken the lives of some families just now, we trust that all will avail themselves of such respite from the cares of life as is possible during this ever-welcome annual holiday. That the sunshine of prosperity may once more enter the homes, and gladden the hearts of those who have been deprived of such a blessing; and that one and all of our readers will enjoy a Merry Christmas is the sincere and ardent wish of

CHARLES WATTS.

A FREETHINKER AT LARGE.

XVII.—AGAIN AT WESLEY'S CHAPEL.

TRAGIC indeed is the fate of the common or garden sermon. Its cradle is its grave; it dies at the moment when the act of bringing it into being is completed; the listless and *ennuyée* witnesses of its birth are also the dry-eyed mourners at its tomb. "Dearly beloved brethren" is the joy-bell that announces the little stranger; "And now to God the Father," etc., is its death-knell. At 7 o'clock the discourse is at yet unborn; at 8 o'clock it has been delivered, is dead, buried, and forgotten, and the ladies of the congregation are already comparing notes about their new spring bonnets.

Personally, of course, I have no love for pulpit discourses. The only kind that I regard with any sort of toleration is the "One-minute Sermon" of Dr. Joseph Parker at the City Temple; and even that I hold to be exactly sixty seconds too long. But duty often overrides our individual preferences; and of late years the hearing of sermons has been a frequent, if distasteful, portion of my work. I recently attended at City-road Chapel to hear the Rev. Allan Rees, of that ilk, preach upon "The Death of the *National Reformer*." The readers of the *Freethinker* will probably remember that some account of that sermon was given in these pages; and the Rev. Allan Rees himself will certainly not forget the occasion for a long time to come.

The rev. gentleman, bearing in mind the consequences of his first ill-advised and untruthful attack upon Atheism and the typical Atheist of our generation, might have been expected to walk warily in this matter; but experience appears to have no lessons of wisdom for parsons. Mr. Rees is incorrigible. He has followed up his sermon on Mr. Bradlaugh and the *National Reformer* by a discourse on "Atheism and Morals," upon which I proceed to give a candid commentary.

In the interesting and characteristic correspondence between Mr. Rees and Mrs. Bradlaugh-Bonner, that lady made it abundantly clear that the Wesleyan minister, in suggesting that Mr. Bradlaugh's atheistic convictions had "weakened" towards the close of his life, had made—to put it politely—a statement without foundation in fact. Finding, apparently, that pious insinuations concerning Mr. Bradlaugh lead to notoriety rather than to honor, Mr. Rees on a second occasion spread a wider net, and wisely selected as his game those who could not hit back.

Mr. Rees selected as his text the second clause of the first verse of the fourteenth Psalm. In the first clause—which was taken as the text on the *National Reformer* night—David declares that "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." The second clause reads: "They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good." And this is what Mr. Rees, in the plenitude of his Christian charity, conceives to be a just description of Atheists as a body.

Mr. Rees stated that the controversy which had arisen upon his previous sermon (that on the *National Reformer*) had moved many persons to send him anonymous letters of a low and abusive character. But nothing else, he added, was to be expected from people who repudiated all authority in manners and morals. For the Christian, on the contrary, there was a standard of faith and of right conduct.* If that standard were destroyed, the inevitable result would be ethical decadence.

Mr. Rees then made a laborious attempt to show that virtuous instincts were the foundation, and not merely the outcome, of religious (that is, Christian) belief. Pompeii, buried for ages beneath the ashes of Vesuvius, and now opened to the virtuous eye of the Christian tourist, bore on its walls overwhelming testimony to the drunkenness and lust that marked the extinct Roman civilisation. No such flagrant immorality exists to-day. And why? Because the civilised world is permeated with Christian truth. But potentially the human heart is as vile as ever, and man

will break out into hideous excesses as soon as the restraining influence of Christian morality is removed.

The natural man seeks to gratify his passions, and rebels against all restraint. And why should he not, if there be no God? But here the Bible steps in with a definite scheme of morality; and the Ten Commandments, which he had read as the first lesson, were an authoritative standard. [Here, perhaps, I may be permitted to remind Mr. Rees that one of those commandments decrees: "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor."] Jesus Christ, in the Sermon on the Mount, had laid down the great principles of supreme love to God and love to man, and had swallowed up the Ten Commandments (particularly the ninth, apparently). Christ had shown that morality was absolute.

But beshrew this flatulent and futile sermon; I will waste no more of my time in recording its passages in detail. No attempt was made to examine or impeach the principles of Atheism, probably because the preacher knew nothing about them beyond the tittle-tattle of chapels. There was no argument, no attempt even at criticism; the sermon was throughout a glorification of the preacher's creed, and a petty, spiteful vilification of people whose views were opposed to his own. It was all done with an amusing unconsciousness of the utter folly and fatuity of the thing which one seldom sees outside the pulpit. If a weak "point" had to be bolstered up, Mr. Rees made an energetic gesture and spoke fiercely as if defying a world in arms. More than once, with outstretched hands and fearless eye, he shouted, "ANSWER THAT!" There were men in his chapel that Sunday night who could have answered him to some purpose had the pulpit, that refuge of cowards, but been open to them. Mr. Rees trusted in God and the lock of his pulpit door; and the Almighty was gloriously vindicated.

Having established the supreme and unapproachable grandeur of Christian morality, Mr. Rees took his iconoclast's hammer and boldly entered the Pantheon of Scepticism (which, he said, was synonymous with Atheism). What frightful execution this obscure Wesleyan preacher wrought upon the men whom Freethinkers delight to honor! He strode hither and thither, dashing the image of Voltaire from its pedestal, smashing Goethe in pieces with one blow of his weapon, and dealing destruction all around. The author of *Candide* was the most impudent of liars, the most brazen of courtiers, a stranger to patriotism and decency. This was stated upon the authority of some distinguished writer whose name I had never heard before. Goethe had said that the greatest good of man was beauty—morality he put in the background. (Smash!—there is an end of the author of *Faust*.) Renan had declared that the chiefest good of mankind was scientific truth, and had denied the possibility of sin. (The fragments of the author of *Les Apôtres* strewed the ground.) Heine once said that if he were forced to choose between a bad conscience and a bad tooth, he would elect for the bad conscience. Therefore, added Mr. Rees, Atheism is opposed to morality. All this was said with perfect gravity and a delicious solemnity of manner. The subtle raillery of Heine touches no responsive chord in the breast of Mr. Rees. He seems to be absolutely destitute of the sense of humor.

The preacher then poured out the vials of his wrath and scorn upon two great writers who have but lately passed away. Mr. Rees once had a ministerial "appointment" in or near Chelsea; and he told his hearers how, in walking from his home to the chapel, he often gazed at the windows of the house in Cheyne-walk in which lived Thomas Carlyle. And then did Mr. Rees smite Thomas Carlyle hip and thigh. His ideas of morality were lax: he had said that moral delinquencies need not be noticed where there was intellectual eminence. Carlyle, it is true, was not a libertine like Goethe; but he was a vulgar, dissatisfied, self-opiniated man. "If you want to know his character," added Mr. Rees, in a tragic tone, "ask his wife"; and on this a ripple of sympathetic laughter—the first I had ever heard in a Wesleyan chapel—ran round the building. (There were evidently several married

* Secularist lecturers frequently receive anonymous letters from Christian bigots who address their foolish communications to the advertised places of meeting. I have myself been thus honored a dozen times, and Mr. Foote must have been the recipient of hundreds of such letters. But nothing else is to be expected from people whose feeble brains are muddled by religion.—G. S.

people present.) But Mr. Rees, of course, could see nothing to laugh at, and he solemnly went on to tell us that he had often looked up at the windows of Carlyle's room, where he (Carlyle, not Rees) used to smoke, and swear, and fulminate against everything and everybody. Ah me! here is another illusion gone, another of my gods smashed by the hammer of the relentless Rees! I used to think, many years ago, as I read the wondrous pages of the *French Revolution*, that Thomas Carlyle was one of the mighty men of the earth; but the erudite Rees has changed all that.

In the course of his remarkable promenades the preacher had occasion also to pass the house in which Marian Evans ("George Eliot") lived with George Henry Lewes "in their illicit love, unmindful of the sacredness of the marriage-tie. Even her philosophical and cultured mind failed to preserve her from the grossest immorality." Thus doth the chivalrous Wesleyan denounce the dead author of *Middlemarch*. If her view of right and wrong did not square with Mr. Rees' two-inch rule—well, so much the worse for her! If only some fool of a parson had gabbled a few hundred words over the union of Marian Evans and George Henry Lewes, all would have been well; but as they chose to dispense with the gabbling, that union was "grossest immorality." For myself, I profoundly believe in marriage as a civil and binding contract; but I am not inclined to throw bricks at my neighbor if he differ from me on this point.

