

The Free thinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.

VOL. XIV.—No. 6.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 1894.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

THE DAMNATION OF HUGH PRICE HUGHES FRESH DETAILS.

THE GIBSONS IN LONDON. GREAT MEETING AT THE HALL OF SCIENCE What will Mr. Hughes do now?

(Concluded from last week's "Free thinker.")

THE Rev. Hugh Price Hughes has thus far taken no notice of my exposure of his false and foolish story of the Atheist Shoemaker. But I do not intend to leave him in peace. I shall pursue him to the bitter end. Of course I cannot make him speak, but I can make him feel the force of at least one Bible text—"Be sure your sin will find you out."

Fortunately I have been able to make fresh discoveries, which enable me to complete this exposure, and to show that the reverend gentleman's story is as "false as dicers' oaths." But before I state the nature of these discoveries I must give an account of the visit of the Gibson family to London.

The Gibsons in London.

Mr. Gibson senior, who has all along been anxious to see the truth triumph, accepted my invitation to come up to London and corroborate my statements in the *Free thinker*. He arrived at Euston Station on Sunday afternoon, in company with his two sons. I met them and took them to my house to tea. They had brought with them the books and documents I referred to last week. After tea we went to the Hall of Science, where they were delighted with their reception. It was a surprise to them to find Secularists so pleasant and cordial, and they desired me to express their gratitude for the treatment they received. Friends not far from the Hall accommodated them for the night. They spent Monday morning with me, and after dinner we parted most excellent friends. They thanked me heartily, though the thanks were due from me to them; and, as a mark of his confidence, Mr. Gibson left in my custody the whole of the documents he had brought with him from Northampton. These are now safe under lock and key, and will remain there until they are wanted to prove my case, and Mr. Gibson's case too, for he is vilely slandered in Mr. Hughes's story.

Great Meeting at the Hall of Science.

The Hall of Science was packed to suffocation on Sunday night. The platform was full, every inch of standing room was occupied, and many persons were unable to obtain admission. Several reporters were present, and good accounts of the meeting were given in Monday's press.

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Mr. R. O. Smith, who took the chair, hoped the audience would not get too excited, and it did not, but it was full of enthusiasm from the beginning to the very end. I am not the proper person to give an account of my own speech, though I may be allowed to say that it was very warmly applauded, especially at the close when I said I would not let Mr. Hughes skulk behind Mr. Holyoake, but would drag him out, and make him take his castigation. I may also mention that I had to correct two unimportant errors in my account in last week's *Free thinker*. First, the volume of the Social Science Congress proceedings was not given by Mr. Gibson to his dead son, Charles Alfred Gibson, but was brought to Northampton by Julia Gibson after her husband's death. She gave it to her father-in-law, who afterwards gave it to Stephen Henry. The substantial point is that the book is the one referred to (and, of course, inaccurately referred to) in Mr. Hughes's story. Secondly, it was not on leaving his father's house at Northampton that Charles Alfred Gibson knelt down and prayed in the passage, but two or three weeks before he left; a little blunder in chronology which is not worth mentioning, except for the sake of absolute accuracy.

Half-way through my speech I stopped to let Mr. Gibson senior corroborate in his own way what I had told the public. He stood up amidst a hurricane of cheers, which visibly moved him. His little speech was spontaneous and touching. At one point, when he said, with a half sob, that it was cruel to talk of his son's "early privations," seeing that he had worked eighteen hours a day to bring up his family as well as he knew how, several persons were shedding tears. "The story is a lie," said Mr. Gibson. "Whoever is responsible for it," he added, "I say it is a lie." He stated that he was a Christian, who had since his son's death conducted a Methodist Mission at Northampton. But he was not a bigot, and he believed in fair play. Above all, he hated lying; and it seemed to him that Atheists could tell the truth better than some reverend gentlemen. For the rest, he had only to say that Mr. Foote had given the exact truth in the *Free thinker*, and it was truth that could be proved right up to the hilt. Mr. Gibson then sat down, after speaking for

about ten minutes, and the audience cheered him again and again.

I rose again and dealt briefly with the yarn of the converted "atheist brother." "Were you ever an Atheist?" I asked Stephen Henry Gibson, who, having been in the army, stood up like a soldier at attention, and answered, "Never." "Have you ever been anything but a professed Christian?" Again the answer was "Never." "Have you ever had any communication with the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes or the Sisters of the West London Mission?" And again the answer was "Never." "I think that is eminently satisfactory," I said, as Stephen Henry Gibson sat down, and the audience evidently thought so too. I then concluded my address, and the meeting wound up with a hearty vote of thanks to the Gibsons for standing up for the truth even amidst Atheists. Mr. J. Brumage proposed this, it was seconded by another friend on the platform, and carried by acclamation.

Fresh Light.

While we were chatting in the Committee Room upstairs, a message was sent up from a Freethinker who had known Charles Alfred Gibson and worked with him. This gentleman was ushered up. His name was Mr. Frank Trasler. He was a member of the National Secular Society while working with the "John Herbert" of Mr. Hughes's story, having been connected with the Branch that used to meet at Claremont Hall, and he was a member still. He laughed at Charles Alfred Gibson's "Atheism," and advised me to call at Ford's in the Gray's Inn-road, and see his old shopmates. Of course I arranged to do so, in company with the Gibsons, early the next morning.

"Herbert's" Old Shopmates.

On Monday morning, at ten o'clock, the Gibsons and I entered Ford's establishment, where the shoemakers were ready for us. As luck would have it, one of them, who came in late, recognised Mr. Gibson senior as a workmate of his twenty years ago. We went down into the very room where Charles Alfred Gibson made shoes in 1888. It is in the basement, where workshops ought not to be, but the men laughed when I read to them what Mr. Hughes says about it in "The Atheist Shoemaker." According to the reverend gentleman's account, his convert's health was ruined by working in "a sweating den," and when the Factory Inspector called his "Christian employer" took the official upstairs, and treated him to sherry, to keep him from "putting his nose" in the basement. "Rubbish!" the men said. The Factory Inspector would come whenever they liked to call him, and as a matter of fact he made his inspections without the employer. Charles Alfred Gibson could not have said what Mr. Hughes had put into his mouth. One of the men had worked there fifteen years, and still looked sound. "Herbert" was not "killed by a Christian employer." It is apparently impossible for Mr. Hughes to be accurate about anything. The truth is, the young man inherited heart disease from his mother, and it killed him as it killed her.

Charles Alfred Gibson's old shopmates remembered him well. He had worked with them about twelve months. Before that he had worked at Lilley and Skinner's, Paddington-green, and while there he had belonged to the Church Army. Within eighteen months, that is, of his conversion by Mr. Hughes! Really the very time was narrowing around the reverend gentleman like the Inquisition walls around the victim in one of Poe's thrilling stories.

"Did you ever know my son to be a lecturer?" asked Mr. Gibson. One and all answered "No," and declared it an utter absurdity. "Did you ever know him to be an Atheist?" One and all again answered "No." A shopmate said that he was rather fond of arguing, in which he shifted about, taking all sorts of sides, in opposition to the person he argued with. But he was never to their knowledge an unbeliever; in fact, he was always hostile to Atheism in his conversation. They had all along thought that Charles Alfred Gibson must be Mr. Hughes's "Herbert," and they were all of them, of all shades of opinion, perfectly satisfied that the reverend gentleman was a first-class liar.

So much for the Atheism of "John Herbert" in the minds of his old shopmates. I have seen them, and Mr. Hughes has not. He preferred to spin his history, spider-like, out of the bowels of his own imagination.

The Last Link.

While talking to these shoemakers, who appeared to me very nice specimens of the English working man, and infinitely better members of society than many persons I have met (including Christian ministers) who fancy themselves these men's "superiors"; while talking to them, I say, I learnt that Charles Alfred Gibson had lived not far off, in the Caledonian-road. One of them thought he could remember the house, and after some tickling of his recollection he brought out the number, though he was not quite sure of it. I don't wish to trouble the landlady of the house, so I refrain from disclosing the number. I keep it with her name (she gave me her card) for use at the proper moment; that is, when Mr. Hughes is goaded into his self-defence.

"John Herbert's" Landlady.

Mr. Hughes seems to have done all he could to baffle investigation. He represents his convert's lodgings as being in Islington. The real place is at the south end of the Caledonian-road, between King's-cross and the canal. The description of the landlady is equally faulty. I do not wonder that the reverend gentleman or the Sisters never sent her a copy of the story of Charles Alfred Gibson's conversion, as they promised to do. The book would have opened her eyes very considerably.

I did not tell the landlady who I was. I simply introduced the Gibsons as the father and brothers of her dead lodger, who had lost sight of him for some time before his death, and were anxious to learn all they could about his last days.

The landlady confirmed Julia Gibson's statement that she did not accompany her husband to Sidmouth, where he died, but joined him there a month later, when he was pining for her society. Mr. Hughes is therefore wrong on a matter where it was so easy to be right.

Charles Alfred Gibson had no large collection of books, as Mr. Hughes again and again declares. He was fond of reading, but his books were generally borrowed. She spoke, however, in the highest terms of his transparent character, which is a point of agreement between her and the Sisters. She also said that the Sisters were extremely kind, which I can well believe.

Charles Alfred and Julia Gibson lodged with her for six months, from July 1888 to January 1889, as she showed by the rent-book. They had a furnished front room at the top of the house, which is the second floor. Here again Mr. Hughes's account is incorrect. The room was carpeted, and the narrow stairs the reverend gentleman "climbed" were like Jacob's ladder—imaginary.

The landlady remembered her lodger's taking the communion. It was administered by Mr. Hughes, and this is one of his few accuracies. She joined in it, though belonging to a different Church; so it is nonsense to talk about her narrow school of theology.

She stated that Charles Alfred Gibson was at first greatly vexed with professed Christianity, because no one had called on his wife when she was ill. "But was my son an Atheist?" asked Mr. Gibson. "Oh no," she replied, "not an Atheist." "Did he disbelieve in God?" "Oh no, he always believed in God," she answered, and added, "It was the Christianity of the day he was set against." In fact she heard him say, "I'm not against Jesus Christ."

"Did you ever hear of his lecturing?" asked Mr. Gibson. "No," she replied, "he didn't lecture." And she said it with a smile, which showed her sense of the idea's absurdity.

A good deal more came out in conversation, but it will keep. It is enough to say that Charles Alfred Gibson's landlady denies his Atheism, and never heard of his being a lecturer.

This is the last link in the chain of my exposure. I think I may say that I have made a thorough investigation, and the result is the utter damnation of the

Rev. Hugh Price Hughes as the author of "The Atheist Shoemaker." His story is false at every point which is of the slightest importance. His "convert" was never a lecturer on Atheism, or on anything else; he was never even an Atheist; and the story of the conversion of a famous Atheist orator is a gigantic fraud; being, indeed, what I first called it, a Lie in Five Chapters.

A Committee of Honor.

I wrote a letter to the *Daily Chronicle* on Monday, suggesting that the dispute between Mr. Hughes and myself should be adjudicated upon by a Committee of Honor; two persons to be nominated by him, and two by me, and (say) the editor of the *Chronicle* to act as chairman and umpire. My letter has not appeared up to the time of the *Freethinker's* going to press. If it is burked I must try to get it inserted in a more hospitable journal.

Ananias Hughes.

Should the Committee of Honor sit and adjudicate, I am prepared to prove, by documentary evidence and the testimony of living witnesses, that the story of the Atheist Shoemaker is what I have made it out to be in these columns—a mass of lies, and a flagrant imposition on the public credulity.

Unhesitatingly do I fasten the whole responsibility upon the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes. I care not a straw about his having been deceived by others. They used him, perhaps, but he was equally ready to use them. He concealed the names of all the characters in the story except his own. He put his own name on the title-page and on the cover of the book. It was he, and no one else, who stood to gain by the circulation of the lie. It was he, and no one else, who impressed upon the reader that it was "a true story, and not fiction." It was he, and no one else, who stood sponsor for it in open daylight. It was he, and no one else, who sought to bolster it up by Mr. Holyoake's sham vindication. I care nothing about his Sisters, his underlings, or his parasites. I fasten the responsibility upon him, and I call him a liar in the face of the world.

