

The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

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NOTICE.

Next week's "Freethinker" will be a special New Year's Number, price threepence.

Owing to a mishap, through the holidays, there is no illustration in this week's issue.

GOD'S BIRTHDAY.

IN discussing religious questions, especially in a Protestant country, it is rank blasphemy to use plain language. Calling a spade a spade is almost, if not quite, the sin against the Holy Ghost. People have objected, for instance, to the title of one of our *Bible Romances*—"The Virgin Mother," although it expresses the essential facts of a certain matter with the minimum of offensiveness; the phrase, indeed, being of frequent occurrence in the older religious literature of England, and especially in the devout compositions of its poets. Still greater offence was given by another title of ours, "God's Mother," although this also is very usual in Catholic writings. On one occasion "The Blood of Christ," which is a common New Testament expression, was vehemently denounced as something little short of ribaldry. We are fully prepared, therefore, to find orthodoxy exclaiming against "God's Birthday." Yet there is an easy defence of this title. Christ was God, and Christ was born; and being born, he had a birthday. This is a plain and polite justification, and let the Christians answer it if they can—without falling into a fury and calling ill names.

God is described to us as infinite and eternal; it is therefore difficult to see how he could ever have been born. But, in the philosophy of faith, the impossibility of understanding a thing, is no reason for not believing it; on the contrary, the more unintelligible it is, and even the more absurd, the greater is the merit of belief. An Atheist can believe what he understands. There is no virtue in that. The true believer should feel like Sir Thomas Browne, who, in his *Religio Medici*, wished that the miracles of Scripture were more marvellous than they are, in order to show the transcendence of his faith.

Mysteries should be taught dogmatically. It is a mistake to explain them. If they are explicable they are no longer mysteries. Besides, to explain is to appeal to reason, which is the enemy of faith. You may sit safely upon the hill, if you choose; but it is idle to sit upon the seashore and cry to the advancing tide, "Thus far shalt thou come, and no farther, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed." The waters of reason, if fairly encountered, will soon dispose of the chairs and campstools of faith.

But some religionists, chiefly in the Protestant camp, will be explaining mysteries. They take a pride in sailing near the wind, though they often get swamped. Some of them tell us how it was that Christ, who was God, grew in wisdom as well as in stature, and why he was mistaken as to the authorship of Daniel and the Pentateuch. In becoming incarnate, they say, he emptied himself of his omniscience. But this is language without meaning. An omniscient being could not empty himself of his omniscience; and if he could, there is no power that could restore it to him afterwards. Omniscience is not a fluid, to

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be poured out like milk from a jug. It is a quality, and God cannot divest himself of his qualities and continue to be God. It is, in fact, a contradiction in terms. Could anything be more absurd than a being who knows everything saying to himself, "Go to, I will for thirty-three years know less than everything"? If he were capable of forgetting he would not be omniscient. The memory of God (if he exist) must act with the irresistible certainty of gravitation.

Let us abandon all attempts to explain the inexplicable. Let us become more prosaic, and at the same time more intelligible.

Jesus Christ was born of an earthly woman; his other parent was the Holy Ghost. He was the son of Mary, but he was also her father. She was his mother, but she was also his daughter. He begat her first, and himself afterwards. The relationship might be worked out through a thousand absurdities.

Reason cries "Halt!" and puts this pertinent question—"Who is the authority for the statement that Jesus of Nazareth was any other than 'the carpenter's son'?" Mary never signed an affidavit that Joseph was not the father of her first baby; Joseph himself never denied his paternity; and they were the only two persons in a position to speak with authority. The two gentlemen who wrote the first and third gospels could not possibly know anything on this subject. They could only repeat what they guessed, or what they were told. If they guessed it, what is the value of a conjecture? If they were told it, who told them? If the reply is that God told them, why did he not also tell the gentlemen who wrote the second and fourth gospels? And how do we know that God told them? They do not say so themselves, and who has a right to say so on their behalf?

Let us take the author of the third gospel. His name is given as Luke. He was not even a disciple of Jesus. Tradition says that he was a disciple of Paul, who himself had no personal knowledge of Jesus. Luke apparently wrote as much as he remembered of what Paul remembered of what was said to have happened. This is a long way from good evidence; indeed, it is no evidence at all. It is nothing but gossip.

"How the world is given to lying!" exclaims Jack Falstaff. Had the fat knight lived in Asia Minor, nearly two thousand years ago, he might have uttered the exclamation with extra emphasis. Lying was so general among the early Christians, that they hardly suspected the virtue of veracity. They scarcely lied for an object, they lied by preference.

Nothing could exceed the childish artlessness of Luke's opening of the chapter in which he relates the birth of Christ. "And it came to pass," he says. What circumstantiality and precision! Such an exordium is sure to lead to what the Americans call "a tall one." And when did it come to pass? "In those days." Circumstantial and precise again, is it not? Can we imagine Thucydides or Tacitus, or any other ancient historian, writing in this fashion?

"It came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed." There never was such a decree, says Mommsen, the great historian, who is a much better authority than Luke. The evangelist, in fact, is

positively silly. He says that, in order to be taxed, every one went into his own city. Fancy the whole population shifting from the places of their residence to the places of their birth! Is such a migration conceivable? And if it was for the purpose of taxation; would it not be a glorious muddle, unless "every one" was compelled to live for ever afterwards in his native town?

Luke says that this farcical taxing was made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria. According to Josephus, this was several years after the beginning of the Christian era. If Luke is right as to the date of Christ's birth, our Christian chronology is wrong. Probably it is worse than wrong. It looks like a sheer invention. The Christian era was not invented till the sixth century, and its legal use only dates from the time of Charlemagne. Christians did not begin reckoning from the birth of Christ. They adopted a Christian era hundreds of years later, and then worked backwards. To a great extent it was mere guesswork.

We do not know the year of Christ's birth, nor do we know the day. The twenty-fifth of December is inconsistent with the gospel story. Shepherds do not watch their flocks by night in Judæa at that season. The fact is, the date is fictitious. It was absolutely unknown to the primitive Christians. All sorts of days between December and May were celebrated by different sections up to the fourth century. It was at Antioch, according to the New Testament, that the followers of Jesus were first called Christians; yet it was at Antioch that St. Chrysostom, preaching in A.D. 380, confessed that the Christians in that very locality had only known for ten or twelve years that Jesus Christ was born on the twenty-fifth of December.

The twenty-fifth of December is really the birthday of the SUN, and was celebrated as such by the Pagans. The Christians borrowed the festival, and identified it with the birth of their "Savior." It was a barefaced, cunning plagiarism. And this is the whole secret of God's Birthday.

G. W. FOOTE.

VOLTAIRE'S *CANDIDE*.

YOU have never read *Candide*! Then you have probably read many far worse books, and not so many better. It is one of the wisest as well as one of the wittiest of works. A philosophy was never more triumphantly reasoned and ridiculed out of court than is optimism in *Candide*. Incident follows incident, argument jostles satire, illustration succeeds illustration, all to show the miseries of existence disprove this being the best of all possible worlds. At one moment we are forced to tears at contemplating the atrocities of inhumanity, the next we are forced to laugh at its absurdities. Prudes may be shocked at some incidents. Voltaire said he was not born to sing the praise of saints. He was himself no saint, but rather one of those sinners who have done the world more good than all its saints. But the influence of the work is profoundly good. It is purely humanitarian. War, persecution for religion, slavery, torture, and all forms of cruelty are made hateful by a recital of their facts, and all this is done in so charming, even flippant a manner, we are laughing all the while we are most profoundly moved. Mr. Swinburne, in the current number of the *Nineteenth Century*, well expresses this characteristic. "Voltaire's great work," he says, "was to have done more than any other man on record to make the instinct of cruelty not only detestable, but ludicrous; and so to accomplish what the holiest and the wisest of saints and philosophers had failed to achieve: to attack the most hideous and pernicious of human vices with a more effective weapon than preaching and denunciation: to make tyrants and torturers look not merely horrible and hateful, but pitiful and ridiculous." This character appears in all his work, but as a fantastic tale *Candide* stands alone. It brings out Voltaire's most characteristic qualities; his keen eye for whimsicalities and weaknesses; his abhorrence of cruelty and iniquity in high places; his contempt for shams and absence of all veneration for the majesty of nonsensical custom. For mordant satire it is surpassed by *Gulliver's Travels*. But it is briefer; the touch is

lighter and instinct, not with morose misanthropy, but hearty philanthropy. The characters are gross caricatures. Was there ever so preposterous an absurdity as Dr. Pangloss? And the incidents are improbable. Was ever so luckless a hero as Candide? What a succession of misfortunes? Candide travels the world in search of his lost beloved Cunegonde, meeting war, the Inquisition, torture, shipwreck, piracy and slavery, with all their attendant horrors. Even the earthquake of Lisbon is brought in; yet with whimsical pertinacity, Pangloss clings to his flimsy philosophy. When Cunegonde is at last found, she is no longer beautiful, but sunburnt, blear-eyed, haggard, withered, and scrofulous. Though ready to implement his promise, her brother, a baron whom Candide has rescued from slavery, declares that sister of his shall never marry a person of less rank than a baron. The book is a mass of seeming extravagance, with a deep vein of gold beneath. All flows so smoothly, the reader fancies such fantastic nonsense could not only be easily written, but easily improved. Yet when he notices how every sally and absurdity adds to the effect, how every lightest touch tells, he sees that only the most consummate wit and genius could thus deftly dissect a philosophy of the universe for the amusement of the multitude.

The earthquake of Lisbon seems to have had a profound effect upon Voltaire. His poem on the occasion shows it shattered his expectation of solving the problem of evil. Those who forget how far more true it is that man is an irrational animal than that he is a rational one, may wonder how Voltaire, having in *Candide* destroyed the foundations of belief in an all-good God by a portrayal of the evils afflicting mankind, could yet remain a Theist. But God with Voltaire was little more than a deification of tolerance and good sense. "Believe in God," he once said to a young poet, "there is nothing more poetic."