But Mr. Rees used to pass other windows in Chelsea during his Sunday rambles. There was the house in which resided a descendant of Shelley, "an Atheist pure and simple"; and, having thus introduced the author of *Queen Mab*, the preacher proceeded to narrate some draggle-tailed "historical facts," and abused Shelley to his heart's content. Why, oh why, were these people so ill-advised as to pitch their tents in Chelsea, where the eagle-eye of the Rev. Allen Rees was ever upon them, piercing them through and through? If Carlyle had resided, say in Camberwell, his name might to-day have still been honored in literature. But alas! the glaring eye of Rees has scorched and withered him, and soon shall his name be forgotten of men!

And now, once and for all, I have done with the Rev. Allen Rees. I was first induced to listen to him by a friend who assured me that he was a "very advanced" minister. This may be true of him in some aspects which have not come under my notice: but he is certainly not very advanced, either in his knowledge of facts, or in power to raise himself above the petty conventions of his narrow sect. A man who, after praising Mr. Bradlaugh as the typical Atheist of his time, ascribing every moral, intellectual, and civic virtue to him, can gravely proceed to "argue" that Atheism and virtue are incompatible, is fit for nothing better than a pulpit, where his ignorance and banality are safe from challenge. Already, I fear, too much space has been devoted to him in these pages; but I may, perhaps, make my peace by promising that his name shall nevermore be written by me in the *Freethinker*.

GEORGE STANDRING.

PROMOTED TO GLORY.

Five colored men were executed at Mt. Vernon, Ga., Sept. 29th two colored and one white preacher officiating. There was prayer, hymn singing, and all five of the condemned made speeches, saying they were going straight to glory. Three of the condemned men, Jacobs, Brewington, and Manuel, assassinated Alexander Peterson, an influential and wealthy citizen of Montgomery County, at Alley, a small town, the motive being robbery. The murdered man made a desperate struggle for his life, but was overpowered by the three assailants. Gordon had murdered a five-year-old girl, and Strickland had killed a man in a quarrel over a dog. While in gaol Gordon regretted he wasn't out, so that he could hang some more children's heads on light wood snags like gophers. But as all of them believed in Christ they went straight to heaven, or there is no truth in scripture. "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Rom. x. 9), "With the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (x. 10), "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (x. 13).—*Ironclad Age*.

A CHRISTMAS STORY. FOR VERY LITTLE BOYS AND GIRLS

ONCE on a time, a great while ago, when men did drink more and think less, and a long way off, where there were no steam-trams or trains, there was born a very, very strange little Jew boy. He was so strange, because he was two in one. And his birth came to pass in this way. In those days there were giants, ghosts and gods. They were all of one kin, and the head ghosts were called gods. They are all gone now, but they lived then because, as I told you, men drank more but thought less, and they could not clear the world of giants, ghosts and gods. Now the three great gods were called Fater, Pilius, and Neuma. They were tied by a rope in the midst, and were known as the three in one. They found time heavy on their hands, having nothing to do but see the worlds go round. Now some said this world was made out of nothing by Fater, others that it was made by his son Pilius, who was as old as himself, but no one said it was Neuma, who some thought came from Fater, others from both of them. But many had never heard of Neuma, though he was the cunningest ghost of the lot. He was a very quiet ghost, and a little bit sly. He never said anything but bided his time. Being fond of playing pranks, he undid his rope one night, and went down to a place, where he saw a nice girl who lived there. She had large dark eyes, long curly black hair, teeth as white as milk, and was very fair to look on. Now, though Neuma was so sly, he could not do anything without the other two knowing. So when they saw what he was after, Pilius said he would go down too and be born as Neuma's baby. As the fair maid was a Jewess, of course he was born a Jew baby boy, and had to be treated as such. And this is how it came to pass, that being both a ghost and a baby, Pilius was two in one, and was in as bad a fix as when he was tied to Fater and Neuma, and was three in one. For he had to bear to be treated as a baby, though he had as much sense as a grown-up god. He had to suck milk out of a bottle, though he had made the cow the milk came from. As he grew up, he left his mother and the earthly father Neuma had got for him. He would not stick to his father's work, but liked to mix with fishers, preach, and play tricks. His first prank was at a wedding feast. The guests had drunk all the wine got for them, and were well drunk, when he got a great lot of water, and turned it all into more wine. This was thought a very fine trick indeed, in those days, when men did drink more and think less. Then he had some fun with the Devil, who flew with him to the top of a high hill and the top of a church, and tried to tempt him. But of course Pilius could joke and laugh at him all the time. Being both a ghost and a man, was at times a bother. Thus one half was one day hungry, so as he passed a fig-tree when it was not the time for figs, his other half cursed it, and it wilted away. Of course he could have made some figs out of nothing if he wished, but he was wroth, as other folks are apt to be when hungry. To have some more fun, he got an ass and a colt and rode on them into the town, where he was hailed as king. But the folk made a riot, and he was taken up. He did not mind, for being a ghost he knew they could do him no hurt. So after he was put to death, as they thought, he got up out of his tomb and put his friends in a fright, and at last went up into the sky, where he lived happy ever after.

UNCLE BENJAMIN.

A spirit rapping medium is not licensed to sell spirits. But, then, he doesn't sell spirits, he only sells the people who believe in them.

St. Peter—"Your name and address, please?" Fair Applicant—"Mrs. Astorbilt, New York." St. Peter—"Is there anything I can provide for you?" Fair Applicant—"No, thank you. I brought my crown with me."

A Manchester carter was one day swearing at his horse, which had fallen in the street, when a virtuous gentleman came out from his house opposite to ask if he knew where he would go to when he died. "It doesn't matter a d—," replied the carter; "I've friends i' both places."

THE PIOUS CHRISTIAN.

* * * * *
 But, don't think the reason
 Was malice prodigious,
 Nor black-hearted treason—
The man was religious!

He, partly, was stunted
 In mental capacity;
 In some respects, blunted
 To highest veracity.

To others he may be
 An honest believer,
 And yet, like a baby,
 An auto-deceiver.

Religion's an ailing
 Of man's racial childhood,
 When nought is availing
 But mildest of mild food.

Men never are equal
 In germ nor in growing;
 With many the sequel
 Is tardy in showing.

So do not dispraise him
 With personal feeling,
 But try to upraise him
 By Reason's appealing.

He's not, though religious,
 Much worse than the rest of us;
 We've all been religious
 At times—*ev'n the best of us!*

G. L. MACKENZIE.

ACID DROPS.

Dr. Parker has often said that, when in the pulpit, he just puts himself in the hands of God. Some time ago he solicited straight tips from the Holy Ghost. One of them seems to have arrived, and Parker has begun to prophesy. Next year, he says, is to be a bright one for England and Russia, but "Germany, especially North Germany, will have a hard time of darkness and suffering." This is not bad for a beginning. Parker will soon be a dangerous rival to Zadkiel or Old Moore.

Mr. W. T. Stead says that drink is "a frightfully dangerous thing," and that "the distributing of it should be done by the Church." We should think the Church had enough to do already in distributing *one* kind of spirit. However, there might be some economy in going to the same establishment for *both* kinds.

"God helping me," says Mr. Keir Hardie, "I will try to do what is right." He should try to do it whether God helps him or not. Of course we are ready to take Mr. Hardie's word for it that God *does* help him, but the result is not very magnificent. Charles Bradlaugh did better without divine assistance.

Mr. Keir Hardie seems veering about a little in regard to Christianity. At a recent meeting he said that England was on the down grade, and that judging Christianity by the church life of the country to-day, he condemned it as a fraud and a huge failure. At this rate, Mr. Keir Hardie may soon become a Secularist, and even drop his talk about "God."

There was a mosque at the World's Fair, where prayers were said daily. One day a pious lady entered into a chat with an Oriental, and at the end she said, "I hope you go to church every Sunday, like a Christian." "No," was the quick reply, "I go every day, like a Turk."

According to the Rev. B. Darley, rector of Harthill, near Leeds, Thursday will be an unlucky day for the next twenty-five years. But is not every day unlucky for England with such imbeciles in the pulpit?

At the Central Criminal Court, on Thursday, December 14, Frederick Leigh Gardner surrendered and pleaded Guilty to an indictment charging him with libelling Mrs. Hypatia Bradlaugh Bonner. Gardner had issued a catalogue of books for sale which included the so-called "Life of C. Bradlaugh"

by Mackay, and described it as libellous and rigorously suppressed.—Mr. Cluer, for the prosecution, explained the circumstances under which the charge arose, and said that the libel complained of had reference to a (professed) biography of the late Mr. Charles Bradlaugh, M.P., by Mr. C. R. Mackay, in which appeared statements which reflected on the memory of Mr. Charles Bradlaugh and on certain members of his family.—Mr. Gill, for the defence, said that the sale of the work by Defendant was not done maliciously, and that he tendered his sincere apology to the lady for the pain and annoyance that the publication of such a libel had caused her. He had arranged to give up the name of the person who had supplied him with the books, and to pay all costs of the prosecution. This the prosecutrix accepted, and the Common Serjeant, having regard to the circumstances of the case, bound the Defendant over in a recognisance of £50, to come up for sentence if called upon.