G. W. FOOTE.

ANIMAL TREATMENT.

THE subject of animal treatment, fortunately, does not depend upon any views as to their intelligence or their immortality. The question, as Jeremy Bentham said above a century ago, is not, Can they reason? nor Can they talk, but Can they suffer? No humane person can go through life without witnessing a deal of preventable suffering at the hands, not so much of the heartless, as of the unthinking. Hood understated the matter when he wrote,

Evil is wrought from want of thought
As well as want of heart.

Far more suffering is occasioned through ignorance and heedlessness, than from deliberate cruelty. The savage boy who likes to see a cockchaffer twirl on a pin, would not do it if he realised the torture. If people would consider the consequences of their actions, much unintentional brutality would be avoided. How often is a horse punished, just because the master is impatient, and has never considered how much easier he can gain his end by kindness. Much that looks like reckless cruelty, is only stupid thoughtlessness. Sir Arthur Helps, in his wise and good book *Animals and their Masters*, remarks, "If you had the intelligence of cultured people, joined to the familiarity with animals which the ordinary practical farmer possesses, you would then have an admirable treatment of stock, and that includes a humane treatment." What lady, who realised the pain of the bearing-rein, would allow her coachman to use one; or who could complacently allow his favorite horse to end his days in a cab.

Of course stupid people are found who defend brutality or unconcern towards animals on the ground that they have no souls and are not Christians. Pope

Pins IX. laid it down it was a theological error to suppose man has duty to animals; and Mr. Philip Austin, in a pamphlet on the subject, says: "Within our duty to God and our duty to man all our duties are included. Duties to visible creatures, animals, plants, or minerals, are not spoken of. In the Christian system there is no progressive development in ethics. What is wrong to-day was wrong a thousand years ago; and if the brutes have any rights in the nineteenth century, they must have had rights in the first." And he goes on to show that man was given lordship over the brutes (Gen. i. 28, Ps. viii. 6). He even minimises the humane precept of the Old Testament, saying: "The direction not to muzzle the ox when he treadeth over the corn (Deut. xxv. 4), we are told by St. Paul himself to be, not for the sake of oxen, but altogether for the instruction of Christians in their duties to the Christian ministry (1 Cor. ix. 9, 10)."

John Foster remarked that, in the eyes of Christianity, the animals are "incarnate absurdities gazing on an unredeemed world." The Secularist prefers the Pagan view that they are children of our common mother earth. He cannot regard them as created solely for the pleasure and advantage of man. The doctrine of evolution proclaims our kinship and rivets our sympathy with all life. Darwin has done more for the kind treatment of animals than Paul or Jesus Christ. He has shown that cruelty is a remnant of our lower savage nature that needs weeding out. It shows itself strongly in unthinking childhood. The spread of Dicky-bird Societies and Bands of Mercy are happy and commendable attempts at this weeding-out process. But as Mr. H. S. Salt observes, in his capital little book on *Animals' Rights Considered in Relation to Social Progress*, "It may be doubted, however, whether the young will ever be specially impressed with the lesson of humanity as long as the general tone of their elders and instructors is one of cynical indifference, if not of absolute hostility to the recognition of animal rights."

Without entering on the debatable subject of animal food, there are abundant cases where our common treatment of animals is susceptible of improvement. How few think of the condition of the horses whose dumb, patient service is too often abused. What cruelties are needlessly occasioned for sport, luxury, gluttony, or personal adornment. Cruelty is the lowest of vices. How contemptible, then, are those who, wittingly or unwittingly, pursue cruelty under the name of "sport." There are races to whom hunting and fishing may be necessary. But much of the "sport" of our aristocratic barbarians is needless amateur butchery. What is fashionable "battue shooting" but a gratification of the lowest instincts for wanton destruction, under the plea of recreation? The birds are not needed for food. They are reared and driven to be shot wholesale. Many of the wounded are left to die of slow torture. And what shall we say of those "sportsmen" who shoot at blinded pigeons or have crackers tied to their tails? In Pagan Athens they put to death a boy who blinded birds and let them fly. In Christian Europe, members of gun clubs who commit the same atrocity are received in the best society. What horrible cruelty results from the common use of steel traps to catch rabbits, the poor unfortunates remaining for hours lacerated in the grip of the toothed atrocity! What a pitiful thing is coursing a poor rabbit or hare, or hunting a fox, and still worse the Royal Sport of hunting the tame deer kept at Ascot and Windsor by the Master of the Queen's Buckhounds! Surely the time is coming when humanity will look back with a shudder at the days when such things were possible. Man has been spoken of as a god to the lower animals, but in truth his treatment of them has been more worthy a devil.

John Stuart Mill, an out and out individualist, in his *Principles of Political Economy*, says: "The reasons for legal intervention in favor of children apply not less strongly to the case of those unfortunate slaves and victims of the most brutal part of mankind—the lower animals." Law has taken the domestic ones under its shield, but it is yet an anomaly that though a cat may not be tortured a wild rabbit may. You may roast a hare alive, or pluck a live quail, and plead that the

* Introduction to the *Principles of Morals and Legislation*. Voltaire wrote: "Reponds-moi, machiniste; la nature a-t-elle arrangé tous les ressorts du sentiment dans cet animal, afin qu'il ne sente pas?"

animal, not being a domestic one, is unprotected by the law. It is not however to law that we should permanently look for any improvement, but to the force of public opinion, which gives law its real authority. When in the eyes of the community the cowardly oppressor of animals is branded with disgrace; when women will boycott the men whose sport is provided at the expense of torture, and men let women know they detest adornment purchased by suffering, we shall no longer hear of a gallant sportsman's boast that he killed a hundred and fifty golden plover with a single round, or of ladies whose toilets meant the slaughter of mother birds while the little ones are left to die. We shall no longer see larks strung up and sold by the dozen at fashionable poulterers, or hear of *paté de foie gras* purchased by keeping geese in such a condition that their livers are abnormally distended. "If," said the pagan Plutarch, "ye are not ashamed to eat flesh, let it at least be for hunger, and not for mere gluttony, wantonness, and expensiveness, to make a pleasure of villainy."

The unavoidable sorrow and suffering of the world is to any sensitive heart appalling. The question whether we add to or diminish it is simply of supreme secular importance. I know the N.S.S. is already weighted with far heavier tasks than it can manage, with its slender resources, or personally I should favor the insertion of kindness to animals among its stated objects. To increase the joy and diminish the suffering of the world is the prime duty of Secularists. But much is gained when people are taught to think. It is to education in the largest sense of the word that we have to look for advance, and for my part I have no doubt that as the thoughts of men are widened so will their sympathies and affections be enlarged. Cruelty of all kinds will become as repugnant to the many as now to the few, and in the words of Shelley, the poet of humanity, its horrors

Shall live but in the memory of time,
Who, like a penitent libertine, shall start,
Look back, and shudder at his younger years.

J. M. WHEELER.

IS THERE A GOD ?

[This article is written by a Theist, who desires a hearing on the question. We give it cheerfully, and have no doubt that the writer will be suitably answered.—EDITOR, *Freethinker*.]

To ask this question is neither blasphemous nor presumptuous on my part. I am a thinking, reflecting, reasoning creature; it is my duty, therefore, to acquire all such knowledge as will conduce to my eternal welfare. Natural life is neither more nor less than a funereal procession from the cradle to the grave; for no sooner is an infant born than it commences to die; and, in view of eternity, even if it live for three score years and ten, it speedily sinks into the dust. "Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down; he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not" (Job xiv. 1, 2). "There is but a step between me and death" (1 Sam. xx. 3). It behoves me, therefore, not only to ask this question, but to demand a serious and explicit answer to it.

But what do I mean by the word "God"? or, rather, what is meant by it? For, with but few exceptions, all men believe in a God, though the belief itself may be expressed in various ways and by different terms.

To my mind the word "Atheist" is a misnomer. Col. Ingersoll, the Ajax of modern Atheists, has spoken thus over the grave of a friend: "I know how vain it is to gild a grief with words, and yet I wish to take from every grave its fear. From the wondrous tree of Life the buds fall with the ripened fruit; and, in the common bed of earth, patriarchs and babes sleep side by side. Why should we fear that which will come to all? We cannot say that Death is not a good. We do not know whether the grave is the end of this life or the door of another, or whether the night here is not somewhere else a dawn. It may be that Death gives all there is of worth to Life. But it is said to me, 'There must be a God somewhere!' 'Well,' I reply, 'I do not know. *There may be!*'"

"*There may be!*" The word "Atheist" in modern language implies one who disbelieves in a future state and ignores the existence of a God; and, therefore, he who can say with Ingersoll that "the grave may be the door to another world," and that "there may be a God," cannot be truthfully classed as an Atheist. I say "in modern language" because, in *ancient* times, the Atheist was he who believed only in *one* God. Socrates was compelled to swallow poison, and so to become his own executioner, because he denounced Polytheism and taught that there is but *one* God.

"*There may be!*" "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God!" (Ps. xiv. 1, liii. 1). But the so-called Atheist, being a thoughtful man, and not a fool, does not say so. He does not *deny* the existence of a God, but simply asks for more knowledge, more light, on the subject. He has doubt; but, as Huxley says, "it is doubt which so loves truth that it neither dares rest in doubting, nor extinguish itself by unjustified belief." Like the Apostle Thomas, who, we are told, would not believe that Christ had risen from the dead until he had seen him and handled him for himself, the Freethinker, who is simply a truthseeker, asks only for such proof as will satisfy his mind that the thing spoken of is true; and that which the apostle had a right to demand for himself, every other man has an equal right to demand for himself too.

By the word "God," then, is meant the Being who, according to the Bible, "created the heaven and the earth" (Gen. i. 1); the Being of all beings; the Cause of all causes; the Being whose existence had no beginning, and shall have no end. Now, is there such a Being?

To aid me in answering so stupendous a question, let me, in imagination, fly out into space, and note what science proves to me to be true. Now, what do I see? I see that the earth is a large ball some 24,900 miles in circumference, and that, whilst turning rapidly upon its axis so as to make day and night to its inhabitants, it is flying through space at the rate of eighteen miles and a half per second, or more than 66,000 miles per hour. I see the other planets which form the Solar System, each pursuing its allotted path with tremendous speed; and, beyond these, millions of millions of miles distant, I see the stars. These glittering diamonds of the skies are distinct from, and outside of, our Solar System; and are so immeasurably distant that, though they are speeding through space at as great, if not at a greater, rate than is the earth itself, they do not seem to move, and are, in consequence, termed *fixed* stars. Now, who was it who made these wondrous bodies? Who was it who launched them into space? Who keeps them in their several and separate paths? Who causes such order to be maintained, such perfect harmony to prevail amongst them? Let me reflect.

The planets and stars on which I have just looked are not sentient things, and yet they move. They could not have made themselves, for by themselves and of themselves they are lifeless. Are they, then, a fortuitous conglomeration of atoms? No! For they are not only perfect in themselves, but perfect in their relations to each other. Even if matter be in destructible, they could not have been made by chance, for chance—if, indeed, there be such a power—could only by accident have produced anything perfect. How, then, were they made, and who was it who made them? For, that they were made in some way or other, and, therefore, that they must have been made by someone or something, is certain.

Astronomers teach us that the stars are suns; that each star is the centre of a planetary system like to our own; that all suns and planets are composed of precisely similar materials, and that all of them originated in the self-same manner. This being so, we may consult the history of our own planet for a general conclusion.