Voltaire tried to save England from the judicial murder of Admiral Byng, who was sacrificed to national pride and political faction in 1757, yet how lightly he touches the history in a sentence: "dans ce pays ci il est bon de tuer de temps en temps un amiral pour encourager les autres." The pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war, had no charms for Voltaire. He shows it in its true colors as multitudinous murder and rapine. Religious intolerance and hypocrisy, court domination and intrigue, the evils attendant on idlers, soldiers and priests, are all sketched in lightest outline, and the reader of this fantastic story finds he has traversed the history of the last century, seen it at its worst, and seen, too, the forces that tended to make it better, and is ready to exclaim, Would we had another Voltaire now!

If we think less of the humane work done in *Candide*, and all other of Voltaire's works, it is because we no longer keenly feel the evils he fought against. For his long life was an incessant warfare. In the noble words of Victor Hugo—

"Voltaire waged the splendid kind of warfare, the war of one alone against all—that is to say, the grand warfare; the war of thought against matter; the war of reason against prejudice; the war of the just against the unjust; the war of the oppressed against the oppressor; the war of goodness; the war of kindness. He had the tenderness of a woman and the wrath of a hero. He was a great mind and an immense heart. He conquered the old code and the old dogma. He conquered the feudal lord, the Gothic judge, the Roman priest. He raised the populace to the dignity of people. He taught, pacified, and civilised. He fought for Sirven and Montbailly, as for Calas and La Barre. He accepted all the menaces, all the persecutions, calumny, and exile. He was indefatigable and immovable. He conquered violence by a smile, despotism by sarcasm, infallibility by irony, obstinacy by perseverance, ignorance by truth."

Protestants who glibly repeat the calumnies of Catholic priests on the French infidel, are probably unaware that but for Voltaire Protestants would have found no toleration in France. His was a life-long battle against cruelty and oppression, and on behalf of reason, common sense, and toleration.

The philosophy of *Candide* is that of Secularism. The world, as we find it, abounds in misery and suffering. If any being is responsible for it, his benevolence can only be vindicated by limiting his power, or his

* Oration on the centenary of Voltaire's death.

power vindicated by limiting his goodness. Our part is simply to make the best of things; to band together and improve this world here and now.

Carlyle probably did more than anyone else to destroy the influence of Voltaire in England. Yet what is Carlyle's essential doctrine but "do the work nearest hand"; and what is this but a translation of the conclusion of *Candide*, "il faut cultiver notre jardin."

J. M. WHEELER.

IS THERE A FUTURE LIFE?

DR. R. B. WESTBROOK, late President of the American Secular Union, has replied in *Secular Thought* to our lecture on "Is there a Life Beyond the Grave?" a long report of which appeared in that journal. As the doctor's replies embrace what are probably the strongest objections that can be made against the Agnostic position upon this subject, we purpose to inquire into their value, and we hope to show their utter fallacy.

Dr. Westbrook, in his reply, does not content himself by modestly asking "Is there a life beyond the grave?" but he positively asserts that there *is* such an existence. This is a bold allegation, to prove the truth of which will require more knowledge than the doctor has hitherto given evidence that he possesses. What is meant by the term "life"? Our answer is, that we only know of it as "functional activity" in organized existence, such as we behold in the animal and vegetable kingdoms. The question, however, of a future life concerns chiefly man, who possesses an organism and functions of various kinds. Before we can accept as true the statement "there is a life beyond the grave," we must have some knowledge of the conditions of that supposed existence, and whether or not they are suitable to man as we now know him. But up to the present we have not met any one who possesses this required knowledge, and, therefore, no information is forthcoming as to the nature of a future life. We certainly decline to accept the proposition as being self-evident. If, as the doctor alleges, there is presumptive evidence in favor of a future life, the most that can be reasonably urged is, there *may be* such a life. Of course we do not contend that a visit to the planet Mars would be necessary before we could believe that life existed there, but we do assert that some kind of communication with the inhabitants would be necessary before we could positively allege that human life was there. It is not unreasonable to demand at least reliable testimony in matters beyond our experience. It is one thing to have a mind open to conviction, and quite another to meet the man who can convince us. When similar evidence is presented in favor of a future existence to that which obtains for the operation of natural law throughout the universe, and when such evidence can be tested by the ordinary rules of observation and experiment, the question of a life beyond the grave will deserve serious consideration.

The doctor's proposition, although put in the positive form, is really an assumption, based on the fact of the continuity of life on our globe. But what is understood by such continuity? Simply a succession of animated forms of existence, beings who continue to possess the attributes of life in whom the living principle appears in a series of individual representations. But a life beyond the grave involves much more than this; it assumes a continuity of life in the same individual, a condition of which we know nothing. Man exists generation after generation, but every succeeding one is new. Life on this globe ceases in the individual man when his organism becomes disintegrated and when its functions are unable to continue their operations. Death is a condition the very opposite to that of life; both, therefore, cannot be conceived as being one, as the doctor's contention requires. A living dead man is a contradiction, for it is a self-evident fact that if man always lived he would never die. Death occurs every moment, but we have no instance of the perpetual continuation of one living individual. A body in action must be present, somewhere, but when it has disappeared in the grave and gone to ashes, it is no longer a body. In other words, a body must act where it is, or where it is not. It cannot act

where it is, in the grave, for there its functions have ceased; it cannot act elsewhere because it is not there to act. This appears to us as evident a fact as that the whole is greater than the part. The denial that a future state has been proved is held to be the converse of the proposition that there is one, and therefore it is equally unphilosophical and presumptuous. People fail to discriminate between the thing itself and what is said about it, although there is a manifest difference between the two cases. What we deny is the validity of the evidence, the conclusiveness of the reasons given in support of the theory of a future life.

The doctor relies much upon what great men have said and written on the subject. Of course the opinions of eminent men are entitled to respect, but they are also open to dispute, inasmuch as all men are fallible. Great men have entertained the most erroneous and childish ideas. We must not confound Newton and the apple with Newton and the Bible, nor Faraday the chemist with Faraday the Sandemanian. Our estimate of great men is based upon what they do or what they prove. When they defend the abominations of slavery and witchcraft, or when they give their support to miracles and orthodox doctrines, because they are sanctioned by the Bible, we have no use for them. Great men have held mistaken views about creation, the laws of motion, and the possible disappearance of all existing things, but that is no reason why the humblest of their fellow men should endorse their mistakes. Professor Wallace's views on development may be accepted, if the facts he submits prove his case, and so also may his other views be accepted upon the same conditions. But in our opinion his contentions in reference to a future life cannot be proved by candid investigation and sound reasoning.

The alleged universality of opinion is quoted by Dr. Westbrook as a proof of the reality of a future life. The fact is the belief in all kinds of error has been general in all ages and in all nations. Because the multitude once believed in the moving sun in the stationary earth and in the existence of angels and devils, it is no conclusive proof to us that their belief was correct. Have we then the audacity to reject the verdict of ages, and to declare that the majority of men have been mistaken? On certain matters we do so most decidedly, for the reason that nothing is clearer to-day than that our forefathers were wrong upon many things which were objects of "universal belief." The notion that the stars were drawn by the gods, or guided by spirits, has had to give way before the discoveries of attraction and gravitation, and the creation theory is refuted by the facts of evolution. Those who base their faith in a future life on the common beliefs of the past are like the man who is said to have built his house upon the sand. The flood of science will sweep all false beliefs away, as surely as the morning sun disperses the vapors of the night.

The doctor fires off his syllogistic cannon and he supposes that we are fatally wounded. But it is not so, for we would remind the doctor that the value of a syllogism depends upon the correctness of its first premiss. For instance, take the following: "The future will be a continuance of the present, the present is manifest and indisputable, therefore, so is the future." Now, if the first premiss were proved, the conclusion may follow, but as that is only an assumption, based on general belief and on great men's opinions, the conclusion is also of the same nature, and is a part of the assumption. Dr. Westbrook ought to know that the greatest absurdity might be made to appear feasible to the uneducated mind by the syllogistic mode of pleading. For instance, "Nothing is better than heaven, a chop is better than nothing, therefore a chop is better than heaven."

It is commonly held that any conception formed by man must have a corresponding reality somewhere. Yet the conception which was formed as to the origin of things has been shown by modern researches to be absolutely groundless in reality. Modern investigation has exploded the old theories of the genesis of things. Men have had to unlearn much that the dame schools taught and that the Sunday-school endorsed. Take the illustration of the general conception of the dragon. We may be able to trace the idea to some

extinct animal, but that does not prove the existence of the dragon or attest the truth of the belief that such an animal ever existed. If an artist paints a picture of the Devil it is perfectly certain that his Satanic Majesty never sat for the portrait.

Perhaps the strongest element in the argument for a future life is derived from what is called the desires of mankind. These, it is said, must be accounted for, which we think can easily be done. We submit that the instinctive love of life found in man is sufficient to explain the desire for its continuation. No doubt there is some connection between desires and their realisation in reference to things that are attainable, for the very desire may be a factor in the sum of the causes that enable us to realise our ideal. But the mere fact of having the desire is no evidence that its realisation will follow. A desire for food and comfort is very general, but many are destitute of both. The longing that all members of the human family should be equally well off is extensive, but such an enviable state of things does not exist. We must not, in reasoning, take refuge in incongruities. Those who argue that without an endless future, this life is not worth having, must regard the present existence as being exceedingly defective. Why, then, should its continuation be desired? And yet the doctor argues for a prolongation of such a life. If it is said that in another world there will be a change for the better, we ask, where is the proof that any improvement will take place? It is another instance that the wish is father to the thought. Endless existence and interminable motion may be laws of thought which it is impossible to banish from our minds, although we are unable to conceive of an infinite past, which is involved in the statement. But it is otherwise with the forms of existence that possess life, these can be conceived of as coming to an end. Intense heat or intense cold may terminate all living things in a brief space of time. The truth is that it is only dreamers who contend that any part of the compound being, called man will

"flourish in immortal youth,
Unhurt amidst the war of elements,
The wreck of matter, and the crush of worlds."

CHARLES WATTS.

AN EXAMINATION IN THEOLOGY.

1. WHERE is our Christian hell?

2. Show that it is perfectly right than an Almighty God, who made us, and who can direct our hearts as he pleases, should also have the right to torture us everlastingly?

3. Where is the Christian heaven?

4. Give a description of the bliss we are to enjoy therein.

5. When do we go to either of these places—when we die, or on the Day of Judgment?

6. State the events that are to take place on the Day of Judgment.

7. Show that it is perfectly right that the worst criminal, if he repents and believes in the truth of the Bible, should go to heaven, and that a man who has led a moral life, without believing in the divine inspiration of the Bible, should go to hell.