In Northern Labrador, two hundred Indians have been starved to death, despite unavailing prayers to the great Spirit Father.

The Rev. J. Laurence is hon. sec. of the Church Promotion of Kindness to Animals Society, but he holds that "Christ's eating at the Passover of the lamb that had been slain, was a recognition of the divine order that animals are to suffer and die for man." This will hardly attract Christian vegetarians to the C.P.K.A.S.

T. B. Horton, a churchwarden at Dalston, has been sentenced to nine months' "hard" for forgery.

Lizzie Jane Perry, aged twenty, of Tottenhall, near Wolverhampton, drowned herself in the canal. The poor girl left a note with her grandmother, in which she said "the Lord is with me." Not an Atheist, this, Mr. Talmage!

An Italian mob at Bitonto was about to celebrate a religious festival, partly by means of a battery of fireworks. A Custom House officer tried to seize the material, and the result was a riot in which three peasants were shot by soldiers. When the soldiers retired the pious mob caught the Custom House officer, soaked him in petroleum, and set him on fire. Beautiful religion!

Mr. Newnes, the proprietor of *Tit-Bits* has the credit of being a liberal-minded man. In that paper for Dec. 16 occurs the following: "J. L. was employed in a large house of business. He is atheistically inclined, and has been trying to convince his fellow-employees that the Bible is not true. The employer hears of this, and although he has no business fault whatever to find with him, has summarily dismissed him, on the ground that he was having a corrupting influence over the others. J. L. asks: 'Has he a right to discharge me for any reason except a business one?'—Certainly he has. If he thinks that the doctrines you are inculcating are pernicious in respect of the characters of the rest of his people, he is perfectly justified in getting rid of you." In one sense an employer has the right to discharge an employe for any or no reason, but who but a bigot would consider him perfectly justified in doing so on the sole ground of difference of opinion?

If Mr. Newnes or his *Tit-Bits* editor happened to be a Wesleyan and were working for a Churchman, he would think it hard to be dismissed on account of his religious opinions. But what is fair between Christian and Atheist is equally fair between Churchman and Wesleyan. According to the *Tit-Bits* philosophy, people should all live, work, and perhaps enjoy themselves in sects; which is about the narrowest and paltriest social system that was ever ventilated.

Talmage's latest production is *From Manger to Throne*. The title is reverently adapted from the popular life of Garfield, *From Log Cabin to White House*. Talmage evidently includes his Savior in the long series of "Men who have Risen."

Parson Diggle writes, in the *Nineteenth Century*, in a spiteful style of his more liberal colleagues on the London School Board. The clericals have got in the thin end of their wedge in making an inquisition into the religious views of teachers, and if they can drive it home as they wish, the Board schools would be converted into seminaries of sectarian instruction.

The churches no longer war against the world, but are confessedly secularised in the endeavor to induce the people to come in. At the Upper Tooting Church Institute, which is held up in the *Church Times* as a model to be imitated, they have a gymnasium and billiard room, where they allow smoking. But after all, the main attraction is the opportunity of meeting the opposite sex, and we fancy the institution of lady ushers, which is spreading in America, is bound to come to the front in England. The influence of the Holy Ghost is nothing compared to the influence of woman.

The refusal of the Government to supply a convict with a set of artificial teeth reminds the *Eastern Daily Press* of the clerical authority for stating that the gaolers in "another place" are more accommodating. For on a wicked and toothless old woman being reminded, as she lay a-dying, of the wailing and gnashing of teeth reserved for those who depart impenitent, she perkily rejoined, with a chuckle, "Let them gnash 'em as has 'em." "My good woman," said the parson, much shocked, "the teeth will be provided." Clearly he was not chaplain to one of her Majesty's gaols.

During the last ten years burial fees have brought the vicar of Hampstead over £9,000. Each interment costs the parish 16s., and meant 8s. to the vicar. Special meetings were held, and a deputation asked the vicar to take a fixed sum, but he declines to make any alteration.

Another of God's houses took fire last Sunday. It was St. Luke's Church, Bermondsey. Considerable damage was done to the choir and vestry. The organist and blower had to be rescued by a ladder; not Jacob's Ladder, but an ordinary wooden one. The age of miracles is past.

A glimpse at the superstitious character of early Christianity appears in the translation of a Greek Christian invocation on a papyrus in the Edwards Collection, University College, London, which is given in the *Academy*, of Dec. 16. Here it is: "Ye angels and archangels who guard the floods of heaven, since I have a quarrel with a headless dog [heretic], if he comes, overpower him and rescue me through the might of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Amen. Iao Sabaoth. Thou who barest God inviolate, spotless Virgin Mother of Christ, remember that thou saidst this to thyself, again heal the woman who carries this amulet. Amen."

Canon Monahan must feel chagrin at the failure of his recent act of bigotry. He moved on the Nottingham School Board that no teacher who does not profess belief in the Divinity of Our Lord (of course he meant *his* Lord) should be allowed to give religious instruction. The motion for this paltry Inquisition did not find a seconder.

Miss Annie Taylor, who has seen something of Thibet, has not come across the Mahatmas. "I don't deny," she says, "that there may be hermits in the country, living apart from the people, absorbed in meditation, but so far from being venerated as teachers and sages, they are despised as madmen."

Abyssinia boasts of having been a Christian country for fifteen hundred years, long before the mass of Europe was Christianised. Christianity is there seen in its original light as a vast monastic system which has left the people in a state of barbarism. How much the divine religion, in its long course has served to civilise the country, may be gathered from the recent account of an atrocity committed by the Emperor. Some time ago a conspiracy was discovered against the life of the Negus Menelik. Well-known members of the Court were implicated, but in view of the influence they possessed, the Emperor considered it advisable to pardon them. A youthful attendant on the Negus had been aware of the secret movement against His Majesty, and took to flight on the conspiracy being revealed. He was captured, and, without the pretence of a trial, was condemned to have his tongue cut out and one of his feet sawn off. The sentence was duly carried out; but not content with the torture to which the boy had been subjected, the Negus, eight days afterwards, ordered that his right hand should be cut off, and that he should then be left exposed in the desert, in the full glare of the sun, until he was devoured by vultures. This inhuman act on the part of the Emperor, who professes Christianity, has caused universal horror in the country.

Baron Kette, a Prussian nobleman, says: "I found everywhere in Abyssinia a confirmation of what I frequently found in the East—namely, that the professors of Christianity are, in all moral respects, far below the Mahometans. If anyone looks there for probity and fidelity, let him not knock at the door of a Christian, or he will find himself cruelly deceived."

In Armenia bread is now selling at twelve times its normal value, and the poorer classes are threatened with starvation this winter. The Lord's tender mercies are over all his works.

An enterprising and no doubt reverend individual advertises in the religious papers magic-lantern slides as accompaniments to sermons. A preacher's words fail him in adequate description of Heaven; he makes a sign, and on the wall of the sacred building is forthwith displayed a picture of the place, or, wanting to terrify his congregation by the horrors of the opposite neighborhood, a hair-lifting representation of the abode paved with good intentions can be thrown on the screen. The slides are highly recommended by their purveyor; they are especially powerful in "winning souls." In this respect they have been successful wherever tried. Good taste is not the characteristic of the howling evangelist, but most people will be of opinion that the blasphemy laws should include others besides Freethinkers and scoffers.—*Weekly Dispatch*.

Some clergymen take little pains to get up or buy new sermons, though they can be purchased very cheaply. "Peter Lombard" writes in the *Church Times*, Dec. 15:—"I know of a country parish where the vicar has two sermons for every Sunday in the year, and they all do duty in turn once on a Sunday, so covering two years, and thus the congregation know beforehand exactly what the text is going to be. This beats the vicar of Boost, who, according to his biographer, F. E. Paget, had 300 sermons bequeathed to him by his grandfather, and used to preach them in turn, never mind what the season was."

The Church organs are howling against the Parish Councils Bill, which they fear will destroy the influence of the parson as the little God Almighty of the parish. They have used their power in such a way that the sooner it is taken from them the better.

The *Daily News* (Dec. 16) thus alludes to the opposition to the use of chloroform, which has relieved so much suffering: "There was a conservative opposition which called itself religious. What, it was asked, were women not to suffer from the curse of Eve? What impiety! This was on a level with the Covenanting objection to the conduct of a Scotch lady who used on her farm some rude but new-fangled sort of winnowing machine, thereby creating a private wind for her own secular purposes contrary to the manifest will of heaven, which had perhaps sent a windless day. To the Covenanters this seemed blasphemous behavior, and so seemed the early use of chloroform by Simpson."