In what manner the materials of which this earth is composed were first brought together is purely matter of conjecture; but, beyond all doubt, this planet before it was fitted for the reception of living beings, was a molten and incandescent mass—that is, it was liquid and glowing hot, like to the burning lava which wells up from a volcano during an eruption. In such a heat

no life was possible; and, inasmuch as we must perforce believe that there is no such thing as "spontaneous generation"—for science has exploded such an assumption—we are compelled to admit that living beings must have been created by someone or something after the crust of the earth had sufficiently cooled and had been made fit for their well-being. And I use the word "created" because, as Huxley says, "creation is not a miraculous interference with the laws of nature, but the very institution of those laws."

Nature is not God—is not the First Cause; the word can never be used in that sense. Nature may be described as the seed-bed of all things; as the wondrous mechanism by which, acting under immutable laws, have been produced all the physical aspects that are observable, not only on and in this planet of ours, but throughout the illimitable space that surrounds us. And behind nature—overshadowing and directing her—is the mysterious and omnipotent something which governs all that she does; for, where there is law, there must be a law-maker; where there is life, there must be a life-giver.

The word "God" implies a creative and creating Being; but the word "nature" implies nothing of the kind. Nature does not create anything; she simply reproduces or transforms. She never did create an animal, a fish, a bird, or a flower; but simply reproduces an animal from an animal, or transforms eggs into birds, or seeds into plants. And that this is so is a scientific truth—for what is evolution but the practical working of the laws of nature?

Darwin, in his *Origin of Species*, admits that none know how organic matter began to exist; and he has been careful to draw a broad line of demarcation between creation and evolution or transformation. He says: "*Given the origin of organic matter—supposing its creation to have already taken place—my object is to show in consequence of what laws and what demonstrable properties of organic matter, and all its environments, such steps of organic nature as those with which we are acquainted must have come about.*" So that what he undertook to do was, not to demonstrate how or when the original single pair or pairs of beings were produced, but simply to show that all the living beings which are included in any one species may have descended from an original single pair; and that the peculiarities which distinguish races belonging to such species are due to what he terms "natural selection"; such selection being the result of the influences, climatic and otherwise, by which the immediate descendants of the original pair had, from time to time, been environed.

We are, then, face to face with two facts which are crucial points. The one fact is that there was a time in the history of our planet when life upon it was impossible, and, therefore, when it was non-existent. The other fact is that we are in utter darkness as to when and how organic matter first appeared upon this earth. Now, in determining this question, it matters not whether the members of each species are descended from an original pair, or whether all living beings have been evolved from a molecule of granulated vivified protoplasm—that is, the first formed grain of matter instinct with life—because in either case the creation of life is "supposed to have taken place." But to admit this is to admit the whole argument. If, then, organic matter must have been created, it follows, as a matter of course, that there must have been a creator; and this creator can be none other than the unknown and unknowable, but all-powerful something which we designate God. This God is he who, "in the beginning, created the heaven and the earth," but who is not the God of either the Jew or the Christian.

N. M. X.

"We all of us know men who deliberately reject the entire Christian system, and still think it compatible with uprightness to summon their whole establishments round them at morning and evening, and on their knees to offer up elaborately formulated prayers, which have just as much meaning to them as the entrails of the sacrificial victim had to an infidel haruspex. We see the same men diligently attending religious services; uttering assents to confessions of which they really reject every syllable; kneeling, rising, bowing, with deceptive solemnity; even partaking of the sacrament with a consummate devoutness, that is very edifying to all who are not in the secret, and who do not know that they are acting a part, and making a mock both of their own reason and their own probity, merely to please persons whose delusions they pity and despise from the bottom of their hearts."—John Morley

THE DYING ATHEIST.

LEAVE me alone! I am sick of your prayers and your tears;
I will die as I have lived, whether guilty or just.
I have fought for my faith through a lifetime of wearisome
years,
And will stand by it now till this body dissolve into dust.

"Do I not shrink from death?" No; why should I fear to die,

When I know that death ends all and the grave is the only goal?

When I know that eternal life is but an eternal lie,
And the dust alone is immortal in nature and not the soul?

You may picture the horrors of hell, you may pray and preach and plead,

But your faith will scarcely quicken the cold grey stone
and the sod

With my dying voice I will mock at your cant and your creed,

And cry with my latest breath that there is no God.

Hark! how the mighty wind howls! Is the voice of the Almighty there,

Or is it the crash of the elements waging eternal strife?

That warfare that summoned the Universe up from the realms
of air

And peopled the myriad planets with this that we call life.

You would blacken with superstition the beauty of Nature's work;

You would startle the peace of death with your dreams of a life to come;

The half-hearted faith of the faithless may call it "a leap in the dark,"

But I die in the hope I have lived by and look for repose in the tomb.

"I was a preacher once?" Oh, yes; I could rail with the best,

And consigned the accursed unbeliever to death and eternal pain;

But falsehood has fled before reason, like clouds with the wind in the west,

And I know that your fears are but follies and I know that your faith is in vain.

If your God in his infinite mercy made man and has made him to sin

And provided a torment eternal for those whom he called into birth,

Let me suffer with those who may suffer; I care not how soon it begin,

He bows to no tyrant of heaven who bowed to no tyrant of earth.

Return to your flock; you may tell them—

This dust will be cold in the tomb;

No tongue will be near to dispute it, no thoughtful voice to deny—

That the Atheist cried to his God for the comfort that would not come;

That he prayed too late for pardon, and trembled and feared to die.

Stand back! let the pure breath of Nature blow in on my fever-scorched brow;

The lights grow dim in the distance; the moon has gone from the skies.

What power shall scatter the darkness that stoops to encompass me now?

Oh, welcome, thou slumber eternal! Behold how the Atheist dies.

—Truthseeker.

W. P. LAWRENCE.

The question of State religion is likely to come prominently before the citizens of the U.S. The clericals are actively seeking to bring God into the Constitution, while the Secularists have forestalled them with a sixteenth amendment to the Constitution, declaring that no state shall pass any law respecting an establishment of religion, or authorise any payment of money to any church, religious society or undertaking which is wholly, or in part, under sectarian or ecclesiastical control.

To the meeting convened to erect a memorial to Darwin at Shrewsbury, the Bishop of Shrewsbury sent a letter, in which he said: "His conclusions startled and alarmed pious minds at first as though they were subversive of the truth of revelation. But the panic has subsided, and it is recognised that the admission of Darwin's theories does not necessarily involve any contradiction of the inspired story of Creation, though it may require a modification of the interpretation most commonly affixed to it." We wonder what modification of the rib story meets the approval of the bishop.

ACID DROPS.

The *Christian Commonwealth* has most orthodox notions of fair play. On the publication of Mr. Holyoake's report our pious contemporary treated it as a complete vindication of Mr. Hughes, but now that our exposure is published it declines to express an opinion, but says "we will make no further comment." That's the style! Catch at anything that serves Christianity, and shut your eyes to everything that tells against it; above all, don't admit that a Christian was ever worsted by an Atheist, even in a dispute as to matters of fact.

Our pious contemporary says that we "arrogate" the title of *Freethinker*. Indeed! Why when we started the word was an opprobrium. But now that the world is a little more reconciled to freethinking, the Christians, who used to hate it like poison, are putting in for a share of it. Thus it ever was and ever will be as long as Christianity endures. First, fight everything good in its infancy, and when it succeeds in reaching maturity claim it as your own.

The *Christian Commonwealth* lies in saying that we are appealing for financial assistance. This journal is standing firmly on its own bottom. The money we are soliciting as a New Year's Gift is for the National Secular Society. Not a penny of it is for the *Freethinker*.

Our pious and mendacious contemporary looks forward to the speedy death of the *Freethinker*. It says the public does not want such a journal. Well, we know that, but a certain section of the public does want it. This journal is older than the *Christian Commonwealth*, and may outlive it yet. We know our price is twopence, but people will buy it even at that figure. How many would buy the *C. C.* at twopence? Perhaps a hundred, maybe a dozen.

In Mr. Hugh Price Hughes's volume of sermons entitled *Ethical Christianity* there is one on the Christian Imagination. He takes as his text, "Your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams!" (Acts ii. 7), and contrasts the imaginative Christian with the unimaginative one, much to the disparagement of the latter. There can be no doubt to which category Mr. Hughes belongs. He concludes with the significant words, "According to our divinely inspired imagination it shall be done with us." Amen!

In an inquest on the body of Mary Lynn, who committed suicide by cutting her throat with a razor at Whitley, near Newcastle, it transpired that the girl, who was a servant-maid, had (she said) been visited in her bedroom by the Rev. Mr. Pallister, curate to the vicar of Delaval. In consequence of the scandal, the poor girl seems to have been driven to self-slaughter.

Prebendary Eyton thinks Spiritualism a "most hideous superstition." "The charlatans who tell us of strange visions and of spirits from another world, whose means of communication are rappings and knockings, have methods of folly which are so many signposts on the road to the mad-house."

Two Worlds (Feb. 3) gives a mis-quotation from John Wesley's journal, to show that he believed in spirits. It cites him as saying "most men of learning have given up all accounts of apparitions as mere old wives fables." What he says (Journal, May 25, 1768, p. 308; vol. iii. Works, 1856) is "all accounts of *witches* and apparitions." It cites the words "They well know, whether Christians or not"; but omits the words that follow, "that the giving up of witchcraft is, in effect, giving up the Bible." Wesley may be claimed as a spiritist, but his position should be stated fairly. He would probably ascribe modern spiritualism to the work of evil spirits.

Says the *Two Worlds*: "If we extract from the Bible its Spiritualism we have nothing left worth anything. Its history is untrue, its science is unreliable, its morals contradictory, its laws antiquated, and its Jehovah more like a fiend than a father. Its stories of the creation, birth and fall of man, its Satan and hell, its angry God and atoning scapegoat, its shed blood for sin and predestination, its physical resurrection, and heaven and earth, its speedy end of the world, second coming of Christ to inaugurate the millennium, together with other absurdities, all of which are undoubtedly

to be found in its pages, are worse than useless; they have produced strife and misery, and brought incalculable mischief. It is the Spiritualism, phenomenal and philosophical, that is the leaven of the whole book." Yes, but is not the Spiritualism, like the rest, a remnant of barbarity?

Bigotry is at the bottom of the strife at the Brussels University. The university is a free one, open to all without question of their religion or politics. It was founded on this principle by M. Verhaegen, and, as a matter of fact, some of its most eminent professors, including M. Hector Denis, the rector, are Radicals in politics and Freethinkers in religion. M. Denis, some months ago, recommended that M. Eliséé Réclus, the great French scientific geographer, who stands at the very head of his profession, should be invited to deliver a course of lectures at the university. The administrative council accordingly invited him. But the recent Anarchist visitations in France having revealed to them the fact, which ought previously to have been sufficiently well known, that M. Réclus is an Anarchist Atheist, they postponed the course on geography by so dangerous a geographer, and in fact cancelled his engagement. The students protested, and twenty-two of their spokesmen were expelled. The rector (M. Denis) sent in his resignation, and three hundred students are on strike, and mean to remain so until the sentence upon the twenty-two is withdrawn. M. Réclus is not the man to import his political views into his scientific teaching, but by their action the council have done much to arouse inquiry into his views and sympathy for them.

Holy Convocation has been considering the solemn matter of the form of Prayer and Thanksgiving which the Prayer-Book ordered to be used in all churches and chapels within this realm, every year upon the twentieth day of June." It appears that the Church has quietly dropped the use of this part of the Prayer-Book. They don't mind praying for the Queen, indeed, said Canon Bright, "anything that would cement the union between the Church and the Throne should be encouraged," but they don't like the subordination of the Church, so the Archdeacon of London points out that the language applied to the Queen is really Messianic and many of the expressions in the collect were most savage. If, however, they once began modernising the barbarities of the Prayer-Book they may have to reform it altogether.

Reuter's telegram announcing the arrival of the Bishop at Lake Nyssa with forty-seven porters for the new mission-station, continues: "As we passed Makanjila's yesterday we found the town on fire. The gunboats commenced bombarding the place on Sunday last, the 19th inst., and continued their fire for three days. Makanjila's people are now being followed up into the hills by Jumbes men. It is intended to occupy Makanjila's town, and a fort is being built." This is the immemorial method of spreading the Christian gospel.