8. Show how a man can control his belief.

9. Show that Christ expressed himself perfectly well when he said "Love your enemies." Infidels say you cannot love your enemies; all you can do is to treat them as if you loved them. Show the erroneousness of such an assertion.

10. Our Church teaches that we can only go to heaven through Christ. State what will be the fate of those who never heard of Christ.

11. Give the reason why Christ was sent to a small nation who he knew beforehand would reject him.

12. How do you explain that our Church persecuted the Jews for having crucified Christ, and yet we say if he had not been slain we should all be lost?

13. State the reasons why Christ did not preach and perform his miracles before the more enlightened people of that time, the Greeks and Romans?

14. Infidels say that as Jesus easily travelled through the air to his Father, he might just as well have preached one day in Rome, another in Athens, another in Peking, and so forth. Show the ridiculousness of such an assertion.

15. They further say: Why did he begin his mission only at the age of thirty, when many great men have already acquired celebrity; and why did he allow himself to be crucified so soon? State his probable reasons for acting thus.

16. Infidels say he would have served his cause far better if he had only groaned and sighed on the cross, instead of exclaiming, "My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Show that they are in the wrong.

17. They further say there was nothing meritorious in his death, as he knew beforehand he would rise on the third day. What would you say against such an assertion?

18. How do you explain this seeming contradiction—He said to one of the criminals who were crucified with him, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise," and three days later on he said to Mary Magdalene, "Touch me not, for I have not yet ascended to my father"—a statement which is confirmed by the teaching of our Church, which declares that he went to hell during these days?

19. State why he called himself the son of God, knowing that he was as old as God himself.

20. Infidels say: When God saw that Adam and Eve were not the right couple to start a world with, he ought to have "translated" them and begun with a better couple. How would you prove the fallacy of such an assertion?

21. Explain why we pray, "Our Father who art in heaven," when we know that he is everywhere.

22. Show that the many disasters where hundreds or thousands of people perish are perfectly compatible with our doctrine of divine providence.

23. Explain why God does not step in and say which is the true religion, although he sees the persecutions and bloodshed committed for the sake of religion.

24. If the infidel says: "It does not prove the divine origin of the Christian religion that it has existed so long because superstition and crime have existed quite as long," how would you refute him?

25. Point out the moral doctrines taught by Christ that had not been taught by heathen philosophers.

26. Explain the seeming difference in the genealogy of Christ in the first chapter of St. Matthew and the third chapter of St. Luke.

27. How do you explain the contradiction between these two passages: Ex. xx. 13, "Thou shalt not kill," and Ex. xxxii. 27, "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbor."

28. What is meant by: "And Cain went out from the presence of the Lord"? W. UHLENBURG.

OBITUARY.

THE late Mr. J. P. Adams deserves a more extended notice than I am able to bestow, and perhaps Mr. Charles Watts or Mr. Lot Hill, or both, may be able to supplement my brief notice. Mr. Adams was a strenuous worker. He was connected with the Philpot-street Hall, where Charles Bradlaugh made his *debut*. He became bookstall-keeper at the old Hall of Science, and for many years was the means of dispersing Freethought literature. He contributed to the *National Reformer* almost from its commencement until 1876, after which he assisted Mr. Watts with the *Secular Review*. Mr. Adams was a member of the Edmonton Branch. He was born May 28, 1815, and passed away quite peacefully on Dec. 5.—J. M. W.

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 contents-sheets, which are of a convenient size for the purpose. Mr. Forster 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.

THEOLOGY AND EVOLUTION.

A PROPER understanding of evolution in all its bearings embraces the study of every science and every art; it implies also a study of every form of knowledge or supposed knowledge, from the manifold and diverse views of nature of our ancient ancestors to the more accurate and verifiable knowledge of to-day; indeed, as evolution is only another name for the idea of the unity and continuity of phenomena, and inasmuch as phenomena are all that man takes cognisance of, it necessarily includes a study, in a measure, of every branch of human knowledge.

Man begins by taking for granted everything he has been taught respecting the past. When, however, his faculties develop and he begins to acquire knowledge on his own account, then for the first time he calls in question the beliefs of his ancestors and endeavors to formulate afresh the views which an independent study of nature has forced upon his mind. The evolutionist starts with a study of the beliefs of the various races of mankind; and after having carefully examined these beliefs, he comes to the conclusion that they are based upon a misunderstanding of the fundamental principles of nature, he seeks by a more comprehensive view of these subject to give a more rational explanation of the multifarious phenomena of nature.

In the present advanced state of physical science, we find it difficult to realise that our forefathers ever entertained such peculiar notions respecting the universe and man as a study of ancient beliefs reveal to us. And yet such has been the progress of science since the days of Galileo and Bruno that Christian views of astronomy, geology, and biology to-day are diametrically opposite to what they were only a few years ago. Indeed, a study of the various commentaries on the Bible up to the year 1870—the memorable year in which the great Act for the compulsory education of all children in Great Britain between the ages of five and fourteen was passed—will show that the Bible cosmogony was quite accurate; that the earth was the centre of the universe; that the sky was a solid firmament, which divided the waters above from the waters below, and beyond this firmament, somewhere in the heavens, resided the Hebrew God Jahveh. Learned divines were to be found who actually believed that this earth existed for three whole days before the sun; that the sun was only, comparatively speaking, a small luminary, placed in the heavens by an omnipotent Deity, to give us light by day; while the twinkling stars were small bodies hanging in the heavens, to give light by night. And further, they believed, in all sincerity, that grass and herbs grew on the earth before there was any sun to draw them out; that the waters brought forth fishes and fowl, and that man was manufactured *ipso facto* out of the dust of the ground.

Now, however, all this is changed. Even the most orthodox divine will have no difficulty in believing that the sun is a vast body comprising 1,350,000 times the number of cubic miles which our globe contains; nor will he dispute that it is highly probable that the sun is the parent of all the planets in the system of which we form part; although of course he still hesitates to believe that our sun and all the suns and stars that scud the universe were once nothing but an infinite mass of gaseous matter diffused throughout space, which through loss of heat of various parts periodically caused the formation of solid bodies. But to this position the Christian divine will be ultimately driven. And what will then become of his theory of divine creation? He will probably say that his God created the matter and force out of which the universe and all the vast bodies therein are composed. But this will not help him much, since the science of chemistry enables us to demonstrate that force and matter are alike indestructible; and it is far more reasonable to suppose that matter and force being inductible are also eternal, than to suppose they were created by a being—a pure spirit—who has nothing in common with matter, and therefore, as Spinoza put it, could “neither be the cause of nor affect matter.”

In the next place, a study of geology discloses the vast age of the earth, and gives us a rational explanation of the growth of vegetable and animal life; while paleontology enables us to estimate the probable age of man on the earth, especially when we find the implements and weapons used by our early ancestors side by side with the remains of extinct animals. Chemistry further reveals the common structure of the organic and inorganic world; and finally biology makes clear the common origin of all life.

Thus science in all its branches supplies us with evidence to demonstrate the great doctrine of evolution. Nor is this all. Every fresh accumulation of facts goes to support this new view and to discredit the old theological ideas. Day by day there is a tendency in every department of life to banish the gods; in fact thoughtful people continually feel the force of the language of the late Professor Tyndall, when in his famous address at Belfast in 1874 he said that “he closed with Giordano Bruno, and recognised in nature the universal mother that produced all phenomena as the fruit of her own womb, without the meddling of the gods.” And if we turn from the study of the physical sciences to that of anthropology, we shall find another powerful piece of evidence in favor of evolution; for by the study of the various races of mankind, their languages and customs, we are able to compute with some degree of accuracy the length of time man has been upon the earth; moreover, we are able to trace his descent by a comparison of his structure anatomically with that of the anthropoid apes and other mammals, also to understand the course of development by a careful consideration of his hands and feet, hair covering, rudimentary organs, and lastly by his brain, with that of the lower animals. In all these branches of human investigation we get abundant proofs of evolution. And when we turn to the study of religions, we find that they all manifest signs of human origin; that they begin in the ages of ignorance and develop and change with the growth of human intelligence, until gradually the supernatural element has a tendency to disappear and the poetical and ethical alone to remain. And so it may be fairly claimed that the doctrine of evolution holds the field. Every day its position becomes more and more secure, and by and bye it will undoubtedly be accepted as the true doctrine of the universe.

Thus do we turn from the fictions of theology to the facts of science, content to know that when our life's work is done our children will survive to continue the endless labor of reading and interpreting the open book of Nature. As Shelley says:

Thus do the generations of the earth
Go to the grave and issue from the womb,
Surviving still the imperishable change
That renovates the world.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

IN DOUBT ABOUT THE BISHOP.

The modern church verger, though by no means so interesting a person as the old parish clerk, is still sometimes guilty of a stroke of unconscious humor. A curate who had previously officiated at a very famous London church, where the sexes were divided, the men sitting on one side of the aisle, and the women on the other, once told me a very amusing story of their official. The service was just about to commence.

The long procession of the surpliced choir was drawn up in the vestry, just about to march into the church. The vicar was commencing the words of the vestry prayer, when the official in question popped his head through the door and remarked: “Please, sir, there's a bishop got in among the ladies. Shall I have him out?”

BELIEVE OR BE D——D.

Religious beliefs must be founded on evidence; if they are not so founded, it is wrong to hold them. The rule of right conduct in this matter is exactly the opposite of that implied in the two famous texts: “He that believeth not shall be damned,” and “Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.” For a man who clearly felt and recognised the duty of intellectual honesty, of carefully testing every belief before he received it, and especially before he recommended it to others, it would be impossible to ascribe the profoundly immoral teaching of these texts to a true prophet or worthy leader of humanity.—*Prof. W. K. Clifford, “Lectures and Essays,”* p 218.

As there is neither partiidge-shooting nor cub-hunting on Sunday, Lady Di, when in the country, whiles away the Sabbath by taking on a Sunday-school class. This week she undertook to instruct her neophytes by relating the story of Jacob and Esau. She was well in her stride when she was pulled up by a touch on her shoulder. Turning round, she beheld the vicar at her elbow. “For pity's sake, Lady Diana,” said that holy man in agonised tones, “cut it short. You are getting the hair on the wrong man.”

THE OTHER SIDE.