The *Christian Commonwealth* writes anent the death of Professor Tyndall, a leaderette on "The Changing Attitudes of Infidelity." The measure of its sense may be judged by the following: "In the case of the Tyndall-Huxley school, its death was hastened by the advent of the extreme critical school." Who but a Christian editor would ever fancy that the application of science to history and criticism meant the death of a scientific school?

Talmage took home a chunk of sulphur from the Dead Sea, as a proof that "the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah, brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven" (Gen. xix. 12), a text which shows that heaven and hell are much alike in their constituent elements. An enterprising Yankee has now got up a scheme to convert the Lord's rain to practical use. He proposes a company to utilise the salt and sulphur, which probably gave rise to the legend.

What does Christmas represent? It is supposed to commemorate the birth of the son of God, nay, of God himself, into human form, for the purpose of redeeming the race from eternal hell. The occasion should be one of awful solemnity. The customs show it represents something quite different. Feasting, evergreens and games, show it is the rebirth of vegetation, the renewed life of the sun-god that is commemorated. Jolly old Father Christmas is a down-

right Pagan, and has no relationship to the man of sorrows who came to so unfortunate an end in Jerusalem.

Hail Father Christmas, and the baby god of Christendom! What with carols, cant, chills, ills, bills, pills, plum-puddings, pauperism, all-night prayer, dear coals and influenza, we ought to have a high old time. Bring forth the fiery untamed snapdragon, and let us revel. The Matabele are massacred, the Parliament of Religions has dispersed, the unemployed are quiet, and Christianity triumphs along the whole line. Glory to God in the highest! Now let us dine!

The season of mince-pies reminds us of two mottoes credibly reported to appear on the walls of a Boston restaurant. The first read, "Try our Mince Pies." On the second was the legend, "Prepare to Meet thy God."

The following act of a "pageant" which took place at Christmas 1410, is extracted from the *Records of Norwich*, and throws light on the original Pagan character of the festival. "John Hadman, a wealthy citizen, made disport with his neighbors and friends, and was crowned King of Christmas. He rode in state through the city, dressed forth in silks and tinsel, and preceded by twelve persons habited as the twelve months of the year." Here we have something like the original signification of Christmas. The *Records* continue, "After King Christmas, followed Lent, clothed in white garments trimmed with herring skins, on horseback, the horse being decorated with trappings of oyster shells, being indicative that sadness and a holy time should follow Christmas revelling. In this way they rode through the city, accompanied by numbers in various grotesque dresses, making disport and merriment, some clad in armor; others dressed as devils chased the people, and sorely affrighted the women and children; others wearing skin dresses and contereifing bears, wolves, lions, and other animals, and endeavoring to imitate the animals they represented, in roaring and raving, alarming the cowardly and appalling the stoutest hearts." Such was Christmas in ye olden time.

Truth, fresh from its victory over that unsavory couple, the Zierenbergs, attacks a spiritist fraud under the heading, "Miss Marryat's Bogus Bogey." In her book, *There is No Death*, Miss Florence Marryat makes much of the affectionate messages she received from her stepson, Mr. F. Lenis, who was drowned at "Callao, in the Brazils." Now Mr. Labouchere has heard from Lieutenant F. J. Davis, who was in the same ship with the same stepson, and knows that his death on the coast of Peru was totally different from that told by the ghost, or rather the medium, and that if he visited his stepmother in an affectionate manner, his sentiments must have suffered a sea change. Mr. Labouchere charitably concludes that Miss Marryat is the victim of a fraud, and probably the spiritists will say the fraudulent story-teller is the spirit, though Lieutenant Davis certifies that he was eminently truthful when in the flesh.

Vaillant, the Anarchist, it appears, was brought up in a Christian seminary, where he was a favorite pupil, serving in the chapel as an acolyte at the altar.

The Archdeacon of Northern Japan has been assaulted by the populace, and it is said the police refused to protect him. It is curious that the missionaries of peace and goodwill draw ruin on themselves nearly everywhere they go.

From the new Mahatmic Telephone Express Astral Line between Thibet, Adyar, Holloway, and San Francisco, we learn that the business manager of the Theosophical Society's Headquarters, M. S. E. Gopalacharlin, has departed to Devachan by a short cut, having previously embezzled the entire amount of the Olcott Testimonial, 2,600 rupees, the whole of the H. P. B. Memorial Fund, 3,700 rupees, a private gift to Colonel Olcott from London friends of 341 rupees, and other sums, amounting altogether to over 8,649 rupees. The Mahatmas made no communication to the Colonel of the intended fraud of his employé, because Gopalacharlin had become possessor of important secrets of the order. We learn, too, that a certain American gentleman who sent bogus Mahatma letters to Mrs. Besant, is trying to supplant Colonel Olcott, but if the Colonel bears his present loss with fortitude, will not be allowed to do so.

One of the latest documents issued by the Esoteric section, tells a cock and bull story of a Yogi having seen a true Mahatma in the Himalayas. The Mahatma was perfectly naked; his eyes could not be looked at, his touch was like an electric shock; and his body, though it looked like butter, was as hard as steel. The Mahatma said a change must be made in India, where Olcott rules, but not in Europe and America, under the regime of Besant and Judge. The Mahatmas wish it to be known that they never appear in such horrid form as this, and their instructions are only conveyed through the before-mentioned Mahatmic Astral Line. Messrs. W. R. Old and Edge, who did important service in the compilation of the *Key to Theosophy*, are for the present suspended from the Esoteric section, for reflections on the Western rulers of Theosophy. If they will put themselves in communication with the Mahatmic Telephone Express, they may learn greater secrets than they will ever discover in the E. S.

An orthodox minister went from one town to another in a Western state lately, both of them supposed to be very orthodox communities. In his sermon in the town to which he went as visitor, he said that the church college in the town, where he then lived, had fifteen hundred students, sons of pious people, and not one of the students could repeat the ten commandments to save his life, and if told to turn to a chapter in Genesis they would just as likely turn to Revelation, as they did not know one end of the Bible from the other.

Hugh Price Hughes has been holding forth at Farnworth, where he collected £70 to save souls in West London. Farnworth must be a very holy place to be able to spare that amount to convert the London heathen. Mr Hughes said that there were thirty Methodists in the House of Commons; that was good, very good, but he wanted to see a hundred there "sitting in solid rows." Mr. Hughes further said that if the Christians were only united they could "do anything in the country." But, thank goodness, there is no likelihood of their being united till after the day of judgment. It would go ill with "infidels" if the Christians were in a position to "do anything in the country." Mr. Hughes has already concocted a wretched lie about a converted Atheist shoemaker, which he sells for eightpence. That is how the early Christians began—with lying. Afterwards they went on to murder, in logical progression. So would Mr. Hughes and his like if they had the power and opportunity.

Dr. Horton, the Hampstead preacher, believes himself to be inspired. He doesn't say so plainly, but he says that all God's ministers are inspired, and it is to be presumed he includes himself in the category. Inspired men, however, don't seem more sensible than their neighbors. Dr. Horton, for instance, has been talking some dreadful nonsense about marriage and divorce. Marriage, he says, should be indissoluble, but then it must be a true marriage; if two people came together without God's will it was no marriage at all. But in case of proceedings in the Divorce Court, how is "God's will" to be ascertained? Should an "inspired" minister be called in to settle that question? The fact is, Dr. Horton is as equivocal as other oracles. He is simply hedging. Let him express himself straightforwardly, and take the responsibility of his judgment.

Dr. Dawson Burns, who was mixed up in "The Liberator," was to have given a Temperance discourse at Woodbridge; but a good many of the victims live in that locality, and handbills were circulated, asking how much of his fees he had given to the Relief Fund, and what sacrifice he is making for those who trusted in his name and lost. Dr. Dawson Burns took a cup of tea at Woodbridge and returned to London. The meeting had to be abandoned. This pious gentleman will have to pray to the Lord against his enemies, for unless Providence intervenes they seem determined to dog his footsteps.

The late Mr. Joseph Rind, of Hadleigh, Suffolk, left £1,000 to the Church Missionary Society and £1,000 to an Asylum for Idiots. It seems a distinction without much difference. However, it will all come right if the Missionary Society spends the £1,000 in converting the idiots. The Bishop of Exeter will confirm them with the greatest pleasure.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, December 24, Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C. : at 7, "A Freethought Sermon on God's Birthday."

January 7 and 14, Hall of Science; 21, Manchester; 28, Portsmouth.

February 4, 11, 18, Hall of Science; 25, Liverpool.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. CHARLES WATTS' ENGAGEMENTS.—December 24 and 31, 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.

OWING to the Christmas holidays, Lecture Notices, etc., should be sent in forthwith, reaching us by Saturday morning.

ATHEIST.—Many thanks for the Bruno portrait.

F. MALVERN.—We can hardly see our way to opening a "Sale and Exchange" column, at least at present. It would involve the employment of some one to look after it. Glad to hear you say that "the N.S.S. *Almanack* is splendid, and should be bought by all Freethinkers."