Who says prayer is unavailing? The opium crop in India has been seriously damaged and, on the authority of the *Anti-Opium News*, "the destruction is an answer to the prayers of an aged member of the Society of Friends, who, during the late three days' prayer-meeting at Exeter Hall, several times publicly prayed that the crop might be blasted." This aged member of the Society of Friends must be, like his God, a dangerous character, ready to bring starvation upon thousands of innocent persons, in order that opium smokers may be deprived of their gratification.

The Rev. D. L. McAnally, chaplain at Hampton Court Palace and chaplain to the Salters' Company, examined in bankruptcy, said he also conducted a clerical agency, but he had only received a few guineas by way of fees. He had, however, a claim of £200 for commission in negotiating the purchase of an advowson, and an action was pending in respect of such claim. The bankrupt said that he, like a good many professional men, had to live by faith. Living by faith apparently means letting creditors who trust you suffer for their faith.

The Archbishop of Canterbury has been denouncing these clerical agents, the money-changers of the Temple Court, as he calls them. It would be more to the point if he denounced their clients and saw they could not purchase the cure of souls. The agents only supply a demand, and their number shows how many of the clergy are ready to buy and sell in the Temple, and prostitute their office for temporal gain.

At Harwich, John Robert Watson, printer, was summoned by the churchwardens for refusing to pay a church rate for which they said they have a special Act of Parliament. The magistrates decided in his favor, but granted a case for appeal. The decision was received with applause in a densely crowded court. Church rates are often sought to be imposed where there is no legal warranty, and in all such cases the claim should be contested and the Church made to prove its title.

The Marylebone Vestry is likely to have a fine old row with the local men of God belonging to the Established Church. There are three churches in the parish, and the vestry is called upon by Canon Barker to put them in repair, and to pay him a considerable sum of money which he has laid out upon these bethels. One reverend gentleman sent the vestry a lump of plaster as a specimen of his dilapidated roof. The vestry has resolved to consult its solicitor, and "developments" are expected. We suggest that the lump of plaster should be sent to Madame Tussaud's, and the parsons with it.

At the burial of a deacon of the Congregational Church at Swinton, Yorkshire, the sexton would not allow wreaths to be placed on the grave until a certain fee had been paid. The sexton said the fee had been imposed by the archbishop. His grace has taken a truly Christian method of raising fresh funds.

In one of the bed-rooms of a hotel in South Lancashire is displayed the text, "I will lay me down in peace, and take my rest, for it is thou, Lord, only that makest me to dwell in safety." Immediately under it comes this notice, showing that in the opinion of the proprietor, Providence guards best those who guard themselves: "Owing to the frequency of hotel robberies, you are requested to bolt your door."

The Rev. R. Wood has been lecturing at Scarborough on "Charles Bradlaugh the Atheist: Lessons from his Career." Mr. Wood was good enough to say that he had no sympathy with the attempt to prove that in the life of an Atheist there was no good. There was much that was noble in Bradlaugh's life. He wished believers were as true to their faith as Bradlaugh was to his. He had some of the Christian virtues. Admittedly he evinced justice, equity, courage, independence, and fearlessness." What cheek to call these Christian virtues, as though they were not known ages before Christianity appeared. But, said Mr. Wood, "there was no meek submission to the Heavenly Father," which we should say was one of the Christian vices.

Talmage has left his Tabernacle, but not the flesh-pots of Egypt. He looks forward to an income of several thousands a year for a long while before he has to exclaim, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace"—without the pieces.

Nonconformist ministers often live in ticklish relations to their deacons, who are able to thwart their pet schemes and wreck their influence. At Soho-hill Church, Birmingham, the minister has rebelled, and sent a lawyer's letter to his deacon, threatening him with an action for slander. He forgets the inspired text which says, "Resist the deacon and he will flee at you."

The Rev. Stewart D. Headlam, in his School Board Notes in the *Church Reformer*, thinks that "now the only final way out of our difficulties is to allow the 'the churches,' to use the inexact but popular phrase, to be responsible for teaching religion, frankly and fully, in the school buildings if they like, to all children whose parents wish them to attend their instruction." This seems to require some explanation. Mr. Headlam can hardly mean that all and sundry religious teachers shall, if desired by the parents, have the right to use public buildings to teach their religious peculiarities there. To the school buildings being utilised for other purposes after school hours, upon payment of expenses, there could be little objection, save on the score of possible favoritism.

Cardinal Vaughan has, too, his pet scheme of how to work the Elementary Education Act to the advantage of the priests. He wants the ratepayer to have no control, but only the parent, with, of course, the priest to stand *in loco parentis*. Does he fancy Parliament will forget that many ratepayers have no children, and that others have them privately educated. This scheme to get public money without public

control is very Jesuitical, but will hardly work in these democratic days.

Cardinal Vaughan, who has set himself to the task of bringing England into submission to the Holy See, in opening a new Catholic church at Handsworth, boldly announced that reason was the enemy. Hence they must have religious education instilled before reason had a chance. If, said he, "a mere smattering of Christianity were given in the schools established throughout the country, that smattering would be of no avail to resist the assertion of reason to dominate the life and character and thoughts of men." In other words, we must crush out the mere idea of using reason in religion if we wish priestcraft to be master of the field.

According to the *Irish Weekly Independent* and the *Leinster Leader*, the priests go to the length of boycotting the dead if they happen to be Parnellites or Independent Nationalists. They refuse to put their names on the Dead List to be prayed for, even when money is offered that Masses may be said for them. The *I.W.I.* proposes that complaint should be made to Rome, as the bishops refuse to interfere.

The doctrine of the Trinity appears to have dominated the mind of a Frenchman, whose case was brought before the last meeting of the Paris Society of Biology. He is the slave of the number three. To avert some terrible misfortune conjured up by his brain, he feels compelled at all times to group by a series of threes all his acts, and all the things and events which concern him. If he has a toothache, he goes and has three teeth pulled out. The other day he purloined, at one of the open shops called bazaars, three corkscrews, and having pocketed them, he crossed three streets, and threw the three corkscrews into the third sewer grating he came across. The three-in-one God seems just suited to such a mind as this.

Convocation has been solemnly discussing the question of the first gravedigger in *Hamlet*, "Is she to be buried in Christian burial that wilfully seeks her own salvation?" Many clergymen have petitioned against being compelled to read that suicides have the sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection. They must be very stupid if they fancy their course is likely to have any influence on the average percentage of suicides.

The newspapers report the capture of a Matabele witch-doctor, who tortured a woman in the most horrible manner by pricking out her eyes with a needle. They don't state, however, that our Christian forefathers, and especially the Christian clergy, indulged in the same sort of pious amusement less than three hundred years ago.

Lobengula, says *Tit-Bits*, went through the Old Testament with a missionary, and was delighted with the God-ordered doings of the Jews in Palestine. It is a wonder he did not give us his own gods and worship old Jahveh.

That Christian blow-fly, H. L. Hastings, has sent here the pamphlet in which he circulates the oft-refuted slander touching the death of Thomas Paine. He, however, does not in any other way attempt to refute the arguments contained in the *Age of Reason*. The assertions that he makes are more than beguiling falsehoods, they are slanderous lies. This buzzing, noxious Christian insect, by defaming the noble dead, imagines he is advancing the cause of Christ.—*Ironclad Age*.

Mr. Cuninghame Graham, in a letter to the *Chronicle* on the Covenanters, told some plain truths about these Puritan gentry. He says: "What Scotland really was when Presbyterianism was rampant is hardly to be realised by the average Englishman. Turning over the register of Port of Menteith parish, in Perthshire, I find frequent entries to the effect that 'Dugald Graene' or Angus McGregor was 'floit ane merke for coming into church after the hindmoste belle had choppit out.'" To be late at church was an awful sin in these worthies' eyes. Mr. Graham remarks: "Most religious persecutors are honest, and why not? If by a brief agony of fire or thumb-screws you can, by sacrificing a body, save a soul alive, are we not to-day mere things if, whilst holding the same faith, we do not act up to its logical conclusion?"

AN OPEN LETTER TO MR. G. J. HOLYOAKE.

DEAR MR. HOLYOAKE,—

It is impossible for me to communicate with you privately on the subject of the Atheist Shoemaker story. You elected to address me in the first instance as editor of the *Freethinker*, which obliges me to take the readers of this journal into my confidence.

I am rather surprised at your silence, and I submit some reasons why you should break it.

You gave Mr. Hughes a "vindication" of the "substantial truth" of his story of the conversion of "John Herbert." When you gave it I have not the slightest doubt that you believed it to be just and necessary; although, in common with every other Freethinker I have heard from on the subject, I regarded your "investigation" as judicially worthless.

It must now be known to you that the story you "vindicated" is in nearly every respect false. You admit that I have the right name of Mr. Hughes's convert, and after what I have published it is hardly conceivable that you can have a doubt in your mind as to the thoroughness of the exposure.

You are perhaps aware that Mr. Hughes is skulking behind you for protection. He is circulating your "vindication" throughout the kingdom, and placing it in the hands of thousands of persons who will never read the exposure in the *Freethinker*.

I cannot believe that you wish to be made use of in this way, and I beg you to put a stop to it.

Circulated without a reference to later information, your "vindication" of Mr. Hughes is as great a falsehood as his original story. Will you not stop the circulation of a falsehood in your honored name?

You say you object to my using the word "lie." Well, I will use any other word you may suggest, so long as it conveys the idea that Mr. Hughes's story, from the first page to the last, is a mass of untruth.

But it is not, after all, a question of my urbanity. It is a question of your reputation, your honor. You gave Mr. Hughes a certificate of more than his personal veracity. You gave him a certificate of the "substantial truth" of his story of the conversion of "John Herbert." You now know that the certificate is wrong, and I ask you to withdraw it.

I do not ask you to do this as an act of justice to me. I put my own claims aside. I ask you to do it in justice to yourself.

The National Secular Society numbers thousands of your admirers. Many of them are shaking their heads at your attitude, which they find unintelligible. It is for your sake, and theirs, that I beg you to break this strange silence. Relieve them from the thought that the name of the Father of Secularism will continue to be trailed in the mire of Christian falsehood. Be kinder to them, be juster to yourself.

Yours sincerely,

G. W. FOOTE.

 NEW YEAR'S GIFT TO FREETHOUGHT.

[Where not otherwise marked the subscriptions are one shilling.]

Amigo 7s. 6d., M. S., J. T. Horsman, R. Simpson, J. T. Haworth 2s., R. Ashworth, Jane Ashworth, K. A. G. 2s., A. Firth 2s., B. and M. Ingham, W. B. Jevons 5s., Ex-Christian 2s. 6d., F. Wilford, H. Mellor 2s. 6d., J. R. Campbell 2s., J. McLeish 3s., John Stewart 2s., H. Smith, Marie O. Fisher 2s. 5d., E. Jackson, T. J. Ross, J. Roberts.—Brookes 2s. 6d., J. Rosenfeldt 2s., L. Small, A. Gilbert 2s., W. Ross, C. Doeg, R. Owen, 5s., J. Ferguson 3s., P. Gibson, J. Williamson.

 WANTED—A HUNDRED POUNDS.

I AM putting this Atheist Shoemaker exposure into the form of a thirty-two page pamphlet, and I want to see it circulated immediately and extensively. If I publish it at a price to cover the cost, the circulation will be slow and ineffectual. I have therefore resolved to appeal for the sum of £100, in order to get the exposure circulated as it should be. I reckon that I can print a large edition of the pamphlet, at cost price, at £1 10s. per thousand copies. By way of securing a real interest on the part of the distributors, I propose to charge a nominal price of one penny per dozen; while reserving, of course, the right to dispense with this charge in special cases. What accrues in this way, together with the £100 I appeal for, will furnish the cost of nearly 100,000 copies, which ought to find their way into all parts of the country within the next few weeks. The iron must be struck while it is hot. It should not be difficult to raise £100. Half a-dozen Freethinkers I know of could easily make up the whole sum between them. But others must not rely on that half-dozen. Those who feel the spirit move them should obey the inspiration *at once*. There is really not a moment to be lost. For my own part, I have taken a vast deal of trouble over this matter, and incurred an expense which I can ill afford. I now ask others to take their share of the burden. If they help me as they should, we shall run the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes down, and do a splendid stroke of work for the Freethought cause. G. W. FOOTE.