Without Apologies to the Shade of Addison.

*"THE spacious firmament on high,"
Where birds of prey and victims fly,
The cruel claw and quiv'ring frame
*Their great Original proclaim."
The weary stag when brought to bay,
The mangled lambs that tigers slay,
Proclaim to those who understand
*The work of an Almighty hand."

*"Soon as the evening shades prevail"
The vampire-bat takes up the tale,
And, nightly, to the shudd'ring earth,
Blood-glutt'd, screams in horrid mirth;
While blasting storms that rage and burn,
And earthquakes in their fateful turn,
Exact from life their deadly toll,
*And spread the truth from pole to pole."

*"What though, in solemn silence, all"
The hearts of bleeding victims call,
With anguished grief too deep for sound,
On heav'n for help where none is found?
Religious fools and knaves rejoice
With shameless face and canting voice,
Declaring, with their pious whine,
*The hand that made us is divine."

G. L. MACKENZIE.

ACID DROPS.

Dr. Brady, of the People's Church, Boston, has been displaying his Christian charity by howling at Col. Ingersoll. He calls him "the Devil's great mud-slinger" and "the standard-bearer of the flag of hell." "A mad dog, a wild bull, is not one millionth part as dangerous." "Brethren and sisters," said this worthy disciple of the religion of peace and goodwill, "when you go out of this meeting, and meet an infidel, do as the Irishman does—hit him with a shillalagh." Muscular Christianity evidently survives in Boston.

Dr. Brady says Ingersoll is "a fool." Ingersoll's opinion of Dr. Brady would not be expressed so coarsely, but it would be worth having; yes, *decidedly* worth having.

Some of the Boston papers protest against Dr. Brady's language. The *Herald* says that the shillalagh doctrine will not go down in America at the end of the nineteenth century. The *Globe* says "it is a bad sign when a man calls his opponent a fool or an ass." This is mild condemnation, but mild as it is it is "a sign" that the Church militant is falling out of date.

Pope Pecci amuses his old age by scribbling advice to the world, which he sends out as Encyclical Letters. The latest of these documents is dated November 18, and is all about the Bible and the "higher criticism." One passage in it is extremely amusing. "Catholics rich in science and in talent," says the Pope, "consecrate themselves to the ardent defence of the Holy Writings, or to the better circulation and understanding of them." Yes, and one of them was Professor Mivart. This ardent Catholic scientist undertook to explain Hell, which he made out to be a very happy establishment, to which no one but an epicure in bliss could possibly object; and all he got for his pains was a peremptory order to "shut up."

Positivism, according to the *Methodist Times*, preaches the Brotherhood of Man "beautifully," but the preaching of this doctrine is in vain until men learn from Jesus Christ to say, "Our Father which art in heaven." Indeed! Why when they learn to say that they go all over the world shooting down the natives. Does not the *Methodist Times* regard the Matabele business as a "blessing"?

The *Christian Commonwealth* has hit upon a nice little plan for sweating those of its readers who are able to write what is worth reading. It has opened a Competition, with magnificent prizes of books published at its own office. The writings of competitors who don't get a prize are to belong to the Editor, who is to use them without any recompense to the authors. Of course he may say it is

so nominated in the bond. Every sweater does that. But it is a curious piece of sharp business for a Christian paper which prides itself on its high morality.

The Twelfth Presbyterian Church, one of the largest in Baltimore, is seceding from the Presbytery, in consequence of the orthodox crusade against Dr. Briggs. This very mild "heretic" is acting like dynamite in Presbyterianism, which Ingersoll considers the vilest creed that was ever invented. It is good to see the break-up of this horrible system.

There is a movement amongst the Wesleyans for setting up thirteen bishops, but under a different name. Hugh Price Hughes favors the scheme. No doubt he thinks he would make a very good bishop himself. But many Wesleyans are opposed to the scheme, and some of them say that if you want a bishop you may as well go to the Church of England and get the real article.

Sir Andrew Clark, the pious physician who tended Mr. Gladstone, died worth £203,969. He was an eminent Christian, sometimes speaking at Exeter Hall, and now and then giving a lift (with his tongue) to the Christian Evidence Society. But all he seems to have left out of his pile for any public purpose is the sum of £500. With a very poor sort of pride, he devoted most of his money to founding a baronetage in his family. And of such is the kingdom of heaven.

A Welsh clergyman was accidentally killed while chaff-cutting. If all the clergy who cut chaff were settled in the same way there would be a marvellous death rate in ecclesiastical circles.

Clericals are always hunting after noted Freethinkers, with a view to minimising their heresy. There is the Rev. R. E. Welsh, for instance, who happened to be on board the same steamer with Miss Olive Schreiner, who says—"I venture to think that, since the day when *The African Farm* came from her indignant heart, she has softened both towards God and faith." *Softened* is a good word. Clericals are anxious to find Freethinkers as *soft* as themselves.

Professor Drummond, the gentleman who makes a lot of money out of dear sentimental pamphlets, says that it is "a philosophical necessity" to "include Man in the scheme of Evolution." There you are again! The clergy are always last. Long after Darwinism has triumphed they are debating whether they shall endorse its truth. It doesn't matter a halfpenny whether they do or don't—except to themselves.

Here is an impressionist sketch of a famous American preacher by an American reporter, who should be equally famous:—"Sweat trickled from the back jungle of his disordered hair, along the ravines and furrows of his haggard face. He advanced and retreated, rising upon his toes and coming down on his heels with a dislocating jerk that made the windows rattle, pausing occasionally to inhale through his dilating nostrils tempestuously, and then emitting a shrieking epigram of apostrophe that thrilled the blood like a wild cry at midnight in a solitary place." These "lines of lightning and eclipse" are really too good for a mere preacher. They would fit a cyclone "like a plaster."

The Church music never sounds so thrilling as when the organist is playing "I seek no wealth but Jesu's love," and the deacons are pattering through the aisles with the contribution boxes.

Having appropriately celebrated the man of sorrows, who was often hungry and looked for figs when their time was not yet, by feasting and merry making, pious Christians can now prepare for watch-night services and a week of prayer, that by shouting with one accord, their heavenly Father may deign to listen lest, as he says in the parable, by continual coming they weary me.

The *Church Times* has given its pronouncement on dancing. "In town parishes, where conducted under the immediate supervision of the clergy and lay helpers, it has been found a success; but in a rural district it is obvious that there are weighty considerations against it." We suppose the country clergy can supervise the dances, but cannot supervise the dancers going home.

The Church which would much like to take us back to the ages of faith, when sacerdotalism was triumphant, is great at establishing guilds. The latest Ritualist development is the Thurible Guild to promote the offering of incense to God in the churches. They propose to institute an incense box. You put a penny in the slot, and, though you draw nothing out, you have the consolation of knowing that the Lord God Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, will get an extra sniff of incense.

The Lord was very partial to sweet savors. But according to Genesis viii. 20, 21, it was roast meat which tickled his nostrils. In his holy temple he ordered that a bullock and lamb should be hacked to pieces every morning (see the picture of the altar of Jehovah in *Bible Studies*), and a lamb every evening. The use of incense in temples arose from the necessity of removing the smell of putrifying blood. But Jehovah, having got used to the perfume, wants to continue it though sacrifices are discontinued. This, we suppose, is the *raison d'être* of the Thurible Guild.

The Thurible Guild is a harmless institution compared with the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament, the object of which is to inculcate the doctrines of Real Presence and auricular confession. The motto of its clerical members might be expressed in the lines put in the mouth of a Catholic priest:

Your God—I hold him in my hand.
Your wife—I have her at my feet.

The *Church Times*, to have a slap at the late Dean Stanley, had an article on irreverence in Westminster Abbey during divine service. The secretary of the Lay Vicars of the Abbey characterises the attack as untrue and unjustifiable. The *C. T.* inserts his letter, but makes no apology.

According to the *Christian World*, a Board school teacher asked a scholar in a very junior class, "Where did Lazarus go?" "To heaven," was the answer. "And what became of the rich man?" "He went to the big fire," said the child, "and burned for ever and ever, and his fingers were like candles." Such are the beautiful lessons of religious education!

It appears from the latest American Census, that only 20,489,697 of its 62,622,000 inhabitants are classed as of religious belief. Of these the Catholics head the list with 6,230,000, the Methodists following with 4,590,000, Baptists, 3,700,000, other Christian sects 5,700,000, Mormons, 166,200, Jews, 130,500, non-Christian Spiritualists, 45,000, Ethical Culturists, 1,100, Theosophists, 700, leaving an immense number of indifferents and Freethinkers, or otherwise unaccounted for.

A holy concert is held this Christmas at St. Michael, Coventry. *Elijah* "with full band and chorus" is announced. The seats are arranged in blocks, block A being valued at 3s. 6d. a seat, and the Lady Chapel 1s. To turn some churches into concert rooms should not require much alteration.

Henry Herbert Thomas, linendraper's assistant, throw himself from an attic window of his lodging, 21 Wood-street, Westminster, leaving a letter saying "I have deserted God and he has deserted me." Religious mania, not atheism, appears to have been the cause of his suicide.

A number of persons applied as usual for relief from the poor-box at Greenwich Police-court, and Mr. Kennedy told one woman she must bring a recommendation from a minister. Applicant said she did not go to church. Mr. Kennedy said that in Greenwich nobody seemed to go to church. He never knew such a godless lot of people. And he refused to relieve the woman.

The Rev. G. Cockburn Dickenson, B.A., was acquitted of the charge of cruelty to his children, but the chairman at the Huntingdon Police-court said the bench sincerely hoped that arrangements would be made by the children's trustees for their removal from the vicarage at Hartford. This looks not very different from the celebrated verdict of "Not guilty, but don't let it occur again."

The *Church Times* finds a curious moral in the Zierenberg case. It is that the clergy should have nothing to do with

charities of the undenominational kind. Evidently it sees that Canon Fleming and the Rev. Hugh B. Chapman only served as touts to draw £1,000 a year to these impostors.

The Duchess of Sutherland, who had once to sojourn in Holloway Castle for destroying documents not her own, recently presiding at a branch meeting of the Church of England Temperance Society, gave a discourse on the evils of drunkenness. For herself, she confessed she was not a teetotaler, but she is a member of the General Section which the C.E.T.S. kindly provides for those who want to see other people take the pledge of total abstinence. Her Grace should not need to be reminded that humanity is subject to other kinds of intemperance besides indulgence in intoxicating beverages.