C. LONG.—We are unfortunately not able to give a portrait of Charles Newman. The others will appear in due course.

KOOT HOOMI LAL SINGH.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."

E. D. H. D.—Cuttings always welcome.

T. DUNBAR.—As you say, halls are generally very badly ventilated, and this is an element of danger to our speakers, especially to those who are energetic in their delivery. The conditions make a very great difference to the lecturer. Mr. Foote, for instance, has been fagged to death by three lectures in a moderate sized hall; he has also lectured three times in a big building without turning a hair.

A. W. P.—*Answers* has a good deal to answer for—in common, we suppose, with other purveyors of cheap slops to the read-as-you-run multitude. There is not a word of truth in the statement that "The poet Shelley feared being buried alive," and that "in order to guard against it he ordered his heart to be removed." Shelley was drowned off the coast of Italy. His body, being washed ashore days afterwards, was burnt on the beach, in accordance with the Italian law. The heart, being gorged with blood, as was natural, did not burn readily; and Trelawny, who superintended the obsequies, snatched it from the funeral pyre. Such are the facts. The statement in *Answers* is fiction.

L. HILL.—We do not know enough of the late J. P. Adams to be able to write an obituary. It is strange that those about him at his death did not communicate with us. We hope your health will allow you to write something yourself.

I. WILLIS.—Thanks. See paragraph.

SAMUEL HALE, late chairman of the Camberwell and Peckham Branch of the Christian Evidence Society, wrote to a certain strong-colored champion of Christianity, saying that Mr. S. Hartmann, an N.S.S. vice-president, would be responsible for half the expenses of a public debate, the whole of the proceeds to go to some good institution. No reply or acknowledgment has been received. The letter was posted on Dec. 11.

W. HOLLAND.—All in good time. We don't think the Labor Church movement has much vitality.

T. BIRTLEY.—Thanks. See "Sugar Plums."

R. CHAPMAN.—See paragraph.

W. D.—Glad you think the cartoons worth the twopence. We note your suggestion, but we must do our duty on such imperative occasions.

B. S. X. asks whether the Bradlaugh Memorial Hall Company (Limited) is going on, and "what prospect the shareholders have of getting something in return for their money." This correspondent was induced to take shares more than a year ago, and beyond receiving his certificate he has had no communication whatever from the Company. He has written to the secretary and received no reply.—We are sorry we cannot give B. S. X. any information, except that we believe that the Company will have to wind up.

E. D. H. DALY.—Thanks for cuttings.

E. O. LOCKWOOD, 1 Pleasant-place, Gainsborough, will be glad to hear from local Freethinkers willing to assist in arranging for Sunday night lectures. Gainsborough sadly wants stirring up. It is given over on Sundays to churches and public-houses.

F. A.—Shall appear.

OLD FREETHINKER.—Forwarded as desired.

A. JAMES.—Mr. Foote is better, but still bears about a little of the after-effects of influenza.

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

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

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Der Lichtfreund—Boston Investigator—Open Court—Freidenker—Two Worlds—Der Arme Teufel

—Western Figaro—Liberator—Liberty—Clarion—Flaming Sword—Truthseeker—Fritankaren—Secular Thought—Progressive Thinker—Twentieth Century—De Dageraad—Weekly Bulletin—Isle of Man Times—Anti-Clericale—Post—Watts's Literary Guide—Boston Globe—Bulletin Mensuel—Church Times.

LITERARY communications to be addressed to the Editor, 14 Clerkenwell-green, London, E.C. All business communications to Mr. R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter-street, London, E.C. *The Freethinker* will be forwarded, direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One Year, 10s. 6d.; Half Year, 5s. 3d.; Three Months, 2s. 8d.

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

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

SPECIAL.

THERE seems to be a conspiracy on the part of some dastardly scoundrels against the *Freethinker*. We hear from various parts of the country that newsagents have been told that this journal has been lately threatened with a prosecution, and that they are incurring a serious danger in selling it. This has had the effect of terrifying some newsagents, who have refused to sell the paper any longer. Of course the *Freethinker* is not likely to be prosecuted again, and the tale is a pure invention; nevertheless it is one that may, for some little time, do us damage. We therefore beg our friends to do their best to counteract the influence of these surreptitious bigots. They can do this in two ways: first, by disabusing the minds of newsagents whom they hear to have been frightened or prejudiced; secondly, by ordering an extra copy for a while, and circulating it amongst their liberal-minded acquaintances. It is also a great assistance to induce newsagents to display our weekly contents-sheet.

A NEW YEAR'S GIFT.

TWELVE months ago a "Shilling Week" was for the first time announced in our columns. It was at a time when Shilling Competitions were in their height of popularity, before they were nipped by the decision of a court of law. We asked whether there were not many readers of the *Freethinker* who would give a shilling, or even more, to the Secular cause, instead of investing it in a kind of lottery; and we put the matter to the test by desiring them to send in their shillings (or more) during the first week in 1893. The result was that nearly £130 was raised in this way.

Later in the year, in July, we had a Shilling Month. It was the opinion of some of our readers that this was a better season for obtaining subscriptions. Perhaps it might be in ordinary years, but these times are exceptional, and there was a considerable falling off in the amount realised.

We are now going to try another experiment. All our readers are earnestly invited to make a New Year's Gift to Freethought. Any sum will be welcome, from a shilling upwards. There will be a good week for each to decide what he can afford to devote to this object; and from January 1 to January 8 (1894) we shall be happy to open letters and extract the "gifts of the faithful." Every penny will be acknowledged in the *Freethinker* as before. And as example is a great aid to precept, we hereby announce that the list shall be headed with our own subscription of one guinea.

Now for the allotment of the proceeds. One half shall be paid over to the General Fund of the National Secular Society. The other half shall be invested in

fully paid up shares in the National Secular Hall Society, whose object, as our readers know, is to convert the London Hall of Science into a first-rate Secular Institute, at once suitable headquarters for the Freethought party and a worthy memorial to Charles Bradlaugh. Many Freethinkers who have not taken shares, or cannot even now afford to do so, owing to the bad times, may be able and willing to aid the scheme in this fashion. *All* are begged to do their *best* on this occasion. A trifling self-denial on the part of half our readers would produce a very handsome result. And we have a right to ask them to be generous, for we have on our own part made some sacrifices for Freethought.

G. W. FOOTE.

SUGAR PLUMS.

We have not issued a Christmas Number of the *Freethinker*, but it is our intention, as already announced, to make a Special Number of our first issue in January, 1894. It will be well illustrated, with a special lot of reading matter, including an article by Mr. G. J. Holyoake. The number of pages will be twenty-four and the price threepence. We imagine that all our readers, even the poorest, will cheerfully pay the extra price for this New Year's Number.

There was a fine audience at the London Hall of Science on Sunday evening, when Mr. Foote lectured on "What Has Become of the Devil?" The applause at the end was enthusiastic and prolonged. This evening (Christmas Eve) Mr. Foote lectures again on a seasonable topic, his discourse being entitled "A Freethought Sermon on God's Birthday." Before the lecture he will perform the interesting ceremony of "naming" a little child.

Mr. Charles Watts lectured last Sunday in Sheffield to three enthusiastic audiences. The effects of the recent coal crisis caused the morning and afternoon gatherings to be rather smaller than Mr. Watts usually has, but in the evening the hall was filled, and a lively discussion followed the lecture. Our colleague was in excellent form, and his answers to the opponents were heartily cheered by the large audience. This evening, Sunday, December 24, Mr. Watts lectures in Baskerville Hall, Birmingham.

Mr. G. J. Holyoake is "all alive O," despite his age and the two or three knockings-about he has had under 'buses and cabs. We see that he is re-writing his "Public Speaking and Debate" for the *Co-operative News*. The work has been largely increased, and should command a good sale in book form.

Mr. J. M. Wheeler's *Bible Studies* is reviewed (rather late in the day) in the December number of *Watts's Literary Guide*. The review is highly laudatory. "One might search," the writer says, "with the lantern of Diogenes, a long time before finding a man who knew more of the dim recesses, the cavernous secrets, the barbaric origins of religious beliefs and customs than Joseph Mazzini Wheeler."

Mr. Herbert Spencer has much benefited by his stay at St. Leonards, and is now able to get on with his work, though he was much troubled by the death of his old friend Professor Tyndall.

To-Day asks the old question, Is Christianity played out? and evidently thinks the question must be answered in the affirmative, for it says, "a religion that has outgrown its strength to be up and doing, that sits inert, a voiceless mummy, bedizened with the trappings of mere word-worship, is a thing best buried and forgotten."