 CHILDREN'S PARTY.

Collected by the following:—Mr. Flaming, 5s.; Mrs. Standring, 7s.; Mrs. Billelt, 5s.; Mr. Searl, 17s. 3d.; Mrs. Leckey, 6d.; Mr. Rowney, 5s. 6d.; Miss M. A. Robins, £2 4s. 0½d.; Mr. Ward, 5s. 9d.; Master H. Courtney, 5s. 3d.; F. R. Bird, 3s. 6d.; H. Rowden, 2s. 3d.; Mrs. Sleigh, 3s. 3d.; Mrs. Guest, 4s.; Mr. Gorniot, 1s.; Collected in Hyde Park (Jan. 29), 1s. 1d.; C. B. B., 5s.; J. Morris, 2s.; G. Wenborn, 2s.—I beg to acknowledge further gifts from Messrs. Church, Davis, Rowney, R. A. Cooper, and Fisher. Amounts not yet acknowledged have been received by Mr. Forder, who is ill, and are held over until he has sufficiently recovered to attend to business.—E. M. VANCE.

 OBITUARY.

CHARLES ECKHARD, who was treasurer of the American Secular Union in 1887, died on Sunday, Jan. 21, at Bloomfield, N.J., aged about sixty-seven years. The body was cremated at Fresh Pond, Long Island.

On the 21st ult., William Lowden Costine died at his residence in Liverpool at the age of 64. Mr. Costine was an enthusiastic admirer and follower of the late Robert Owen, and was an equally ardent Freethinker. About a quarter of a century ago he, together with a fellow-workman, was dismissed from his situation as a compositor for distributing handbills announcing lectures by Mr. Bradlaugh. After being idle a few days, they were invited to return to their old positions. Mr. Costine declined the offer, whilst his companion accepted it. Shortly afterwards Mr. Costine became engaged at the printing-office connected with Cope's Tobacco Works, and remained in that employment until, about six years ago, a paralytic attack rendered him incapable of further work. His connection with Messrs. Cope's works covered the time during which the *Tobacco-plant Journal* was published, to which "B.V." was for some time a contributor. A long illness was borne with patience, and even with cheerfulness, and at last he passed away so quietly that those ministering to him did not for some minutes realise that he was dead. Mr. Costine was a member of the Typographical Association, from which body he received a superannuation allowance granted during his illness. His immediate friends, who are not Freethinkers, testify that he maintained his opinions to the last, and bear witness to his sterling worth.—C. D.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, February 11, Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C. :— 11.15, "Can Poverty be Abolished?" (free); 7, "The Damnation of Hugh Price Hughes" (admission free, reserved seats 3d. and 6d.)

Thursday, Feb. 15, Hammersmith Club, The Grove, Broadway, at 8, "A Search for the Soul."

Friday, Feb. 16, Secular Hall, New Brompton, at 8, "A Search for the Soul."

February 18, Hall of Science; 25, Liverpool.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

- MR. CHARLES WATTS' ENGAGEMENTS.**—Feb. 11. Edinburgh; 18, Bradford; 25, Hall of Science, London; 26, Battersea; 27 and 28, Bristol. March 1, Bristol; 2, Chatham; 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.
- FUND OR CIRCULATING GRATUITOUS COPIES OF THE *Freethinker*** containing the Exposure of the Atheist Shoemaker Story :— W. B. JEVONS, 5s.; George Anderson, £2 2s.; J. Kennedy, 10s. 6d.; Amigo, 2s. 6d.; J. Downing, £1; R. Shaw 2s.; W. Rudd and H. Dinmock, 3s. 6d.; Juno, 3s.; Charles Hugh, Alfred Price, and Gibson Hughes, 2s. 6d.; J. Brown, 1s.; W. J. Paul, 4s.; T. H. Hert, 2s. 6d.; A. Castle, 2s.
- H. E. SMITH.**—Forwarded as desired.
- H. TURNER.**—Copies forwarded. Glad to hear that your interest in this journal was excited by the loan of a New Year's Number from a friend.
- TRUTHSEEKER.**—Mr. Foote has not received a written challenge from the person you mention. But it is also well to say that Mr. Foote does not issue or accept challenges to debate.
- T. GORNIOT.**—Thanks. See paragraph.
- S. S. PHILLIPS.**—Glad to hear from such an old reader. Thanks for all your good wishes.
- K. A. G.**—You must not judge a subtle, ironical writer like Renan by a single passage. Your friend is wrong. Renan was not a Christian. He regarded Jesus as simply a man, and declared that the negation of the supernatural is a dogma to every cultivated intelligence. How *could* such a man be a Christian, unless you stretch the meaning of Christian to the point of no-meaning?
- H. E. LONG.**—The mistake is your own. What we said was that Mr. Holyoake had never been President of the National Secular Society. You surely do not imagine it to be contradiction of this statement to say that Mr. Holyoake was the President of the London Secular Society before the N.S.S. existed.
- J. KENNEDY.**—All right this time. We have sent out a great many copies of this and last week's *Freethinker*. You say we are "giving Hughes hell." Yes, but better men have had it before him.
- H. JONES.**—Thanks for report of Mr. Holyoake's visit to Manchester. The veteran must be simply bewitched if he is content to let the matter rest.
- W. B. JEVONS.**—Thanks for your subscription. Of course it is regrettable that Mr. Hughes's certificate should be written out by a *Freethinker*.
- T. HINTON.**—We are afraid it is only too common for Atheists to be discharged from their employment when their opinions become known. As the law stands we cannot afford to publish your letter. Should you require any assistance, communicate with Miss Vance, at 28 Stonecutter-street, E.C.
- LONDON SECULAR FEDERATION.**—R. O. Smith, hon. treasurer, acknowledges :—Scotus 10s., H. A. Lupton 5s., F. Wood 2s. 6d.
- D. F. GLOAK.**—See paragraph.—Mr. Foote hopes to be in Scotland in March. The date for Glasgow will be fixed before this is in your hands.
- R. SHAW.**—We quite agree with you.
- NOAH LOT.**—Will look it up. Thought it had appeared.
- J. W. GOTT.**—See paragraph.
- M. S.**—Thanks for paper. Mr. Foote may visit Hamilton when he comes to Scotland.
- J. NEATE.**—Better settle the matter without a glaring announcement.
- J. P. GILMOUR.**—A paragraph was already in type. Pleased to hear that the Hughes exposure has given a fillip to the sale of the *Freethinker* in Glasgow.
- AMIGO.**—Thanks. Acknowledged as desired.
- W. SIMONS** wishes us to state that a meeting of local *Freethinkers* will be held this morning (Feb. 11) at 12, at Mr. Davey's, 21 Castle-street, Kingsland, for the purpose of forming a committee to work the open-air station at Ridley-road during the summer. We hope there will be a good meeting.
- K. A. G.**, after reading last week's *Freethinker*, feels in duty bound to give a third contribution to the New Year's Gift fund. Some of our readers have forgotten to give the first.
- H. MELLOR.**—We reciprocate your good wishes.
- JUNO.**—Yes, the exposure has cost us a lot of trouble and expense. Thanks.
- A. TURNER.**—(1) Mr. Bradlaugh never had any connexion with the *Freethinker*. (2) Mr. Foote's sentence was twelve months' imprisonment. (3) Messrs. Ramsey and Kemp were also imprisoned for nine and three months respectively.
- H. E. SMITH.**—Mr. Holyoake's address is Eastern Lodge, Brighton. All such information will be found in the *Secular Almanack*, which should be purchased by all *Freethinkers*.
- HERTS.**—Always glad to receive cuttings.
- H. C.**—Thanks for cuttings. It is only what we expected. Papers that noticed Mr. Holyoake's vindication of the "Christian gentleman" will not notice our exposure.
- W. RUDD (Luton)** feels pride and satisfaction in knowing that the N.S.S. has "a fighting President."
- E. D. H. DALY.**—Cuttings always welcome. Glad you think we "deserve the congratulations of the whole Secular party."
- J. WOOD**, 7 Gladstone-avenue, Wood Green, N., is the new secretary of the local N.S.S. Branch.
- E. H.**—(1) We cannot reopen this matter. It would only give the man a much-needed advertisement. (2) Certainly the law of gravitation is against the Bible. Jesus violated the law of gravitation when he went up with a body that could be handled, including a stomach that could digest fish. So did Elijah, the gentleman who went up before him. (3) It looks as though Price Hughes means to lie low and say nothing.
- A. W. OXLEY.**—We hope to hear of a good meeting at Mr. Weightman's lecture.
- H. LIGHT.**—We believe the "Leopold Shakespeare" is published by Cassell at 7s. 6d. We regard the Bacon theory of the authorship of Shakespeare's plays as "dry rot"—*very* dry rot. The man who can read Bacon and Shakespeare, and fancy them the same person, is to our mind without a modicum of literary discrimination.
- J. SKINNER.**—The Hughes affair has kept back a lot of copy, yours included.
- G. W. BLYTHE.**—We shall resume our illustrations next week. They must go on the front page, and we have wanted that of late for the Atheist Shoemaker affair.
- F. WILFORD.**—Glad to hear your children appreciate the bits from Ingersoll.
- F. G. ROE.**—In a day or two.
- J. McLEISH.**—Mr. Wheeler sends his compliments. The cause will make fine progress if all do their share.
- H. SMITH.**—Yes, it *was* an imposition.
- MARIE O. FISHER.**—The fellow's statement is a sheer invention. We don't intend to notice his brutal falsehoods. Mr. Fisher must expect dirt if he fights with a chimney-sweep—especially after full warning.
- L. SMALL**, president of the Liverpool Branch, in remitting subs. for New Year's Gift fund, writes :—"Liverpool heartily congratulates you on your success in finally nailing down 'the lie,' and feels that the honor of Secularism is safe in your hands."
- J. WILLIAMSON.**—William Rossetti's edition of Shelley, published by Routledge at 3s. 6d. Buxton Forman's edition is far more expensive.
- J. BROWN.**—See our open letter to the veteran. Thanks.
- FRIENDS** who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish to call our attention.
- 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.
- LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.**, should be written on postcards or the envelopes marked outside, and be sent to 14 Clerkenwell-green, London, E.C.
- PAPERS RECEIVED.**—Der Lichtfreund—Boston Investigator—Open Court—Froidenker—Two Worlds—Der Arme Teufel—Western Figaro—Liberator—Liberty—Clarion—Flaming Sword—Liver—De Dageraad—Progressive Thinker—Post—Secular Thought—Truthseeker—Ironclad Age—Pioneer—Leeds Mercury—Dundee Evening Telegraph—Echo—Rad—Church Reformer—Birmingham Daily Post—St. Pancras Guardian—Middlesex County Times—Holloway and Hornsey Press—Singapore Free Press—Surrey Independent—Daily Argus—Fritankaren—Scarborough Evening News—Scarborough Post—Irish Weekly Independent—Wellington Journal—Shrewsbury News—Christian—People's Friend—Essex Telegraph—Isle of Man Times—Weekly Irish Times—Liver—Islamic World—Crescent.
- LITERARY** communications to be addressed to the Editor, 14 Clerkenwell-green, London, E.C. All business communications to Mr. R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter-street, London, E.C. *The Freethinker* will be forwarded, direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid :—One Year, 10s. 6d.; Half Year, 5s. 3d.; Three Months, 2s. 8d.
- SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS.**—Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements* :—(Narrow Column) one inch, 3s.; half column, 15s.; column, £1 10s. Broad Column—one inch, 4s. 6d.; half column, £1 2s. 6d.; column, £2 5s. Special terms for repetitions.
- IT** being contrary to Post-office regulations to announce on the wrapper when the subscription is due, subscribers will receive the number in a colored wrapper when their subscription expires.