Dr. E. J. Miller, who was for five years Baptist missionary in Burmah, makes the charge that of 46,000 dols. paid by the Government for the mission schools only 12,053 dols. were accounted for in the mission annual report. Dr. Miller says he has a full itemised statement, and can prove all he says. He was offered a bribe to keep a still tongue, but he refused to accept it. The bribe was, that he should be allowed to keep his station at Shwegyin as long as he liked, and whether he succeeded in his missionary work or not—1,200 dols. a year to hold his tongue!

The Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland has reprieved the Rev. George Griffiths who murdered his mother with cool deliberation for the sake of her cash. A plea of insanity was set up on his trial, but was rejected by the jury: it seems good enough, however, for the Lord-Lieutenant. George Griffiths is to be kept in penal servitude for life. But is this a real kindness? No doubt he would have gone to glory after the hangman's performance, and it seems a pity to keep him out of heaven, where he would find some very suitable company.

A Greenock street preacher, David Hutcheson, eloped with a widow, who was also a soul-saver. David left his wife and children destitute, and the cruel Sheriff has fined him £10 with the alternative of sixty days' imprisonment. Go to prison, David, go to prison, and join the noble army of martyrs.

The private organist to the Earl of Aberdeen is a very pious individual. He interlarded his love letters with frequent passages from the Bible, and when he jilted Miss Horry said, "It is God's will that we shall part, and I hope you will be happy." It was the sheriff's will that he should pay her £100 as a solatium for breach of promise.

According to the newspapers, a colored preacher in America, aged ninety-nine, has just married his eighth wife. What a rare old patriarch! It is like a picture from the Old Testament.

The Rev. R. C. Fillingham, vicar of Hexton, Bedfordshire, is a rare sort of a parson. Not only is he in favor of Disestablishment and Disendowment, but he says it would be more apostolic for the Archbishop of Canterbury to occupy two rooms over a barber's shop, and live on a pound a week, than for him to take £15,000 a year and occupy two palaces. Mr. Fillingham thinks the money of the Church is wanted for educational purposes, and that it is better to keep old men from the workhouse than to send parsons' sons to Eton or Oxford. We quite agree with this phoenix of clergymen, but we guess the Archbishop doesn't. It will take something more than the grace of God to convert "Cantaur" to this way of thinking.

In the *Review of the Churches*, writing on the work of Board schools, the Rev. J. H. Hollowell replies to Mr. Athelstan Riley's contention against the compromise of 1870, that it was received with enthusiasm by Secularists, by reminding him that Atheists only have a Conscience Clause, which is not of much service. Now it is true that Secularists welcomed with enthusiasm the Act which extended education and put it somewhat more into the hands of the people, but it is absurd to suppose they can ever be satisfied with a Conscience Clause, the practical working of which turns their children into martyrs. The clericals have re-opened the question, and the Secularists say, Let it be kept open and fought to the end.

After all, the extension of education is the main thing. They show, in Canada, a gun taken at Bunker's Hill. An

American, seeing that trophy, said, "Anyhow, we've got the hill." Mr. Riley and his friends may decry the Board Schools, may hamper them with religious teaching and delay the fall of his church for a generation or two, but the day of clerical domination is gone, and as real education extends, religious dogmas must be neutralised.

"Peter Lombard," writing on the subject of the burial of amputated limbs in the churchyard, cites the Rev. R. M. H. as writing of an old Lincolnshire woman who came to him some years back. When she brought her son's finger in a tiny coffin to the vicar, she said, "Thou know'st, sir, as the Lord's host 'll be main an' throng (very busy) a putten foalks tegither i' the Resurrection morn, an' A reckon it doant beseem such as we to send 'em a rammockin an' a ravin about (running hither and thither, and turning things over), if so be as we can put the bits handlike for 'em in his own ground."

Quips has been discussing the Christmassy question, Are there such things as ghosts? Despite the Spiritists, the general opinion seems there is not the ghost of one—even of a holy one—left. As the late Prof. W. K. Clifford said, "There is no room in the universe for ghosts."

More than three years after his death, the *Meditations and Devotions of the late Cardinal Newman* are given to the world. They will not add to his reputation, but rather display the deep current of superstition which underlay and spoiled the many beauties of his character. For instance, he calmly records of St. Philip: "And when he was passing the night in prayer in the catacombs, that great miracle took place of the Divine Presence of the Holy Ghost descending upon him under the appearance of a ball of fire, entering into his mouth and lodging in his breast, from which time he had a supernatural palpitation of the heart" (Pp. 142, 143.)

Again, he says this saint could smell those who were vicious, detecting them by their odor. What a pity God did not bestow this power on the myriads of innocent victims who have been ruined by the vicious, instead of bestowing it on a saint who was above temptation.

Jesus Christ may have smelt all right, but according to another passage of Cardinal Newman's *Meditations*, he must have looked abominably vicious, for he says: "He carried the image of them (the world's sins) in his very face. He looked like some outcast or outlaw who had frightful guilt upon him." Again he says: "Joseph was pure and innocent in a way unlike any other man who ever lived, our Lord excepted. . . . Jesus, Mary, Joseph, pray for me."

It is no pleasure to expose the littleness of a really great man, but one cannot contemplate the career of Cardinal Newman, as compared with that of his two brothers, without seeing there was a hidden flaw, which crops up prominently in these *Meditations*.

Abstinence from intoxicating liquor, says the *Methodist Times*, is a scriptural principle, and so is abstinence from war. Well, it may be, according to the Methodist Bible, but not according to the one in general use. That Bible calls the Lord "a man of war," and says that wine "cheereth" him. We guess that the wine which cheereth old Yahveh is something stronger than British port.

Says the *Natal Advertiser*: "The *Press* wants compulsory education for the Transvaal Boers. They read the Bible regularly, reverentially, unintelligently, literally. They begin at the Book of Genesis, working their way steadily to the last book of Revelation, and never think of missing so much as a chapter in Numbers, or a verse of the Chronicles. They read the Bible like they plough—as straight as possible, regardless of the smaller boulders. Having no imagination—for if they are born with imagination it is quickly starved—they have no conception of allegory, no perception of subtle truths and sweet poetic fancies that lie hidden between the lines. Their minds are as narrow as their lives, and, living to all intents and purposes alone, with nothing to occupy them but a daily round of sordid duties, they naturally became a race apart—so many Rip van Winkles, who look as if they would remain dormant for ever."

What a piece of humbug is this London Educational Progress Council! It was started at a meeting called to

consider how the Church party, the Diggleites, the Rileyites, or whatever you like to call them, should be fought at the next London School Board elections. This meeting took place under the auspices of the Liberal and Radical Union. The Rev. Stewart Headlam moved a resolution in favor of Secular Education, which was supported by Mr. Baker, of the N.S.S. Executive, and only lost by the casting vote of the chairman. Thus the majority, which was really a sham one, decided in favor of the "existing compromise"; that is, it decided to support the Nonconformist policy as against the policy of the Church of England. And now that an Executive Committee has been formed, it is naturally packed with Dissenters.

One member of this Executive is *not* a Dissenter. We refer to Mr. Graham Wallas, a leading light of the Fabian Society. Mr. Wallas is a gentleman whom we have every desire to respect, but he has made a very bad mistake in this instance. He talks of the "existing compromise" as the principle that "divides us least." But who are the "us"? It will take something more than this very cheap sort of wisdom to make Freethinkers and honest Radicals vote for any sort of religious education in Board schools. The difference between the Bible alone and the Bible explained, is a domestic difference among Christians. Freethinkers who have their own views about the Bible, and honest Radicals who are true to the principle that the State has no concern whatever with religion, are anxious to make a clean sweep of the whole business. For our part, if Secular Education cannot be carried, we should rather like to see the Church party beat the Nonconformists, and set up denominational teaching. That would bring the matter to a crisis, and compel the Nonconformists to accept the Secular Education ticket.

Mr. Graham Wallas, if he develops a taste for compromising his principles, will soon find himself in strange company. He is already not far from being cheek by jowl with Hugh Price Hughes. This gentleman is, of course, all for the "existing compromise"—that is, for as much Christianity as can be taught without giving the Church of England an advantage. "There is no difficulty," he says in the *Methodist Times*, "about the Atheist or Agnostic. He is protected by the Conscience Clause." But veracity is not Mr. Hughes's strong point, and he is here playing the humbug to perfection. A hundred times has he called the Conscience Clause a farce when its protection is sought by Nonconformists whose children are obliged to go to Church schools. It ceases to be a farce, however, in the case of Freethinkers, who have to seek protection against Church and Nonconformity combined. The fact is, the Conscience Clause is a farce in *all* cases. It creates a martyrdom, not for the parents, who might bear it, but for the children, who feel the smart without understanding the principle for which they suffer.

Mr. Wallas and his friends should really eliminate the word "Progress" from the name of the Council. There is no progress whatever in their policy. At the very best it is only marking time. Progress means going where you should be; this Council tries to keep us where we are. Other persons have a better right to use the word, because they are animated by its meaning. This much, at least, is pretty certain: the National Secular Society will fight against the "existing compromise"—which is purely one between the religious sects, and there is little doubt that it will have a great many Radical allies in the struggle.

During the miners' lock-out a Salvation Army man, called Happy Bob, shouted out, "Come with us, dear friends. There are no reductions at our colliery." At this some laughed, and he added: "It will be no laughing matter when you get to heaven, for there'll be no Salvation Army soldiers there."

In a country parish the wife of the lord of the manor came to church, after her confinement, to return thanks. The parson, aiming to be courtly, and thinking plain "woman" too vulgar, instead of saying "O Lord! save this woman!" said, "O Lord! save this lady!" The clerk, resolving not to be behindhand with him in politeness, answered, "Who putteth her ladyship's trust in thee?"