Mr. Frederic Harrison lectured at Prince's Hall, Piccadilly, last Sunday, on "The Ethics of the Gospel and the Ethics of Science." He said that "Love thy neighbor as thyself" would not compare with Comte's "Live for Humanity." All religions had a doctrine about human nature, and that of the Gospel was that the human heart was desperately wicked, and sought evil as the sparks flew upward. Yet into this blackness a mysterious grace entered and transformed it. Human nature was too good and sound for this vilification, and not

ethereal enough for this sanctification. It undermined morality, because it made nonsense of ethics. Human nature, said Mr. Harrison, was strong and noble to have drained this potion to the dregs and to have recovered from it.

A crematory has been put up in Graceland Cemetery, Chicago. The fee for incineration will be 25 dollars.

Colonel Ingersoll has been lecturing a good deal this winter, both in New York and New England.

We see that Frau Hedwig Henrich Wilhelmi has left America for another lecturing tour in Germany. Her last one ended in imprisonment and exile for blasphemy.

A members' general meeting of the Finsbury Park Branch was held on Thursday, December 14, at 91 Mildmay Park, Mr. Ward in the chair, when the secretary reported a successful season of propagandist work, 52 lectures having been delivered in Finsbury Park, while the financial report of the treasurer showed a balance in hand. Auditors were duly appointed. Balance-sheet to be submitted at annual general meeting on Sunday, Jan. 28, 1894. Secretary reported that library had been handed over to the Society's Executive to augment the Hall of Science Library, where books can now be obtained by members. Those members who have books are requested to return same to Hall of Science.

Next Sunday (Dec. 31) the Battersea Branch will hold its quarterly tea and soiree. During the evening the Marlowe Dramatic Company will give two sketches. Dancing will be kept up till a late hour. Freethinkers who wish to enjoy a jolly New Year's Eve should purchase a ticket at once; the price is only sixpence, including the tea.

Mr. J. B. Coppock's astronomical lecture at Wimbledon is well reported in the *Surrey Independent*. We read that there was a large audience, that the lecturer was frequently applauded, and that "a hearty vote of thanks closed a most enjoyable evening." Mr. Coppock teaches the Science Classes at the Camberwell Secular Hall.

There has been some difficulty in obtaining Freethought literature at Pelton Fell since the hubbub caused by Parson Birley and Curate Stack, but our readers there will now be able to get what they require by applying to Mr. J. Winn, newsagent, at the Old Post Office.

South Shields Freethinkers will please note that the local Branch's third annual social gathering is to take place on Tuesday, December 26, in the Baring-street Infants' School, at 8 prompt. Double ticket (including first-class refreshment) 5s.; single—gentlemen 3s. 6d., ladies 2s. It is sure to be an enjoyable evening.

The Liverpool and Bootle Secular Sick and Tontine Society, the first of the kind, has just completed another year. The annual meeting will be held on January 31, at the Oddfellows' Hall, at 11.30 a.m., when it is hoped several new members will be enrolled, and show that they have a belief in "taking thought for the morrow." During the past year the death-roll has been heavy, and the drain on the society's resources onerous, but this has been provided for, and the new year will open with a substantial reserve fund notwithstanding.

We are pleased to see that the work of Mr. H. Croft Hiller *Against Dogma and Free Will*, which we noticed at length some months ago, has now reached a second edition with the additional title, *And For Weissmanism*. The work is both revised and enlarged with replies to criticism, and in the Introduction, Mr. Hiller expresses his obligations to Mr. William Platt Ball for his suggestions. "He further has a high appreciation of the moral effect likely to ensue from the outspoken manner in which he has been supported by a scientist of Mr. Ball's eminence." As a reply to those critics who have taxed him with assailing morality, the author has added a short essay on Social Expediency, in which he deals with the punishment of criminals, the elimination of the unfit, and contrasts the methods of the followers of science with those of the "priests of the antique." Holding that "no religion which affronts human reason is tolerable," he has been impelled to attack the prevailing faith as adverse to the best interests of humanity, because "it appeals no longer, as truth, to the human understanding; it opposes all

that is best in human nature by exercising hypocrisy in every man, woman and child who professes it; it is the very antipodes of honesty, and honesty is the main attribute essential to the higher, and conspicuously absent from the present social development." We again recommend Mr. Hiller's book to all interested in question of heredity and social evolution.

De Dageraad continues its publication of Herr Rotteveel's study of the mysteries of Mithras, which is an important contribution to the subject of mythology and the origin of Christianity.

Dr. Westbrook, writing in *Secular Thought*, says, "I know Tennyson said

Is there no other life?
Pitch this one high."

These lines are not by Tennyson, but by Matthew Arnold.

PROFANE STORIES

From *W. R. Le Fanu's* recent volume, "Seventy Years of Irish Life."

A CONVERT'S PRICE.

Many stories—how true I do not know—were told by Mr. A—and his wonderful would-be converts. Here is one. An old widow, Bryan, called on him, and on being shown into his library and asked by him what her business was, she said, "Well now, your reverence, it's what—I'd like to turn Protestant." Mr. A.: "Why do you wish to change your religion?" Widow B.: "Well now, I'm told your reverence gives a blanket and a leg of mutton to anyone that turns." Mr. A.: "Do you mean to say that you would sell your soul for a blanket?" Widow B.: "No, your reverence, not without the leg of mutton."

A GOOD CATHOLIC.

A Roman Catholic clergyman told me of a woman in Cork who was complaining to her priest of the misconduct of her son; that he was always fighting, gambling, and drinking, and often beat her when he was drunk. "Ah!" said the priest, "is he a Catholic at all?" "Begorra, your reverence," said she, "it's what he's too good a Catholic. If that boy had his will, he'd stick every Protestant from here to Tralee."

DEGENERATE TIMES.

As an example of what Lady Morgan called "hating one another for the love of God," Mr. Le Fanu says: "Not very long ago an old Orangeman in the county of Down was asked: 'Are the times as good now, Tom, as when you were a boy?' 'Faith they are not,' answered Tom; 'they'd take you up now and try you for shooting a Papist!'"

A PARROT STORY.

For fear of accidents, the parrot was not allowed into the breakfast-room till after prayers. One morning, however, by some mischance, he was there; but behaved with becoming decorum until prayers were nearly over. My father had got to the middle of the Lord's Prayer when, in a loud voice, Poll called out, "As many as are of that opinion will say 'Aye'; as many as are of the contrary opinion will say 'No.' The 'Ayes' have it." I need hardly say, prayers were finished under difficulties.

AN ALTAR-PIECE.

To return to Father Rufus. One of his oldest friends was Father Prout, the eccentric parish priest of Ardnagehy, in the county of Cork; it was from him that Father Frank Mahony took his well-known *nom de plume*, under which he wrote so charmingly. When Father Rufus was in Rome studying for the Church, old Prout came there to purchase an altar-piece for his chapel—a subscription had been raised for the purpose—and called on him to ask his assistance and advice. He went with him to many dealers and artists whom he knew; but, after a long day's search, nothing was found to satisfy his friend. A few days afterwards Prout called again to say he had just found exactly what he wanted; but, before buying it he would like Father Rufus to see it and give his opinion. When he saw it he exclaimed, "Why, man, that is a Diana!" "I don't care what it is," said Prout; "it's lovely, and I'll have it; those chaps of mine at Ardnagehy will never know the difference."

CHILDREN'S PARTY AT LONDON HALL OF SCIENCE.

I have pleasure in acknowledging the following subscriptions, and shall be glad of further donations to enable the committee to give the little ones their annual treat:—G. Anderson, £3; Mr. Hurren, 2s. 6d.; J. Brumage, 1s.; Mrs. Marks, 10s.; S. A., 5s.; T. Bullock, 2s.; R. H. Side, 5s.; H. C. B., 2s. 6d.; R. Forder, 2s. 6d. Per Miss Vance: Dick Edwards, 2s. 6d.; A Friend, 6d.—R. FORDER, treasurer.

DOES GOD CARE?

I HAVE left the faith of churches,
I am free from its tyrant rod;
And yet I am just as happy
As when I prayed to a god.
I share the joys and the pleasures
That other mortals share:
The world may frown on the infidel,
But God never seemeth to care.

My home is as glad as the Christian's,
It is lit with love's bright glow;
They never dream of a heaven above
Who have one here below;
I am blessed with a wife who is loving,
And with little ones guileless and fair—
The world may frown on the infidel,
But God never seemeth to care.

And when amid fields I wander,
I mark that the little birds sing
The same bright song of gladness
To me as to parson or king;
And the winds waft just as gently,
And the flowers bloom just as fair—
The world may frown on the infidel,
But God never seemeth to care.

Methinks that the great God of nature,
If such a God there be,
He doth not the creeds and the dogmas heed
Of puny things like me.
That life lived well, livod nobly,
May to God be the holiest prayer;
Man may build the scaffold,
But Nature to all is fair.

—Liberator.

WALLACE NELSON.

EBONY RELIGION.

"If de wedder grows much wuss and de work harder all de time," said an Alabama colored man, "dis nigger will have a call to preach."

"Do you beleebe in prayer, Uncle Jupe?" "I should think so; I allus pray dey may nebber catch me stealing chickens, an' praise de Lord dey nebber hab yeh."