SUGAR PLUMS.

Mr. Foote occupies the London Hall of Science platform again to-day (Feb. 11). In the morning he lectures on "Can Poverty be Abolished?" In the evening he was announced to lecture on "The Bible Incubus in Board Schools," but, as the Atheist Shoemaker exposure has taken some fresh developments, he will deliver himself finally on the subject, under the head of "The Damnation of Hugh Price Hughes." By the time of this lecture Mr. Foote will know the result of his offer, through the *Daily Chronicle*, to have the dispute submitted to a Committee of Honor. He will also know from the *Methodist Times* whether Mr. Hughes means to defend his reputation or to let it take its chance. He will further know whether Mr. Holyoake means to break silence. And he will be in a position to explain his intentions for the immediate future. Altogether it is likely to prove a very interesting occasion, and we have no doubt the Hall will be crowded.

Mr. Foote lectures at the Hammersmith Club's hall, the Grove, Broadway, on Thursday evening next (Feb. 15) at 8, his subject being "A Search for the Soul." Complimentary tickets have been sent to several local clergymen, and it is hoped the lecture will be followed by a good discussion.

We are glad to hear that our colleague, Mr. Charles Watts, had excellent audiences last Sunday in Glasgow. The hall in the evening was crowded. An interesting debate followed the lecture, and every copy of the *Freethinker* was sold, although extra numbers were on hand. To-day (Sunday, Feb. 11) Mr. Watts lectures three times in Edinburgh.

The Bible up to Date is the taking and appropriate title of a telling little brochure by Charles Watts. (Watts and Co. Price 2d.) Dr. Caird, Canon Driver, Dr. Martineau, Bishop Temple, and other writers, are quoted to show how irreconcilable are the conclusions of modern criticism with the orthodox beliefs concerning the inspiration and authority of the compilation which goes under the name of the word of God. Mr. Watts claims the right and duty of discriminating the contents of old books, and testing their teachings by the standard of modern thought. We hope the pamphlet will have a wide circulation, especially among the orthodox.

The Sunderland Branch unanimously approves of Mr. Foote's action in exposing the Atheist Shoemaker story, and hopes that the respected veteran, George Jacob Holyoake, will see his way clear to rectify the mistake he made in giving Mr. Hughes a "vindication."

The Blackburn Branch unanimously expresses satisfaction at Mr. Foote's policy in relation to the Atheist Shoemaker story.

Mr. J. W. Gott, of the Bradford Branch, went over to Colne on Sunday with Mr. John Grange, who gave three lectures to good audiences. A fair quantity of literature was disposed of, including twenty-seven copies of the *Freethinker*, the supply of which was not equal to the demand. Seven names were taken of persons willing to form a Branch of the N.S.S. Others who would like to co-operate are requested to communicate with Mr. J. Mycock, 5 Charles-street, Colne.

Mr. Gott will be glad to hear from other towns within easy distance of Bradford, and to arrange for lectures by Mr. Grange with a view to starting fresh Branches in that part of the country, where there are surely Freethinkers enough to form the nucleus of a strong organisation.

The Dundee Branch now reckons forty-six members, including two ladies. Its meetings continue to be extremely well attended.

The Finsbury Branch held a successful smoking concert on Saturday evening, the proceeds going to the Secular Federation. Another social will be held on Good Friday. The better the day the better the deed, we suppose.

We are pleased to see that religion is being "found out" by the workers of England, who will not be bamboozled by the up-to-date dodges of the mystery men. On Sunday evening last Mr. Thomson lectured at the rooms of the Gas Workers and General Laborers' Union, Seven Sisters-road,

London, N, on "Cromwell in Ireland." He showed that religious intolerance, on the part of both Catholics and Protestants, was the curse of that country. The meeting agreed that religion had been one of the greatest curses to humanity. This evening (Feb. 11) another lecture is to be delivered by Mr. Mowbray, of the Tailors' Society.

The Children's Party at the London Hall of Science was a great success, and was pronounced the best on record. Mr. George Ward, Miss Vance, and a number of other ladies and gentlemen ministered untiringly to the little ones' enjoyment. Hundreds of boys and girls spent a jolly evening, and hundreds of their elders watched their gambols from the gallery. Finally came the distribution of toys and prizes, which is an event always looked forward to with great interest.

The *Surrey Independent* reports the debate at Liberty Hall, Wimbledon, between Mr. W. Heaford and the Rev. W. Bothamley, on the question whether evil is compatible with the existence of a God of infinite goodness and compassion. Next week a Mr. Fox will take the minister's place in the discussion.

There has been a controversy about the character of Wagner's *Parsifal*, which the *Tablet* denounces as anti-Christian on account of the parody of the gospels and of the Mass which it contains. Max Nordau, the author of *Conventional Lies of our Civilisation*, said of it that "so daring a sacrilege has never been attempted by any dramatist since the time of Constantine." However, a Catholic Wagnerian wrote to the *Westminster Gazette* to say he could not see any parody, but others think it as clear as daylight. Wagner's personal opinions, it is well known, were those of a Radical and a Freethinker, as were those of a still greater musical genius, Beethoven.

The inhabitants of Shrewsbury have at length determined to take steps for erecting a memorial to Charles Darwin, who was a native of the town, and was partly educated at the school. At a town's meeting the Mayor said that three proposals had been made—one for a statue in front of the school, another for a statue and scholarship, and another to seek aid from admirers of the great scientist all the world over, with the object of founding in his native town a school for scientific and technical teaching. A committee was appointed. It is to be hoped they will be able to carry out the largest scheme.

In the *Contemporary Review*, Dr. E. J. Dillon has a remarkable article on the book of Ecclesiastes and Buddhism. It is now allowed, among all critics, that the book of Koheleth, instead of being written, as it pretends to be, by King Solomon in Jerusalem, is one of the latest books of the Jewish Canon, and probably later than Epicurus. Dr. Dillon endorses the ingenious theory of Professor Bickell, of Vienna, that the sheets of the Hebrew manuscript have been shifted from their original places, and a number of interpolations inserted to make the various parts of the book cohere. Dr. Dillon himself is responsible for the theory that the writer of the book was acquainted with the writings of Gautama Buddha, and was influenced by them.

Professor Ludwig Büchner, of Darnstadt, informs us that his famous work on *Force and Matter*, which has gone through seventeen editions in Germany, besides two or three German American editions, and which had had four editions in its English translation, and seven in its French version, will now be issued in a cheap slightly abridged form for the multitude in Germany and Holland. Ten thousand copies will be issued. We send our congratulations to Professor Büchner and the German Freethinker. He reaches his 70th birthday on the 29th of March of this year, and this edition of his great work will be known as a Jubilee one.

A proposition for a chaplain to say prayers for the Ohio Legislature was thrown out by a vote of 38 to 29.

Young ladies, and especially Freethinking ladies, are in request in Canada, where the male population is largely in excess. The editor of *Secular Thought* has several advertisements for eligible partners.

During the absence of Mr. Symes in New Zealand, Mr. Wallace Nelson, of Brisbane, has been lecturing in Melbourne.

The Humanitarian League is doing a very good work in a quiet, unpretentious way. We have pleasure in announcing that a lecture under its auspices will be delivered on Thursday next (Feb. 15) by Mr. J. F. Oakeshott, on "The Humanising of the Poor Law," at 32 Sackville-street, Piccadilly. The chair will be taken at 8 by the Rev. J. P. Hopps, and the admission is free.

Mr. G. J. Holyoake lectured at Manchester on Sunday, and we are glad to know that our last week's paragraph helped to bring him excellent audiences. Of course the Manchester friends were very anxious about the Atheist Shoemaker story, and Mr. Holyoake had to undergo a regular fusillade of questions. In the course of his answers he admitted that "Gibson" was the name given to him as being that of the "John Herbert" of Mr. Hughes's narrative. So that matter is set at rest. It won't do now for Mr. Hughes or any of his friends to say that we have got hold of the wrong family.

Mr. Holyoake's general attitude, however, was highly disapproved by the Manchester friends, especially when he said that Mr. Foote had given his opinion of Mr. Hughes's book, and he (Mr. Holyoake) had also given his opinion of it, and that was all there was to say in the matter. With all possible respect for Mr. Holyoake, we must tell him that this is trifling with the matter. He wrote a "vindication" of the truth of Mr. Hughes's story, and the story is now proved to be a lie. Does not Mr. Holyoake see that he is bound in honor to revoke that "vindication"? If he does not, he is letting himself be accessory to the circulation of a convicted falsehood. Surely this is not a position in which he can be satisfied to remain. At any rate, it is a position in which all Secularists will deeply regret to find him, after his long life of service to the "good old cause."

A writer in the *Daily Chronicle* hoped that some publisher would bring out a cheap edition of Jeremy Bentham's *Church of England Catechism*, in view of the coming struggle between clericalism and progress in relation to Board schools. Another writer points out that the work is already published by R. Forder, at 28 Stonecutter-street, at the price of one shilling. Freethinkers might do worse than circulate this trenchant criticism of Bentham's. It is a masterpiece in its way.

Zitsuzen Ashitsu, a Japanese Buddhist priest, of the Tendai sect, who attended the Parliament of Religions at Chicago, gives in the *Monist* a statement of "The Fundamental Teachings of Buddhism." His philosophical views are similar to those of Berkeley, which he carries to their logical consequence of making the percipient mind of man the creator of the universe. He argues against the action of an external deity. Thus he says: "O brethren, inhale the air about you! Is it fragrant or foul? Then it is your mind that makes it so. No creator, no god makes it so; but your mind." To study the mind, then, is to arrive at the secrets of nature, the path of Buddhahood. "Therefore, it is just to say, that when we open and unfold our mind, and become enlightened, and attain to the state of the Buddha Sakyamuni, the scriptures are of very little use to us." Again he says: "All the Sutras are but fingers that point to the shining moon. When once we see the moon, pointers are no longer necessary." As an exposition of an unscientific but nevertheless deeply meditated psychology, and of a philosophy which is at once mystical and atheistical, the article is very interesting.

Good reports of Sunday night's crowded and enthusiastic meeting at the London Hall of Science appeared in the *Daily Chronicle*, the *Morning*, the *Morning Leader*, and the *Star*. A pointed paragraph also appeared in the *Westminster Gazette*. This is as it should be. It is high time that the old conspiracy of silence against Freethought were broken down for ever.

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. Forder will send them on application.

CHRISTIANITY AND CIVILISATION.

[CONCLUDED]

CIVILISATION is not an invention, but a growth; a process from low animal conditions to higher physical, moral, and intellectual attainments. The real value of civilisation consists in its being the means whereby the community can enjoy personal comfort and general happiness. Now, the elements that have contributed to such a societarian condition, are those that Christianity has not concerned itself with, either as originator or as promoter. The lesson of all history teaches the fact that the progress of a people depends upon their knowledge of, and their obedience to, organic and inorganic laws. This great truth has not been sufficiently recognised by the expounders of Christianity. On the contrary, following in this particular the example of their Master, they have urged that man's principal attention should be directed to the alleged supernatural, and to the considerations of a life beyond the grave. The secular affairs of existence have been deemed, by the consistent professors of Christianity, as being of only secondary importance. This disregard of mundane duties is, no doubt, the logical sequence of believing such teachings of the New Testament, as: "He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it until life eternal" (John xii. 25). Also, "Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundred fold, and shall inherit everlasting life" (Matt. xix. 29). This is actually offering a premium for neglecting the requirements of this world, and for ignoring the natural promptings of humanity.