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

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.**—Dec. 31, Birmingham. January 7, Birmingham; 14, Nottingham; 15, Derby; 21, Leicester; 22, Rushden; 28, Hall of Science, London. Feb. 4, Glasgow; 6, 7 and 8, Dundee; 11, Edinburgh; 18, Bradford; 25, Hall of Science, London. March 4, Hall of Science, London; 11, Liverpool; 18, Nelson.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent to him (if a reply is required a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed) at Baskerville Hall, The Crescent, Birmingham.
- J. COLLINSON.**—We have no room for such a discussion. Our opinion has already been expressed that the body which issues medical degress should simply be the judge of a man's scientific qualifications. How he chooses to do business is entirely a matter between himself and his customers. Dr. Allinson has been badly treated, but letters in our columns will not undo the injury.
- R. STEVENS.**—The promised articles on the Drink Question shall appear as soon as possible. Competent discussion can follow. In respect to the other matter, you seem to have acted well, which is more than can be said of the others.
- F. G. ROK.**—Branches are always welcome to such notices. We conduct this journal in the interest of the party.
- N.S.S. BENEVOLENT FUND.**—Miss E. M. Vance, sec., acknowledges:—Collected per Miss Robins, 18s. 3d.
- MR. SMALL,** president of the Liverpool Branch, has removed to 60 Brook-road, Bootle. Those concerned will please note.
- C. DOEG.**—We don't know. Editors are not answerable for correspondents.
- B. S. K.**—We had gone to press when your second letter arrived. It is satisfactory to know that you have at least received a reply from Mr. Anderson, the secretary.
- E. MARTIN.**—We are very sorry to hear that Mr. Knox, the able and zealous secretary of the Ulster Branch, has had to have one of his eyes extracted. It is well to know, however, that his long torture is over, and that the remaining eye is sound and serviceable. We hope Mr. Knox will be able to resume his official duties in your Branch. Men of his stamp can very ill be spared in our movement.
- G. REMINGTON.**—It is handed to Mr. Forder, to whom all orders for literature should be sent direct.
- "W. C."** (Dorking) sends us £1 for the N.S.S. Benevolent Fund.
- DELTA.**—We intend to use new type for our "Acid Drops" and "Sugar Plums" shortly. Thanks.
- J. PRINGLE.**—The matter shall be seen to. Thanks for cuttings.
- JOSEPH BROWN.**—Inserted, but at great inconvenience. Sorry to hear you have been ill.
- LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.,** should be written on postcards or the envelopes marked outside, and be sent to 14 Clerkenwell-green, London, E.O.
- FRINDS** 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—Quips—Church Times—Natal Advertiser—Dalton's Weekly Advertiser—Chat—Charity Record—Glasgow Herald—Echo
- CORRESPONDENCE** should reach us not later than Tuesday if a reply is desired in the current issue. Otherwise the reply stands over till the following week.
- LITERARY** communications to be addressed to the Editor, 14 Clerkenwell-green, London, E.O. All business communications to Mr. R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter-street, London, E.O. *The Freethinker* will be forwarded, direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One Year, 10s. 6d.; Half Year, 5s. 3d.; Three Months, 2s. 8d.
- SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS.**—Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements:*—One inch, 3s.; Half Column, 15s.; Column, £1 10s. Special terms for repetitions.
- IT** being contrary to Post-office regulations to announce on the wrapper when the subscription is due, subscribers will receive the number in a colored wrapper when their subscription expires.

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.

The next issue of the *Freethinker* is our special New Year's Number. It will comprise twenty-four pages of reading matter and illustrations, and the price will be threepence. We shall regard it as a favor if Branches and newsagents who have weekly parcels from Mr. Forder will send him

their orders for this number as early as possible. We can promise that it will be one of exceptional value and interest.

Christmas Eve is not, generally speaking, a favorable time for public meetings, yet there was another fine audience at the London Hall of Science on Sunday evening, when Mr. Foote gave "A Freethought Sermon on God's Birthday." Mr. Robert Forder took the chair, and the veteran Edward Truelove, who is a few months older than Mr. Gladstone, occupied a seat on the platform. Prior to his "sermon" Mr. Foote performed the ceremony of naming a baby boy, Ernest George Beid. The little fellow behaved remarkably well, staring at the speaker as intently as any of the spectators. Mr. Foote's discourse was much relished, the audience was thoroughly alive from beginning to end, and at the close there was a regular tempest of applause. The chairman observed, amidst marks of approval, that he had presided at many lectures in past years, and he ventured to say that the one they had just listened to was worthy of the genius and eloquence of any speaker who had gone before.

Mr. Robert Forder occupies the London Hall of Science platform this evening (Dec. 31), his subject being "The Rise of Christendom," with special reference to Professor Johnson's theories. Mr. Forder should have a good audience.

We invite the attention of our metropolitan readers to the London Secular Federation's annual dinner, which is to take place at the Holborn Restaurant, on Monday, January 8. The price of the tickets is higher than it has been before, but this is unavoidable. The lower price has been tried, and there has always been something to mar the success of the function. This time the dinner is arranged for at a first-class establishment, where the food, the service, and the general accommodation may all be depended upon. Those who can afford to pay the four shillings—and it is only once a year—will find a good evening's enjoyment for their money. All who can should attend, if only for the sake of the movement. Mr. Foote is to preside, and he will be supported by Mr. Charles Watts and other Freethought leaders. Tickets can be obtained at the Hall of Science, at 28 Stonecutter-street, or from any London Branch secretary.

An officer of the London Secular Federation, overcome, we suppose, by the festivities of the season, burst into song as under—

Come to the dinner of the L.S.F.,
For a rare good evening 'twill be;
He'll tickle your palate, will the Holborn chef,
And the singers are in capital key.
The orators, too, will not bawl you deaf,
When they speak on behalf of the L.S.F.

Members of the N.S.S. should purchase a copy of its *Almanack*. It is worth buying for its reading matter, and it contains full details of Freethought work and organisation in all parts of the world, besides a valuable calendar, in which are the names of hundreds of the most advanced modern thinkers and reformers. As the *Almanack* belongs to the Society, the profits of its publication go to further the work of the movement.

Mr. Charles Watts lectures this Sunday evening, Dec. 31, at Baskerville Hall, Birmingham.

The eighth Annual Gathering of the South Shields Branch will take place at the Baring-street Infants' School on New Year's Day. There will be a large attendance of members and friends, and an enjoyable evening may be anticipated. Tea at 5.30, to be followed by dancing, etc. Tickets, gentlemen, 1s. 6d.; ladies, 1s.; children, 6d.

The last written words of Professor Tyndall were sent in answer to a request from an American syndicate for a Christmas message to friends in America. It ended: "I choose the nobler part of Emerson, when, after various disenchantments, he exclaims, 'I covet Truth.' The gladness of true heroism visits the heart of him who is really competent to say this."

Colonel Ingersoll says Shakespeare "was a splendid pagan, and that was all. There is not a single suggestion of religion about any of his death scenes."

Mr. Symes writes to the *Liberator* on his journey to New Zealand. He was very seasick, and says: "Those who find life so sweet—at other people's expense and loss, tell us how beautifully 'God' has adapted this world to man and man to this world! Such people should have the pleasures of seasickness administered to them until their superstition is expelled. I have never yet been able to discover the harmony between the rocking and rolling of a vessel and the nervous and gastric constitution of most men. Greater discord would be hard to find. Probably no Natural Theologian ever tackled that problem. It's a tough one."

"O. K." the famous Russian lady publicist, writing in the *Westminster Gazette*, tells an interesting story of Kinglake, the historian, who was a man of brilliant parts and a first-rate conversationalist. It was soon after Tyndall's exciting Belfast Address, and "O. K." remarked that the Professor's sentiments were what she was "accustomed to connect with the purest Christianity." She spoke with enthusiasm, and Kinglake checked her. "Pray remember," he said, "I am a heathen. I dislike churches, and had I my way," he added, with a twinkle in his eye, "I would write on every chapel, church, and cathedral only one line—'Important, if true.' As for philosophy, with all its objective and subjective theories, with all its 'categorical imperatives,' I patronise it still less. I admit categorical imperatives," he said smiling, "only from a woman I like."

The *Westminster Review* notices the discordance of the higher criticism with the teachings of Jesus Christ. It says: "In the few pronouncements Christ makes on biblical questions, he takes those very views to which orthodoxy has ever clung, but which critical science now shows to be untenable."

The annual tea-party of the Manchester Branch takes place to-day (Sunday, Dec. 31) at 5 p.m. Adults, 1s.; children, 6d. At 6.30 the dramatic society will produce a humorous sketch, and there will be instrumental music. Free admission to the entertainment.

The Newcastle Branch will have a social evening on Sunday, Dec. 31, at the Eldon Hall, consisting of songs, recitations, etc. Admission to members and friends only.

Mr. W. Willis, L.C.C., will lecture at the Battersea Secular Hall next Sunday evening (Jan. 7) on "London Government: what it is, and what it ought to be." Mr. Willis was an active member of the Battersea Branch and member of the Executive. Old members and friends of the Branch should attend, especially as they will have a good opportunity to rejoin—the quarterly meeting of the members taking place immediately after the lecture.

The collected works of the late Dr. Albert Dulk are being published at Stuttgart. Dr. Dulk was a stout Freethinker, as may be gathered from the title of one of his works, *The Errors of Jesus*.

The *Sentinel* quotes a negro philosopher of Wakeeney, known as Uncle Nathan Brown, concerning the condition of things in Western Kansas. The people hired a rainmaker named Boyd, who failed and pulled out. "I 'low dis heah country ain't nevah goin' to get no mo' rain," said Uncle Brown. "De good Lawd, in his justificatin', didn't see no use ob a fall ob de heavenly waters, an' you all done sent foh Mr. Boyd. Den the Lawd said, Ef you gwine to put yo'r trus' in Mr. Boyd, den trus' Mr. Boyd. Den de Lawd pulled out. Den Mr. Boyd pestiferated wif de elements a spell, an' he pulled out. Wif de Lawd pulled out, and Mr. Boyd pulled out, how you gwine to 'spect any rain?"

Jonas Hanway, the philanthropist, having once advertised for a coachman, he had a great number of applications. One of them he approved of, and told him, if his character answered, he would take him on the terms which they had agreed upon; "But," said he, "as I am rather a particular man, it may be proper to inform you, that every evening after the business of the stable is done, I shall expect you to come to my house for a quarter of an hour to attend family prayers. To this, I suppose, you can have no objection." "Why, as to that, sir," replied the man, "I does not see much to say against it, but I hope you will consider it in my wages."

MORE OF MIVART.