Peablossom—"Uncle Mose, does you beleebe we is all made ob dust?" Uncle Mose—"Sutinly we is." Peablossom—"Den de cultured folks must be made ob coal dust." Uncle Mose—"De Lord! I nebber think ob dat, but I reckon we is." Peablossom—"How erbout de yaller niggers?"

A negro preacher in South Georgia county asked his congregation for a short vacation. An old sister objected, giving as a reason, "dat de Debil nebber takes no hollerday, but he git in his wu'k ev'y minute." The parsons, however, are not so industrious. They like enjoying themselves too well.

"Why do you keep up a revival all the time in your church?" was asked of an Arkansaw negro preacher. "Has ter do it, sah," he replied. "Whut de land boom is ter de small town de 'vival is ter de Church, an' ef yer let it go down de cause gwine ter suffer. Tell yer whut's er fack, ef I didn't keep dese niggers shoutin' all de time da'd let me starve 'or def. Ef er nigger preacher let's de rope slack he's gone."

One of the most eloquent preachers of Chicago tells a good joke at his own expense as follows:—"When I was in Florida last winter I preached to a negro congregation one Sunday, excusing myself from saying much on account of my poor health. The colored minister, in his closing prayer, said: 'O good Lawd! bless our brother L—, who has preached to us in hes pore weak way.'"

Brother Bones went down South to preach to the darkies. He died there, and they record the value of his services thus:

Here lie the bones of Brother Jones,
Who lately came among us;
But he might as well have gone to hell,
For all the good he brung us!

Church was over, and, as usual, a company of women were standing about the doorway laughing, though probably not concerning the sermon. Soon a young man acquainted with the group approached, saying, "Aren't you ever going home? You are blocking up the way like Balaam's ass." "You are wrong there," replied a young lady, with a toss of the head. "It was the angels who blocked the way, and the ass made a fuss about it."

CHRISTIAN PARADOXES.

LORD BACON, who died on April 9, 1626, left, amongst a mass of writings upon many subjects, a MSS which was discovered some years after his death, entitled, "An Essay on the Character of a Believing Christian in Paradoxes and Seeming Contradictions." The following are a few selected paragraphs as numbered in the MSS., and are as true to-day as they were nearly three centuries ago:

1. "A Christian is one that believes things his reason cannot comprehend, hopes for things which neither he nor any man alive ever saw; he labors for that which he knoweth he shall never attain, yet in the issue his belief appears not to be false, his hopes make him not ashamed, his labor is not in vain."

2. "He believes three to be one, and one to be three; a Father not to be older than his Son, a Son to be equal with his Father, and in one proceeding from both to be equal with both. He believes three persons in one nature, and two natures in one person."

11. "He knoweth if he please men that he cannot be the servant of Christ, yet for Christ's sake he tries to please all men. He is a peacemaker, and yet is a continual fighter and an irreconcilable enemy."

18. "He professeth he can do nothing, yet as truly professeth he can do all things. He knoweth that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, yet he believeth he shall go to heaven both body and soul."

20. "He knoweth he shall not be saved by or for his good works, yet he trieth to do all the good works he can."

21. "He believes beforehand that God hath purposed what he shall be, and that nothing can him alter his purpose; yet he prays and endeavors as if he would force God to alter his ways."

24. "He is often tossed and shaken, yet is as Mount Zion. He is a serpent and a dove, a lamb and a lion, a reed and a cedar. He is sometimes so troubled that he thinks nothing is true in religion, yet if he did think so he could not be at all troubled."

It is certain from this essay, and other portions of this great author's writings, that he was, considering the age of faith in which he lived, a right worthy Freethinker in the broadest sense of the word.

THOMAS MAY.

[Mr. May is laboring under a pardonable mistake. *The Divine Paradoxes; or Distinguishing Characteristics of a Believer*, though published with Lord Bacon's name in 1656, 1756-58, 1799, was really composed by Herbert Palmer (1601-47), who was one of the Westminster Assembly of Divines. The question of authorship was gone into by Mr. A. B. Grosart, in his *Lord Bacon not the Author of "The Christian Paradoxes"* (1865), and is considered settled by bibliographers.—J. M. W.]

OBITUARY.

WE regret to notice the death of M. Gustavo Verone, the treasurer of the French Freethought Federation. He left a will desiring no religious ceremony, but a funeral of the simplest possible class. He leaves daughters who are active in the cause, one having served as reporter to the International Congress of 1889.

THE friends of Mr. and Mrs. Dawson (Members of Newcastle Branch) in Newcastle and neighborhood, will regret to learn that their son, aged eight months (which Mr. Foote named on his recent visit to Newcastle), died suddenly on December 12, and was buried at Elswick Cemetery on Friday, the 15th inst. Mr. J. G. Bartram read Colonel Ingersoll's "Whence and Whither," with some slight alteration, the same making a very appropriate and impressive ceremony.—J. W. MEIN.

HOW TO HELP US.

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

SPIRITS AND TRICKS.

MR. A. ROTERBERG, an inventor of conjurors' tricks, says: "The spirit medium has a great advantage over the conjuror, for while the latter usually gives his performance before a large audience, with the glare of the footlights upon him, the medium has but a limited number of sitters, usually not more than one. Added to this is the fact that while the audience of the conjuror know that they are being deceived and are on the alert to discover the method, the sitter with the medium is open to conviction, and the ordinary individual is quite willing to be deceived and gets mad when you try to tell him otherwise. If he believes in the phenomena of slate-writing, he goes to the so-called medium in a 'passive condition' that makes it all the more possible to gull him. If the investigator proves too sharp, the medium can fall back on 'inharmonious conditions.'"

When asked about Slade, and if he thought Professor Zollner was deceived in his experiments, Mr. Roterberg remarked: "I do not hesitate to say that I could explain every trick Slade produced in the way of slate-writing that I ever heard of, and that each could be produced by trickery. Whether Slade used trickery or not, I do not say, but he had no need to call upon any other power. Slade was a remarkably quick and clever performer, and was very expert in the use of his feet. Those who know him say that he never wore socks on his toes, and during a séance slipped off his shoes and had the use of his toes to perform many things while his hands were placed on the table."

Most of the spiritist medium tricks, says Mr. Roterberg, are so simple, that a regular conjuror would consider them beneath his notice.

"Slate-writing is done in different ways, but it involves sleight-of-hand, a knowledge of chemistry, and of a few simple laws of physics. The tricks that succeed best are the boldest ones. The more common method is by the use of prepared slates that are dexterously changed for the sitters. There are different ways of preparing the slates, but the same principle is involved—affinity of chemicals—the universal law of attraction between certain elements. Of course the desirable thing was to find a chemical that would appear and disappear as required. One method is by writing with a gold or quill pen in a solution made by dissolving pure zinc shavings in muriatic acid. The writing, when dry, will resemble writing done with a slate-pencil. The sitter is allowed to wash the slate, and when he is convinced it is perfectly clean the slate is put under the table, the sitter holds it by one hand and the medium with one of his, and in the due course of time the writing appears."

CORRESPONDENCE.

PHILOSOPHICAL ANARCHISM.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

As a student inclined to philosophical Anarchism, but no dynamiter—strange that it should be necessary to use the phrase, for to me it seems like writing "a humanitarian, but no assassin"—I thank you for your article "How to Treat Anarchists." The instinct of the Church is to rule by force and terror, and too many of those brought up in its bad old way are apt to rely upon its methods. But I wish you to permit me to say that there are Anarchists to whom the recent crimes of Barcelona and Paris appear the work of madmen opposed to the very spirit of Anarchism. For Anarchism, as I have learned it from Shelley, Proudhon, and Walt Whitman, is an attempt to achieve the welfare of Society by the free development of the individual, minimising all force, violence, and external restraint, and attaining the ends of Society by voluntary combination and co-operation. It seeks to render the soldier and the policeman unnecessary. Such an attitude is inconsistent with homicidal outrage. Doubtless there have been Thugs and Dacoits who look on murder and theft as a religious duty, just as some of the most pious Christians have persecuted those who differed from them, "quite persuaded, all the apostles would have done as they did." But the connection between Anarchism and outrage, to my mind, cannot be made out as that between the belief in hell and persecution. True, in countries where the individual finds himself ground down, and all that is dear to him maltreated by a tyrannic despotism, he may be goaded to vengeance or to stupid hatred of the State and all connected with it, and call himself Anarchist. But murder is not the natural method of Anarchism. "Do not thus when ye are strong," said Shelley, voicing its truer spirit. Its natural method as the opponent of all force is passive resistance. "Passive resistance," said the brilliant Lassalle, "is the resistance which does not resist." What an error! Lassalle had studied Heraclitus the Dark, but I doubt if he had ever studied Lao-tse. Said the Chinese sage: "The weak can conquer the strong, and the tender the hard. What so weak as water, but water without striving reaches its desired place."