In any accurate history of the advancement of the human race, the influence of external forces must be duly considered. The emotions of our nature have doubtless played an active part in civilising processes, but external conditions have also proved potent factors in all progressive movements. For instance, the geographical position and climate of nations have always had a marvellous effect upon the temperaments and the beliefs of individuals, thus either marring or improving the development of civilisation. An observant traveller can readily discern the difference between the temperament of the inhabitants of the Swiss and of the Italian sides of the Alps, or between those who reside on the English and on the French side of the Channel. The Swiss are as solemn as their snow-capped mountains, and the Italians are as lively as the English larks, whose songs accompany the dawn of the summer morn. The mental calibre of the French, as a rule, differs in many respects from that of the English; and a faith that may satisfy an Oriental mind, would probably be found inadequate to meet the requirements of the Western intellect. This is a feature in the process of civilisation that Christianity has not taken into account; for it prescribes the same faith for all nations and for all people, despite the varied climates and the different localities in which they are born and trained. Buckle has shown that man's progress is the result of his physical environment; for it has been found to be impossible to establish a high civilisation in certain countries, and under certain climatic influences. Take, for instance, the people of Asia, and of Africa; also the Abyssinians. In spite of all the efforts of Christian missionaries civilisation in those countries is at its lowest ebb. As a writer aptly remarks: "If it were the Church that created civilisation, then we should see similar results in different latitudes, and among different races. But the facts are opposed to this claim. Wherever there is a high civilisation, there is a good soil and a temperate climate." This fact proves that it is not to Christianity that we owe civilisation, but rather that it depends for its manifestations upon the healthy conditions of society and its surroundings.

Briefly summarised, it appears to us that the principal causes of modern civilisation are: The development of the intellect, this rules the world to-day; the expansion of mechanical genius, this provides for the increased needs of the people; the extension of national commerce, this causes an inter-

change of ideas; the invention of printing, this provides for the circulation of newly-discovered facts; the beneficial influence of climate, this affects the condition both of body and mind; the knowledge and the application of science, these reveal the value and the power of natural resources; the spread of scepticism, this provides for the vindication of the right of mental freedom; the practical recognition of political justice, this forms the basis of all just governments; and finally, the establishment of the social equality of women with men, this secures the emancipation of women from that state of domestic servitude and general inferiority in which theology had for centuries kept them. The question here to be considered is, are the causes of civilisation just named, even indicated in the New Testament? We submit they are not, for if the following injunctions were implicitly obeyed, there would be a complete stagnation of all civilisation. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world," "For what is a man profited if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness and all these things [food, clothes, etc.] shall be added unto you. Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple," "Take no thought for your life," "Resist not evil," "Blessed be ye poor," "Labor not for the meat which perisheth," "Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called," "Submit yourself to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake," "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers, for there is no power but of God. . . . Whosoever therefore resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God, and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation." "Wives submit yourselves to your own husbands," "As the Church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their husbands in everything," "What therefore God hath joined together let no man put asunder," "Servants be subject to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward," "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth," "Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away," "Lend hoping for nothing again," "He that taketh away thy goods ask them not again," "Forgive your brother who sins "until seventy times seven," "Whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that city, shake off the dust of your feet," "If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed," "If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to the wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . he is proud, knowing nothing. . . . from such withdraw thyself," "Of whom is Hymenæus and Alexander, whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme."

Here are a few passages from the Scriptures, the highest Christian authority, which enjoin conduct that cannot possibly promote civilisation, but must necessarily retard it. The teachings herein set forth are, neglect of the world, personal indifference to human needs, non-resistance of wrongs, to regard poverty as a blessing, abject submission to "the powers that be," the subjection of woman, the giving up all for Christ, reckless lending without any conditions for the return of the loan, and the encouragement of a bitter spirit of persecution. Well may the late John S. Mill exclaim, in his work on *Liberty*, "That not one Christian in a thousand guides or tests his individual conduct by reference to those [New Testament] laws." The reason why those laws cannot be obeyed in the nineteenth century is because, as Mill further states, the morality of Christ is, "in many important points incomplete and one-sided, and unless ideas and feelings not sanctioned by it had contributed to the formation of European life and character, human affairs would have been in a worse condition than they now are. Other ethics than any which can be evolved from exclusively Christian sources must exist side by side with Christian ethics to produce the moral regeneration of mankind."

It may be asked by professors of the Christian faith, "If Christianity is so unprogressive in its nature, and so much opposed to a high condition of civilisation as

you allege that it is, how is it that the profession of Christianity is so extensive to-day?" This is a question that can be better dealt with in future articles, upon "Why Christianity is Still Professed."

CHARLES WATTS.

DEPOSITION OF THE GHOST OF A ONCE-FAMOUS PERSON.

LISTEN to my words, ye people, for I have been a mighty and terrible personage in my time. You laugh at me now, but once I could have made you shake in your shoes. Through accumulated misfortunes and a series of harrowing experiences, I am worn to nothing. I am as thin as a moonbeam and as harmless as a shadow. Once how different! Ah, well! it is still a comfort to think what a gorgeous potentate I was, and to dwell on past glories. At one time I was described as going about like a roaring lion; now my substance is worn to such extreme tenuity that a roar—even like that of a sucking dove—would rend me to shreds and at once annihilate what remnant of existence I possess. Sometimes I could almost doom myself to extinction for the pleasure of frightening someone, if only an old woman, with a display of vigor. I am too weak to carry off anybody now, though that was a common feat with me in my younger days. My power has been steadily decreasing with the increase of education and Freethought. My friends, the theologians, did their best for me, and succeeded in keeping the life in me for a time, but my system never recovered the shock of seeing so many who once acknowledged my sway turn their backs on me and treat me with scarcely concealed contempt.

It is a melancholy thing to recount one's own decline and fall from a dazzling eminence and the splendors of a universal sovereignty over human nature. According to the older orthodoxy, human nature was *me*, and I was human nature. Now, owing to the interference of a host of later thinkers, human nature repudiates me and has cut the connection. I am, therefore, like some unfortunate mortals, reduced to a wretched condition for want of credit. In the days of my prime everyone grovelled before me, from the king to the beggar. Princes, priests, peers, politicians and potentates, preserved implicit faith in my capabilities, and trembled if so much as a glimpse of my foot appeared. I possessed a dominion of my own, which could not have been improved upon for wickedness and terror. My ambition rested at nothing less than possession of nine-tenths of the human race. I was to have made kings perambulate through a fire of bills of attainder and acts of privilege, to have spun politicians on fiery wheels in continuation of earthly gyrations, to cook conquerors on foreign bayonets, to stew women and children as a pastime, to prevent *ennui* by toasting a prince suspended by a silken garter. In those days I was very magnificent, and dreadful to behold. I was of a handsome, if swarthy, complexion, with the finest pair of antlers imaginable surmounting my head; the possessor of an ornamental caudal appendage, which, however, I was obliged to discard later on in deference to public opinion, and in fear of ridicule. Though an awe-inspiring, I was still a prepossessing character. I possessed many men and women in diverse ways. I had a monopoly of epilepsy, paralysis, learning and lunacy, and in fact, of all diseases, plagues, and pestilences whatsoever, which I dealt out to mankind just as it pleased me. I once possessed a whole herd of swine with the notion of husks and soft-feeding, and lured them all into the sea. This is rather a sore point with me, however, as I have been literally pulled over my own coals about it, and laughed out of countenance as a clumsy impostor. It may not strike modern minds as a fine thing to do, but it created a good impression at Gadara, and served as an exhibition of my power. I know the most ignorant now-a-days would only laugh at such a feat, and set it down to hypnotic influence. I was then accompanied by a whole legion of demi-demons, ghosts, goblins, witches, etc., all of whom have preceded me to oblivion and extinction. I will be the last of my race. Men accuse

me of cruelty and wickedness during my career, but one thing I did *not* do. I never counselled a conqueror to slaughter a conquered race, warrior and citizen, with their wives, the child at the breast, and the innocent beasts of the field. In justice to myself I must say I drew the line at *that!*

Fashion changed, and I began to discover I was behind the age. To keep pace with the times I modified my exterior and assumed a more polished manner. I grew eminently respectable, but as my respectability increased my vigor declined. In fact I found myself going piece-meal; my tail had to be docked; then my horns were removed in accordance with the canons of good taste. I took lessons in deportment and read the "Etiquette of Good Society." My address was pronounced fascinating and alluring in the extreme, but I could no longer terrify people as of old. The first potentate in high society would nod to me good humoredly as he passed, and the mildest bishop in the Church would shake hands with me affably at a garden party. I will never forget the feeling of indignation and mortification I experienced when a young scientist fresh from college actually patronised me. From the time of the new development of science I felt that my fate was sealed. After that my decline was rapid. But why should I enter into all the harrowing details or expose my sorrows to a callous world? I gradually lost caste. People could not forgive me for some youthful bungling, and calumnies were circulated about me. In particular I was considered to have acted like a second-rate conjuror in the matter of the Gadarenian swine aforementioned. Society passed its fiat of excommunication against me, and I found every fashionable drawing-room shut in my face. I lingered awhile in shabby guise in the lower walks of life, gradually drifting down into the social grades. In the end I was finally abandoned, and I can see plainly I am doomed by the general consent of the world. In the meantime I have taken refuge with the Salvation Army, and though I have to thank them for much kindness and zeal on my behalf, I feel their well-meant efforts will be of no avail, and that I must shortly pass into the limbo of worn-out dogmas and be remembered no more.

When I depart from this fickle and changeable world there will never be another to fill my place; and the worst of it is there are so few to lament my untimely demise. But so it is; the priests whom I have supported in their exactions, the kings whom I have assisted to trample on their subjects' liberty, the statesmen I directed, the religionists whom I had private dealings with—all, all have left me and repaid my benefits with ingratitude. I will turn upon them and haunt them in the shape of a Mahatma or an astral body—that is one way of revenge still left.

T. E. M.

IS THE BIBLE TRUE?

You may reply: God knew that his book would be understood differently by each one, and intended that it should be understood as it is understood by each. If this is so, then my understanding of the Bible is the real revelation to me. If this is so, I have no right to take the understanding of another. I must take the revelation made to me through my understanding, and by that revelation I must stand. Suppose, then, that I read this Bible honestly, fairly, and when I get through am compelled to say, "The book is not true." If this is the honest result, then you are compelled to say, either that God has made no revelation to me, or that the revelation that it is not true is the revelation made to me, and by which I am bound. If the book and my brain are both the work of the same infinite God, whose fault is it that the book and brain do not agree? Either God should have written a book to fit my brain, or should have made my brain to fit his book. The inspiration of the Bible depends upon the credulity of him who reads. There was a time when its geology, its astronomy, its natural history, were thought to be inspired: that time has passed. There was a time when its morality satisfied the men who ruled the world of thought: that time has passed.—*Ingersoll*.

"I believe in sending missionaries to the heathen," said Hicks. "But you said a minute ago you thought the heathen had a right to their beliefs." "So I do; but I think it's a good thing for us to get rid of the missionaries."

LONDON SECULAR FEDERATION.

COUNCIL MEETING, held at the Hall of Science, Feb. 1; G. W. Foote in the chair. Present: Mrs. Fisher, Miss Vance, Messrs. Renn, G. H. Baker, Schaller, Dowding, G. Standing, R. O. Smith, J. Neate, Turner, and J. Anderson.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed, and the report on the annual dinner approved.

A sum of £5 was ordered to be paid to the printer.

The election of secretary was again postponed.

A committee of five was appointed to carry out arrangements for a ball in March.

Instructions were given to arrange a course of four lectures at Walthamstow. Also to convene a special meeting in April, to decide the question of admitting secretaries of Branches as honorary members of the council.—J. ANDERSON, sec. (*pro tem*).

NORTH-EASTERN SECULAR FEDERATION.