ONCE more Mr. Mivart appears in the *Nineteenth Century* on the hell question, and this time it is to make an explanation of his recent "knuckling under" to Rome. Now no one, we fancy, will care to deny that Mr. Mivart is, at times, a singularly pleasant and lucid writer; some of his scientific works one reads with a distinct sense of profit and pleasure. But it must also be allowed that, at times, he is oppressively verbose; and it would seem that, in handling religious questions, his mind becomes involved in an obscurantism that is not one of its characteristics in other realms of thought. To see a man of science and sense like Mr. Mivart busy discussing the nature of hell, or the doctrine of the "Hypostatic union," and citing seriously—in a wealth of foot-notes—the balderdash of mediæval monks, is a curious phenomenon which is interesting as showing how a man, who has advanced far beyond the average on some lines of knowledge, may yet be hopelessly behind the average on other lines. It may be stated that Mr. Mivart has evidently made himself acquainted with the criticisms passed upon him in the Freethought, as in the other journals of the country, and it is to defend his action that he now takes up his pen.

Before he comes to the point of his article—the matter of the Index—he volunteers a little information on what he considers the "ultimate foundations of all religion." And the way he arrives at these "ultimate foundations," he tells us, is by "the dictates of calm and solid reason." In fact, he assures us that he has justified, to his "own satisfaction, the validity of human reason." Now we venture to say that this proposition—the validity of human reason—destroys all Mr. Mivart's creed. The proposition, of course, is unquestionable—it is, in fact, almost all that Freethinkers have ever claimed. Once grant the validity of human reason, and your supernatural house of cards tumbles to the ground. If Mr. Mivart sets up his own "calm and solid reason"—such as it is—as the criterion of "revelation," he is placing his reason in the superior, and "revelation" in the inferior position; he is weighing what is alleged to be the supernatural, in the scales of the natural; in short, judging by the tests of experience what is said to transcend the possibility of experience. In a foot-note Mr. Mivart implies that people who use their reason and who reject his "revelation," are either "vicious," or else "regard with repugnance the command to worship and explicitly serve a supreme invisible Power." Now, dismissing the "vicious" part of the thing as really unworthy of Mr. Mivart, we may say that Freethinkers have no innate repugnance to worship or obey a Power of which they have no knowledge. But when Mr. Mivart demonstrates to our "calm and solid reason" the existence of his "supreme invisible Power," and further shows that this Power is worthy of our worship and service—we shall then have not the slightest repugnance to do whatever, in the circumstances, it seems calmly reasonable to do.

The unfortunate part of the business is that what seems the "most certain of all facts" for Mr. Mivart is not so for other people. One, for instance, of Mr. Mivart's "solid reasons" for believing in a God is that the universe demands "a cause adequate to the production of intelligence, goodness, and will." He finds no necessity for a cause adequate to the production of unintelligence, badness, and lack of will. In short, he concerns himself solely with one side of the picture, stubbornly refuses to look at the other, then elevates his narrowness of vision into a "certain fact," and flings at those who take a broader view, and try to look all round where he only looks at part, the epithet of "vicious" or the charge of petty pride.

The trend of Mr. Mivart's exposition—which we may say is not startlingly original—is this: the existence of a supreme Power of intelligence, goodness, beauty, truth (and any other characteristics that are considered admirable by the individual) is a "certain fact"; this Power must have communicated with man; the best revelation on earth is the Christian revelation; ergo, Christianity is the revelation of a beautiful, intelligent, truthful, etc., etc., Power. Of course the reasoning

bristles—at least so it seems to us—with fallacies. In the first place we deny that the existence of the supreme, intelligent Power is a demonstrable fact; in the second place we deny there is any logical necessity, even if it were demonstrated, of a communication from that Power; and in the third place we deny that, of the existing alleged revelations, Christianity is either the oldest, the latest, or the best. However, having worked out his Christian "revelation," the only thing left for Mr. Mivart is to work in the Catholic establishment. And this is accepted because, of all the Christian bodies, it is the only "one which loudly and unequivocally proclaims that it, and it alone, is the organ of divine revelation, and exclusively possesses authority which all men throughout the world are bound to obey." By this it seems that you have only to make a preposterous claim—the more preposterous the better—in order to have established your credentials. Christianity alleges itself to be a divine revelation, therefore it is so; Catholicism claims authority over all men, therefore you ought to obey it. When a person's "calm and solid reason" accepts propositions of this character, one is inclined to look up the dictionary to see if he may not be mistaken as to the meaning of the words. "It is manifestly absurd," says our author, "for any corporate body to command submission to its authority and assent to its teaching while it admits that it is not infallible, but may be mistaken." This proposition may be quite true; it may only mean that, since no corporate body can be infallible, it is "manifestly absurd" for any such body to command submission to its authority. What are the facts of history? Is it not the case that those who claimed to be infallible almost invariably proved to be wrong? Has not Mr. Mivart himself written scathingly of the Church's "infallible" dealings with Galileo and with Bruno, with its "infallible" denunciation of the Copernican astronomy? Nay, we would say of all men or bodies, those who claim infallibility are those most mistaken. The man who admits he may be wrong is far more likely to be right than the blustering dogmatist who denies the possibility of his being in error, because in all probability the modest man is one of broader view; and right through history the dogmatists—in point of knowledge and ability—had the least right to dogmatise. For the more a man knows, the better he realises how little comparatively is his knowledge to the knowledge that may be; the greater a man's experience, the more cautious he becomes in his statements, the more ready to listen to new and wider experience. It is precisely your "absolute infallible authorities" that generally turn out to be mendacious ignoramuses and pretentious quacks.

The Catholic "faith," Mr. Mivart says, contains nothing "which conflicts with my reason." Well, now all we can say is, that if the propositions of an omnipotent God thwarted in his designs, of an angry God sacrificing himself to appease his own anger—in short, if the hodge-podge of nonsense, which makes up Christian theology, is not in conflict with Mr. Mivart's "reason," that commodity must verily be of an extraordinary character. Most Christian jugglers have contended that the Christian doctrines were "mysteries" beyond the comprehension of reason, that they were matters of "faith." But when we find Mr. Mivart coming forward to justify them all on the score of their "reasonableness," we can quite understand why Rome may look upon him as a very questionable advocate, and one who is as likely to damage, as to help, her cause.

The riskiness of Mr. Mivart's advocacy comes out, for instance, in his laudation of the Ritualistic party in the Establishment. He tells us that Ritualistic ministers are "scattering the good seed of Roman doctrine far and wide." "Thus," he says, "not only are our ancient churches being renovated and decorated in the Roman spirit, and so prepared for us, but congregations to fill them are also being gathered together." We fancy Mr. Mivart's "noble-minded" Ritualistic friends will hardly thank him for these touches. He makes the most he can—against the Anglican Church—of the fact that it is without a "definite, recognised" creed, that it is split by divisions and dissensions, and contains within it a number of merely undefined

Theistic believers. The Romish Church, on the other hand—according to Mr. Mivart—professes definite dogmas, and further, is able to authoritatively enforce the acceptance of such fresh definitions “as the restless activity of the human intellect must from time to time ever render necessary.” That is to say, plainly, the Roman Church is far better able to trim, to deny today what it asserted yesterday, change with the changing times, and incorporate into its own system whatever for the moment seems expedient. And it is all infallible! If one “infallible” Pope says the earth is flat, and persecutes those who assert its rotundity, well, of course, “revelation” must be suited to the capacity of men to understand. Truths must not be sprung upon the world too suddenly!

At last Mr. Mivart comes to the point on which he set out to write. In the first place, there is the statement that the Congregation of the Index sometimes suppresses a book merely because what it contains is “inopportune.” Examples are given of books which have been placed on the Index and have afterwards been removed. And there is a brilliant parable to illustrate the argument of the inopportuneness of telling a young wife, in love with a man not her husband, the properties of certain poisons. The parable, however, is curious. Who is represented by the young wife? Is it the body of the “faithful”? And if so, is the Catholic laity in a state of latent rebellion, and Mr. Mivart the gentleman whose information about poisons would lead to disaster? But the fact is, Mr. Mivart overdoes the thing. This is the substance of his statement: It was said by some people that the Church had so few scientists in her ranks, that she would hesitate before condemning one of them; the Church, however, has condemned and demonstrated her integrity. Secondly, the whole affair has given Mr. Mivart an opportunity of showing his loyalty for which he was pining. People said he was breaking away from the Church; he has shown his steadfastness. So that really one gets the impression that Mr. Mivart would have been sorry if his articles had not been condemned. In fact, Mr. Mivart doth protest *far* too much; so much, indeed, that one might well be excused for thinking the whole business a “put-up-job” between Mr. Mivart and the Vatican.

And now, probably, we have heard the last of the “happiness in hell.” A year ago Mr. Mivart set out on his little journey. Month after month a review like the *Nineteenth Century*, which ought to contain the best thoughts of the most educated thinkers, was degraded by a crack-brained exposition which would have rightly found its place in the columns of a second-rate religious weekly. The vagary is over. Mr. Mivart having marched up the hill to a great flourish of trumpets, has marched down again to a greater flourish. He may consider that he has done right, and has acted conscientiously throughout, but to us it seems he has come out worse in character, worse in reputation, and worse as a writer who merits serious attention. In short, Mr. Mivart seems to have allowed himself to be made a cat's-paw; no man can do that and suffer not.

FREDERICK RYAN.

TERRIBLE EFFECTS OF SUNDAY-SCHOOL TRAINING.

AT a temperance mass meeting, recently held at Leighton Buzzard, the Rev. R. Watkin Jones (Wesleyan) drew a terrible picture of the sad effects of Sunday-school training. In what the newspaper report called “a very eloquent and forcible speech,” he referred to the facts that “a few years ago, in an Edinburgh prison, there were 569 prisoners, and 408 of them had received instruction in Sunday-schools. . . At Glasgow it was reported that 62 out of 68 prisoners had received Sunday-school instruction. . . In Leeds, out of 2,000 prisoners, 1,500 had received instruction in Sunday-schools. . . After that, a very extensive inquiry was made by chaplains and others, connected with the principal prisons of England and Wales, and their report showed that out of 10,000 prisoners, 6,500 had received instruction in Sunday-schools. . . some of them had been Sunday-school teachers.”