EGOMET.

THE BOOK OF BOOKS.

He walked into the bookstore and stopped before the Bible department. He leaned over the counter and said to the ministerial-looking salesman: "Is them Buffalo Bill books over thar?" "Nope, religious works." "Don't nun o' them read about chasin' Injuns and shootin' wild varmints?" "Not exactly." "Nothin' about a feller 'at could knock 'em out like John L., ner a feller 'at's slick with er Winchester, er hed the nerve to tackle er b'ar?" "Oh, yes. One better than that." "Who's he?" "Samson." "What'd 'e do?" "Oh, he had a fight with a lion." "Laid 'im out, did he?" "Yes, he killed the lion." "Jes' bored 'im with er Winchester?" "Nope." "Biffed 'im in the head with er ax, I 'spect?" "Nope." "Jes' kyarved 'm with his bowie?" "No, he just caught the beast by the throat and choked it to death." "You don't say!" "Yes, he was the strongest man that ever lived." "Wusser'n John L.?" "Yes." "An' wusser'n Jimmie Corbett?" "Samson could knock them both out at once." "Whoopee! ain't he the stuff? I'll take two o' them Samson books."—*Atlanta Constitution.*

A lady hailing from the Emerald Isle one evening partook somewhat freely of the particular spirit associated in name with her birthplace. She awoke in the morning with a bad headache and a burning thirst, but alas! without the means to gratify that thirst by "a hair of the dog that bit her." However, she went off to a public-house where she was well known, and endeavored to obtain a modest quencher upon trust, promising faithfully to pay up on the following Saturday—but in vain! Undaunted by her failure, she again presented herself, and offered a Bible as security, but again she was refused; whereupon she remarked: "Shure, things have come to a moighty foine pass! They will neither take my worrud nor the worrud of God for twopenn'orth of Oirish whiskey!"

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.
LONDON.

Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C.: 11.15, no lecture; 6.30, musical selections; 7, G. W. Foote, "A Freethought Sermon on God's Birthday" (admission free; reserved seats 3d. and 6d.) Boxing Night, "Queensberry" R. and A. Club's first social evening. Wednesday at 7.30, "Cinderella" ball. Thursday and Friday at 8, dancing classes.

Battersea Secular Hall (back of Battersea Park Station): 7.45, Marlowe Dramatic Company, assisted by musical friends (free). Boxing Day at 8, social gathering (free). Wednesday at 8, dramatic club.

Bethnal Green—Libra Hall, 78 Libra-road, Roman-road: 5.30, tea and free entertainment.

Camberwell—61 New Church-road, S.E.: 11.30 (in small hall), debating society, Miss Augusta Brown (Board of Guardians), "The Workhouse Taint and How to Remove it" (free); 7.30 (in large hall), C. Cohen, "Christianity and Secularism." Friday at 7.30, free science classes in chemistry and astronomy.

Wimbledon—Liberty Hall, Hartfield-road Coffee House (Broadway entrance): 7, R. Harding, "Socialism: a Gospel of Plunder, Tyranny, and Unreason" (free).

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Battersea Park-gates: 11.15, C. Cohen, "Free Will and Determinism" (in the hall if the weather is unfavorable).

Hyde Park (near Marble-arch): 11.30 and 3.30, J. Rowney will lecture.

COUNTRY.

Aberdeen—Oddfellows' Hall Buildings (Room No. 6): 11.30, W. Diack, "The Life and Writings of Henrik Ibsen."

Birmingham—Baskerville Hall, Orescent, Cambridge-street: 7, Charles Watts, "A Christmas Sermon on Christ and his Faith."

Brighton—Star Athletic Club, 6 Whitecross-street: Mr. Baker, 3, "The Fetish of Monarchy," and recitation; 7.30, "The Birth, Growth, and Death of God," and recitation.

Bristol—Shepherd's Hall, Old Market-street: Tuesday at 6, tea and social (tickets 1s.)

Dundee—Cutlers' Hall, Murraygate: 11.30, mutual improvement class, "The Reward of Labor"; 1 to 2, music lessons; 2.30, concert; 6.30, adjourned debate on "Imitation: a Study," opened by J. Duncan.

Fairsworth Secular Sunday-school, at 10 and 2; 6.30, P. Percival, "Great Types of Humanity: Bichat—Modern Science."

Glasgow—Ex-Mission Hall, 110 Brunswick-street: discussion class, G. Faulkner, "The Positive Elements of Socialistic Science"; 6.30, J. Cowie, "The Authenticity of the Four Gospels."

Hanley—Secular Hall, John-street: 7.30, a reading.

Hull—St. George's Hall, 8 Albion-street: 7, Mr. Monroe, "How Long did Christ Remain in the Grave?"

Hull Sunday Association, St. George's Hall, Storey-street: 2.30, an "At Home" (refreshments provided).

Leicester—Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate: 6.30, musical and literary evening.

Liverpool—Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street: 7, Mr. Doeg, "The Birth of Gods."

Manchester N.B.S., Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints: 6.30, A. Newell, "Possils: what they are and what they Teach us" (free).

Newcastle-on-Tyne—Eldon Hall, 2 Clayton-street: 11, committee meeting; 7, E. Mitchell, "Natural Selection."

Portsmouth—Wellington Hall, Wellington-street, Southsea; 7, discussion on "Socialism."

Sheffield—Hall of Science, Rockingham-street: 7, vocal and instrumental music, recitations, etc.

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

LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

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

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

TOUZEAU PARRIS, Clare Lodge, 32 Upper Mall, Hammersmith, London, W.—Dec. 31, Camberwell. Jan. 21, 1894, Hall of Science. Feb. 4, Camberwell.

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REVISED VERSION.

There was an old darkey in Southern Illinois who wanted to join the ministry. He had progressed through many years of trial and tribulation, from the position of chief hog stealer and hen-roost robber of the community to the mourner's bench, to membership, to a deaconate, and finally to the dignified office of sexton and chief bell-ringer of the white folks' church in the same town. He couldn't read, but his grand-daughter Lucindy could, and he made her read to him every evening from the good book. He was finally brought before the board for examination, which was conducted as follows: "Brer 'Lias, do you know the Bible?" "Yas, praise de Lawd." "Brer 'Lias, do you believe it to be the word of God?" "Yas, dat I do, praise de Lawd." "Do you believe the parables?" "Dat I do. Every w'ud ob dem par'bles is fac's, sho nuff. Gospel troof." "Do you know any of them well enough to repeat, Brer 'Lias?" "Dat I do. I know dem all, but dat one of Potiphar and Jezabal is de truest an' mos' powerful one of all. Hit goes dis way. You see Potiphar was a ridin' down in his charyit f'um Ja'usalem into Jericho. He drove 'long lil bit w'en 'long come Jezabal. Sae say, 'White man, gimme a ride'; an' he done tuk her up behin' him in his charyit. An' dey went eriong a lil furdur as 'fell among t'ieves. An' dey say, 'Frow down Jezabal!' An' Potiphar he say, 'Let him among you widout sin cis' de fus' stone.' But dey say all de louder, 'Frow down Jezabal!' An' finally he frow down Jezabal. But dey warn' satisfied, an' yell, 'Frow down Jezabal!' An' he frow her down ergin. An' den dey yell out, 'Frow her down some mo'.' An' he frow her down seb'n times. Bat dey was dat mean dey warn' satisfy no how, an' dey kep' a hollerin', 'Frow down Jezabal!' An' he frow her down seb'nty times seb'n. An' of de remains dey geddered up seb'n basketful."

Haggard Stranger—"My principal difficulty, doctor, is that I am unable to sleep." Famous Physician—"Go and hear the Rev. Dr. Seventhy preach." Haggard Stranger—"Alas! doctor, I am the Rev. Dr. Seventhy."

BURGLARY AND BIBLES.

WHO, when a boy, has not had read and re-read to him by his elders that thrilling anecdote of the soldier who carried his mother's Testament next his heart? In peace and war, day and night, except when he was reading it, the Testament reposed in his inside pocket. And then one day when an enemy's bullet fled on its deadly mission of death, straight towards that manly and dutiful breast, it never reached its goal. His mother's Testament stood in the way.

How our little hearts thrilled when we thought of how that dutiful son's obedience was rewarded. And now in old age it is too bad to have these bright impressions of youth shattered.

Last Friday night three burglars went out in Chicago suburbs to burgle. One put his mother's Testament in his inside pocket. He had no doubt read the anecdote of the soldier. The man whose house they went to rob objected to the proceedings, and emptied two revolvers at the burglars. Into the one who carried his mother's Testament he put six big holes, any one of which would alone have caused death. And not a shot hit the Testament.

It would not have been so bad if he had killed the two fellows who, it is presumed, had no Testaments. But he didn't. They both escaped without a scratch.

And thus is shattered another of the great moral lessons that impressed us in our youth—Toronto Evening News.

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