ON behalf of the Council of the N.E.S.F., now that the new year has come, and the holidays over, I remind our friends in the north that it is time we were once again doing some active work in the way of propaganda. I am sure that there are many Secularists who are wondering why, to some extent, our Council have been rather slack in their work. Well, we are ready to begin; all we want is our friends' financial help. I therefore appeal to them (*i.e.* those who are in a position to do so) to heartily come forward during the next few weeks with their subscriptions, which will be duly acknowledged in the *Freethinker*. I am sure it needs no words of mine to remind northern Secularists of the work we have done in the past in support of our appeal. Friends sending subscriptions kindly note my change of address. I have great pleasure in acknowledging 2s. from James Tullen and 3s. from the Sunderland Branch. Secretaries of Branches and vice-presidents note that affiliation fees and subscriptions are now due.—JOSEPH BROWN, hon. sec., 55 Northbourne-street, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

CORRESPONDENCE.

THE PERMANENCY OF BELIEFS.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER"

SIR,—Let us assume, to the edification of all the little Hughes's in this Christian land, that *all* Atheists die in the belief of their childhood—Calvinistic, Papistic, Wesleyan, Judaistic, Buddhistic, Mahometan, Statechurchistic, Deistic, or any other beliefs ending in *ic* or *an*. Acting on this assumption we shall look for the law that underlies this reversion of Atheists on their death-beds to the creed of their infancy; and we shall find it in John Locke's teaching. For does he not say that he doubts if any man *can* eradicate the beliefs inculcated in his childhood. But Locke's teaching, if true—and if not true an initial assumption is absurd—goes much too far, for no convert to any of the *ic* or *an* dogmas can remain true to his conversion, but must revert to his earliest creed. And that this is supported by much evidence even missionaries themselves are witness, for nothing is so common among so-called "savages" as a reversion to their so-called "superstitions," which they have deserted for a belief in some variant of Christianity, in moments of great danger or intense fear—as at the approach of some civilised disease (smallpox, say), or at the approach of death. The fact is, sir, our minds are poisoned at their source, and it is no wonder we find it so difficult to remove all traces of the poisons. Every child's mind, almost, is adulterated with lies or unprovable dogmas and beliefs, and the man—who is the child's child—wastes useful years in attempting to get rid of the adulterant matter which is often too inextricably woven with his own pure mental fibre to be wholly extracted or expelled. This is Mr. Riley's game on School Board, a criminal and abhorrent game, in which he is backed by the officials of the State superstition sitting on the Board. They know that the superstitions sown in the soil of tender minds flourish like rank and noxious weeds, but that the conclusions of reason grow but slowly, and perhaps never, where the soil is already pre-empted by poisonous and gross vegetation. Superstitions—requiring, and, indeed, admitting of no demonstration—luxuriate like scandal and lying. Facts, permitting as well as inviting demonstration, do for that very reason grow with slowness and with circumspection. Are superstitions, "things rank and gross in nature," for ever to get a priority of lodgment in the minds of our children, and things useful and demonstrable to be neglected, in order that lies, guesses, and fancies may flourish weed-like? Is it not a crime to teach as facts to immature minds anything but facts—facts explicable and demonstrable?

FREE MIND.

Lady (to returned missionary): And how was the king of the savages clothed? Missionary: "H'm—principally with authority, madam, and not much of that."

BOOK CHAT.

Lovers of chess, which claims to be a scientific discipline as well as a recreation, will find *The Principles of Chess in Theory and Practice*, by James Mason, a valuable work (H. Cox and Co., Bream's-buildings, E.C. Price 2s. 6d.) The author is a master, and the student advances rapidly to "master play." A large number of diagrams are given, illustrating the principles of successful combination. The literature of chess is extensive, but Mr. Mason has supplied a distinct want.

The Story of My Dictatorship is published, without author's name, by Bliss, Sands and Foster (Craven-street, Strand. 3s. 6d.) It appeared originally in the *Weekly Times and Echo*, with the name of Isidor Singer. It is "Dedicated without permission to the Liberty and Property Defence League." The author, the imaginary Dictator, is a Land Nationaliser, who would deal very summarily with some old-established institutions, abolishing all taxes save one on land values at the rate of twenty shillings in the pound. The expostulations and arguments of the various interests affected are vividly told. The book is a live one, and many who would not care for a dry argument will be attracted and interested by this fictitious account of how to bring about the land for the people.

A Brief Story of Fourteen Years' Struggle for Parental Emancipation from the Vaccination Tyranny. The Royal Commission on Vaccination, etc. By William Tebb, F.R.G.S., President of the London Society for the Abolition of Compulsory Vaccination.—In this little pamphlet the reader will find a good *précis* of what has been achieved in the interests of parental freedom during the last fourteen years. Mr. Tebb says that during his recent severe illness, his thoughts reverted to the "great work of parental emancipation" in which the London Anti-Compulsory Vaccination Society has so long been engaged; "to the humble beginnings, the difficulties and obstructions with which it has constantly been confronted, and its gradual and certain progress," the result being a brief survey and historical reminiscence at once interesting and valuable; as a propagandist tract

especially so. The pro-vaccinal prejudice of the many of the Royal Commission on Vaccination (Mr. Bradlaugh was, perhaps, the only Royal Commissioner with an independent mind, and capable of sitting impartially the official evidence) is spoken of in no uncertain voice, and the pre-eminent evidence of Dr. Charles Creighton and Professor Edgar Crookshank meets with due praise. Mr. Tebb concludes his pamphlet with a few words of sound, practical advice and exhortation. E. W. Allen, 4 Ave Maria-lane, E.C. Price one penny.

The librarian of the Clerkenwell Public Library points out that, though the staple is fiction, novels are more quickly read than more solid works. Judged by the standard of bulk, Darwin's *Origin of Species*, Green's *Short History of the English People*, and Herbert Spencer's *First Principles* are among the books most in demand.

The catalogues of Mr. Dobell, bookseller, 54 Charing Cross-road, always contains some interesting items. To a copy of Shelley's *Queen Mab*, with the imprint "New York, 1821," he adds the note: "This curious edition, though bearing the imprint of New York, was probably published in London, by Benbow, who put the false imprint on the title in order to avoid prosecution." We expect Mr. Dobell is right, for he is always accurate about books, and is a special authority concerning Shelley. But it is certain there was a sale for Shelley's *Queen Mab* in America, for we have seen it advertised in the first numbers of the *Boston Investigator*, issued in 1836.

In one pamphlet entitled *The Religion of Socialism*, two very different aspects are offered by Katherine St. John Conway and J. Bruce Glasier. The lady seems to offer a sort of undogmatic ethical Christianity with all the grit taken out. Mr. Glasier speaks out more boldly. "The founders and chief apostles of most of the various schools of Socialism in France, Germany, and Russia, from which we have derived the greater part of our ethics and economics were Atheists, and the men and women who, by their suffering and death for the cause, have exemplified the highest altruism and bravery to which human nature has yet attained, have been, in the majority of instances, either Atheists or Infidels of some sort."

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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 postcard.]

LONDON.

Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C.: 11.15, G. W. Foote, "Can Poverty be Abolished?" (free); 6.30, musical selections; 7, G. W. Foote, "The Damnation of Hugh Price Hughes" (admission free; reserved seats 3d. and 6d.) Monday at 8.30, debating class, Mr. Eagles, "Anarchism" (free). Thursday and Friday at 8, dancing classes; Friday at 8.30, athletic class. Saturday at 8.30, in the minor hall, social evening.

Battersea Secular Hall (back of Battersea Park Station): 7.45, W. L. Phillips (Fabian), "Labor and Socialism" (free). Tuesday at 8, social gathering (free). Wednesday at 8, dramatic club.

Bethnal Green—Libra Hall, 78 Libra-road, Roman-road: 7.30, social evening.

Camberwell—81 New Church-road, S.E.: 7.30, B. Hyatt, "The Devil Transformed into an Angel of Light." Friday at 7.30, free science classes in chemistry and astronomy.

East London—Swaby's Coffee House, 103 Mile End-road: 8, T. Crisfield, "Hypnotism: what is it?"

Hammersmith Club, 1 The Grove, Broadway: Thursday, Feb. 15, at 8.30, G. W. Foote, "A Search for the Soul" (3d. and 6d.)

Notting Hill Gate—Clarendon Coffee Palace, Clarendon-road: 8, St. John, "Malthusianism." Monday at 8.30, at the "Duke of York," Kensington-place, Silver-street, business meeting of the West London Branch.

South Essex Secular Society, 33 and 35 Salway-road, Stratford, E.: 7, Walter Scott, "The Higher Criticism" (free).

Wimbledon—Liberty Hall, Curtis's Coffee House (Broadway entrance): 7, J. Hyons, "The Position of Labor a Hundred Years Ago" (free).

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Battersea Park-gates: 11.30, A. Guest, "What is Truth?" Hyde Park (near Marble-arch): F. Haslam, 11.30, "The Life of Thomas Paine"; 3.30, "The Life and Times of Voltaire."

COUNTRY.

Bristol—Shepherd's Hall, Old Market-street: 3, Mr. Roe, "A Biography of Lincoln." Members subscriptions due.

Chatham—Secular Hall, Queen's-road, New Brompton: 11, members' monthly meeting; 7, free concert and entertainment.

Derby—41 Copeland-street (off Traffic-street): 7, Mr. Whitney, "Christian Evidences."

Dundee—Cutlers' Hall, Murraygate: 11.30, mutual improvement class, A. Smith, "Light"; 1 to 2, music class (free); 2.30, concert: 6.30, "The Socialism of Professor Marcus Dods and other Divines."

Fallsworth Secular Sunday-school, at 10 and 2; 6.30, P. Percival, "God, Man, and Nature."

Glasgow—Ex-Mission Hall, 110 Brunswick-street: 12, discussion class, T. Weir, "British Government in Ireland: a Justification"; 6.30, Zosimus, "The Arts of Life," with special lantern slides.

Hanley—Secular Hall, John-street: 7.30, a reading from Ingersoll, by a lady Freethinker. Thursday at 8, improvement class.

Hull—St. George's Hall, 8 Albion-street: 7, J. Sketchley, "The Meaning of a Revolution."

Jarrow—Co-operative Hall (small room), Market-square: 7.30, members' annual meeting.

Liverpool—Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street: 11, Tontine Society; 3, Mr. Small, B.Sc., meeting of the science class; 7, debate (second night) between Messrs. Smith and Jackson on "Is the Bible, as a whole, Conducive to the Moral Well-being of the People?"

Manchester N.S.S., Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, Oxford-road. All Saints': 6.30, two free sketches by dramatic society, "April Fools" and "Wanted, a Wife." Monday from 8 to 10.30, dancing.

Portsmouth—Wellington Hall, Wellington-street, Southsea: 3, chess club; 7, social evening.

Reading—Foresters' Hall, West-street: 7, annual meeting.

Sheffield—Hall of Science, Rockingham-street: C. Cohen, 11, "Evolution v. Special Creation"; 3, "What the Universe Teaches": 7, "Christianity and Morality." Monday at 8, C. Cohen, "The Scientific Basis of Morals." Tuesday at 8, C. Cohen, "Christianity and Modern Thought."

South Shields—Capt. Duncan's Navigation School, King-street: 6.30, ethical class; 7.30, R. Chapman, "The Reasonableness of Atheism."

Sunderland—Bridge End Vaults, Bridge-street: 7, R. Weightman, "Lying for the Glory of God—with special reference to the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes's 'Converted Atheist Shoemaker.'"

LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

C. COHEN, 12 Merchant-street, Bow-road, E.—Feb. 11, Sheffield; 18, Manchester; 22, Hammersmith; 25, m., Battersea.

STANLEY JONES, 53 Marlborough-road, Holloway, London, N.—March 11, Sheffield.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Oredon-road, Rotherhithe, London, S.E.—Feb. 18, Bolton. March 4, Camberwell. April 1, Camberwell.

TOUZEAU PARRIS, Clare Lodge, 32 Upper Mall, Hammersmith, London, W.—March 4, South Shields; 25, Grimsby.

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Printed and Published by G. W. Foote, at 23 Stonecutter-street, London, E.C.