The strange part of the matter in connection with these deplorable statistics, was that it never seemed to cross the Rev. Mr. Jones's mind that the Sunday-schools were in the least to blame for this state of affairs, but went on to speak of the “blessed results of Christianity in this and other lands,” especially as regards “reclaiming young women”! Now, we have no wish to make Sunday-schools responsible for the state of things quoted above, but would like to know what Mr. Jones and men of his cloth would have said if all these criminals had “received instruction” in Secular Halls? Would he and they not have got red in the face through shouting “Here is the awful effects of Secularist teaching”?

But there is another aspect of the case we do wish to insist on, and that is this: That Christian teaching in Sunday-schools has not prevented these scholars turning out criminals. Surely there must be something very much wrong with a religion that claims to be *the* particular pea out of so many, with such poor results to show. What a farce, too, is the boast that Christianity is reclaiming a few young women, when criminals are turned out wholesale from the Sunday-schools!

Another point worth mentioning, is this: Are not the teachings received in Sunday-schools relative to Jesus turning water into wine, and other references of an appreciative character in relation to intoxicating drink, as well as the drinking of wine at the Lord's Supper, are not these facts to be reckoned as having a good deal to do with the manufacture of criminals, seeing that nine-tenths of our crime is caused through drink?

SCEPTIC.

CHURCH SPIRES.

O, TALL church spires, you're pious liars
On each revolving day;
You point at night to Bethlehem's light,
At morn the other way.

You're said to point to realms on high,
Where saints immortal dwell;
Beneath your spires sectarian fires
Suggest an earthly hell.

As up your height I look for light
On human life and plan;
I find there's hosts of talk on ghosts,
But little as to man.

Your form is grand just where you stand,
And covers a large square;
The wonder is how “men of biz”
Could build you up with prayer.

Perhaps, I think, they prayed with chink,
As earnest churchmen do;
The money came from girl and dame,
And some from papa, too.

Uprose the spirit higher and higher,
By means of golden grace;
The hopes of man (salvation's plan)
Then vanished into space.

It seems at least that spire and priest
Are sadly out of joint;
The spire should rest, not on its base,
But only on its point.

But Church and man, on such a plan,
Are not so often built;
The Church's way is pray and prey;
The point is always gilt.

ALBERT W. RAWSON.

“The collection for the heathen last Sunday,” said a minister, “was very gratifying. We got three dozen shirt buttons. If the congregation will kindly put a few shirts in the plate this morning to go with them, no more can be expected of them.”

A four-year-old boy was amusing himself one evening by imitating his mother and father, who were playing euchre. The child held a pack of cards and would lay a card on the floor every time his mother laid one on the table, and would say “I pass,” etc., when she did. Bedtime came, and with it the usual child's prayer with the common ending; but this time the youngster wound up thus: “God bless papa, mamma and baby—I pass—clubs trumps. Amen!”

SPIRITS NOT ABOVE PROOF.

Dabblers in the gentle art of "spiritualism" will feel rather a shock at the revelations made by Professor Schiff to the Besançon Congress. A young girl—one of those extremely interesting cases—was reported to be haunted by rapping spirits. Her health was worn out; her power of sleeping gone; she lay in a sort of dazed trance. Thus the Professor found her when he called, wrapped to the neck in bedclothes. Being told to listen for the peccant spirits he did so, and presently perceived a faint dry or sometimes vibratory tapping. He felt convinced that it came from the motionless bedclothes, and ergo was caused in some way by the unconscious girl; but he was puzzled to account for the production of a dry sound by a body composed of moist elements. The vibrating notes were low in the scale, such as would be given out by a stretched cord of fair length, and this caused him to fix his attention upon the long tendon in the leg, which might be made to spring off a small projection behind the ankle. He made experiments with one leg, placing his foot first against a support, and then trying without. He found that with a little practice he was able to reproduce all the sounds perfectly, and concluded his narrative by giving a séance of spirit rapping that would have made the fortune of a professional medium.—*Pall Mall Gazette*.

NORTH-EASTERN SECULAR FEDERATION.

The Annual Social Gathering will be held on Wednesday, Jan. 3, in Mr. Cook's Dancing Academy, Rutherford-street, near the Tyne Theatre. The concert will commence at 7, for which a host of talent has been provided. A special entertainment will be giving during the evening, at which a small extra charge will be made, for the benefit of the Federation funds, consisting of conjuring and comic art gallery. Supper at 9.30; dancing from 10 till 2. Tickets, gentlemen, 2s.; ladies, 1s. 6d.; children under 12 years of age, 1s. Friends unable to attend the concert and supper will be admitted to the dance, by applying to the secretary, at the following charges—gentlemen, 1s.; ladies, 6d. Tickets may be had of the secretary, at his address, or of Mr. Peter Weston, newsagent, 77 Newgate-street, Newcastle.—JOSEPH BROWN, Hon. Sec., 55 Northbourne-street, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

[Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday, and be marked "Lecture Notice," if not sent on post-card.]

LONDON.

Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.O.: 11.15, Miss Agnes Henry, "What is Secular Education?" (free); 6.30, musical selections; 7, R. Forder, "The Rise of Christendom" (admission free; reserved seats 3d. and 6d.) Monday, debating class, F. Haslam, "Poverty: its Cause and Cure." Tuesday 7.30 to 12, "Cinderella" ball. Thursday and Friday at 8, dancing classes. Saturday at 8.30, in the minor hall, social evening (free).

Battersea Secular Hall (back of Battersea Park Station): 5.30, tea, entertainment, and dance (6d.) Tuesday at 8, social gathering (free). Wednesday at 8, dramatic club.

Bethnal Green—Libra Hall, 78 Libra-road, Roman-road: 5.30, tea and social evening.

Hammersmith Club, 1 The Grove, Broadway: Thursday, Jan. 4, at 8.30, A. B. Moss, "Religious Cross Roads."

Wimbledon—Liberty Hall, Hartfield-road Coffee House (Broadway entrance): 7, free entertainment.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Battersea Park-gates: 11.15, J. Fagan, "Miracles" (in the hall if the weather is unfavorable).

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

COUNTRY.

Aberdeen—Oddfellows' Hall Buildings (Room No. 6): 11.30 J. Harkis, "Religion and Science."

Birmingham—Baskerville Hall, Crescent, Cambridge-street: 7, Charles Watts will lecture.

Bradford—Unity Lodge Rooms, 65 Sunbridge-road: 6.30, J. Grange, "Secularism: is it True, is it Moral, is it Needed?"

Bristol—Shepherd's Hall, Old Market-street: 3, J. Keast, "The Saviors of Mankind."

Dundee—Cutlers' Hall, Murraygate: 11.30, mutual improvement class, "Bible Women"; 2.30, concert; 6.30, adjourned debate on "Imitation: a Study," opened by Mr. Nicoll. Tuesday at 6, festival and dance.

Hanley—Secular Hall, John-street: 7.30, members' quarterly meeting.

Hull Sunday Association, St. George's Hall, Storey-street: 2.30, Mr. Ackroyd, "The Labor Church; its Necessity, Mission, and Principles."

Leicester—Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate: O. Cohen, 3, "The Rise of Christianity"; 6.30, "Evolution v. Special Creation."

Liverpool—Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street: 11.30, annual meeting of Tontine Society; 7, S. Reeves (Fabian), "The Origin of the English Proletariat."

Manchester N.S.S., Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints': 5, annual tea party (adults 1s., children 6d.); 6.30, free dramatic performance.

Newcastle-on-Tyne—Eldon Hall, 2 Clayton-street: 3, monthly business meeting; 7, social evening for members and friends only. South Shields—Capt. Duncan's Navigation School, King-street: 7, business meeting. Sunderland—Long Room, Bridge End Vaults, Bridge-street: 7, Mr. Oxley, "The Necessity for Atheism."

LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

O. COHEN, 12 Merchant-street, Bow-road, E.—Dec. 31, Leicester.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Oredon-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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It was the question of the Pope's infallibility which aroused the individuality of Father Suffield. When that question was being agitated by the "aggressive and insolent faction," as Cardinal Newman called them, who were pressing it on the Church before the Vatican Council, Father Rodolph felt it his duty to examine it. To open such a question was like the letting out of waters. If the Pope was not infallible, was the Church? If the Church was not infallible, was the Bible? Investigation drove him to the conclusion that infallibility was not to be found in pontiff, council, or book. Prayer, fasting, and hard work were inefficient to remove his doubts; and at length, in May, 1870, when the dogma of infallibility was evidently being forced on the Church, he wrote to Dr. James Martineau a touching letter showing his innermost thoughts.

Dr. Martineau went to confer with him in his retreat at Bosworth, and the result was, that when the Papal Infallibility Dogma was proclaimed, Father Suffield both repudiated it and the other orthodox dogmas of the Christian Church, of which he had been twenty years a minister. His views

had become similar to those of Theodore Parker, and a Free Christian congregation was found for him, first at Croydon, and afterwards at Reading. His earnest and elevated character attracted select congregations. He married and joined in many movements for secular improvement. Ill health compelled him to retire in 1888, and he died at Reading on Nov. 13, 1891. Some specimens of his discourses are included in the volume, which is a worthy memento of one who was in many ways a remarkable man.

The following is Mr. Suffield's verdict upon his early creed. "Catholicism may long remain a verbal creed to millions, a source of spiritual consolation and refreshment, a guide amidst perplexities of conduct and morals—but resting on dogmas which cannot by any amount of compromise be incorporated with knowledge and with facts, assuring as the condition of its existence an hypothesis condemned alike by reason, history, and science; upheld by an organisation which is the assumed enemy of inquiry, of liberty, of the rights of others—it may still delude devout and reverend and high souled men, but it cannot again regenerate society."

The True History of Joshua Davidson has been translated into Dutch by C. Vosmaer, one of the leading Freethought writers in Holland.

Dr. Huber, of Berlin, has written a work entitled Morality without Dogmas. He naively sent a copy to the pious young emperor, but received the blunt rebuff that a book with such a title could not be accepted.

In the latest volume of the Dictionary of National Biography Dr. Garnett contributes an able and sympathetic notice of Philip Bourke Marston. Mr. Leslie Stephen writes on Malthus, Bernard Mandeville, and Harriet Martineau, whom he speaks of frankly as "the disciple of an avowed Atheist." The Life of Henry Marten, the Pagan regicide, is by C. H. Firth, who also does the biography of that other patriot, Andrew Marvell.

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