

The Freethinker

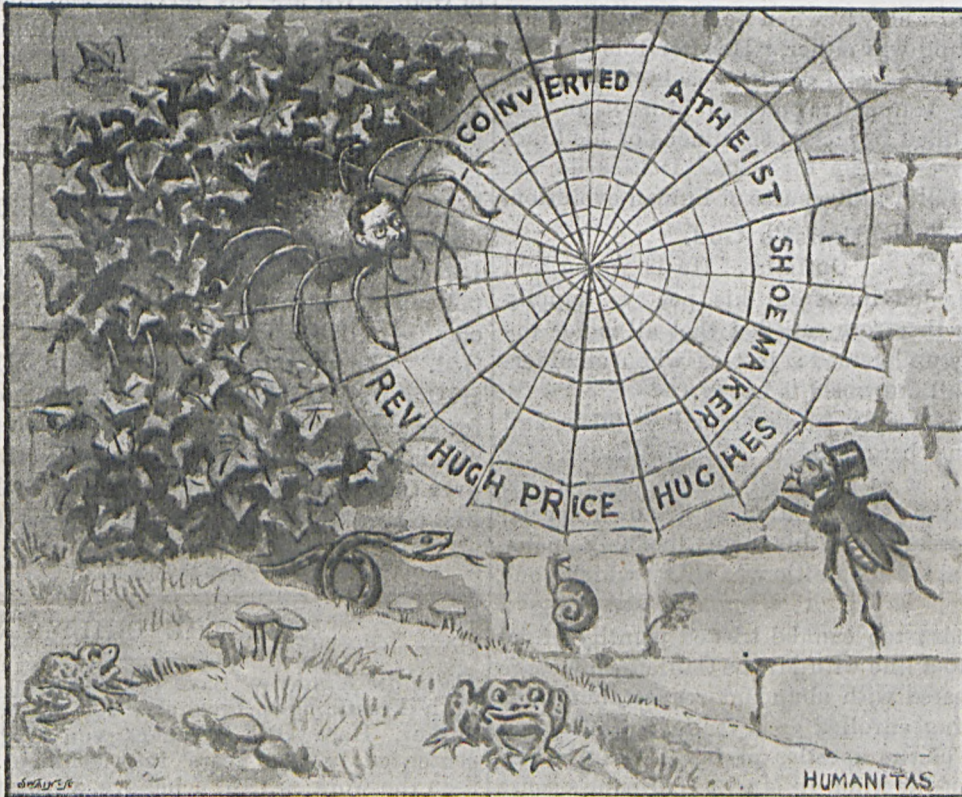
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THE SPIDER AND THE FLY.

(A LONDON SPIDER—THE FLY FROM BRIGHTON.)

MR. LE GALLIENNE'S "CHRIST."

(Continued from p. 186).

The Religious Sense.

MR. LE GALLIENNE follows the beaten track of theology in talking about "mysteries," which are only subterfuges to cover the retreat of a nonplussed debater, or a warren for the fugitive game of the hounds of reason. He also follows the beaten track in arguing—or rather assuming—that the elect spiritualists have a "sense" which is lacking in the reprobate materialists. There is nothing like a good lumping assumption for begging the question at issue. It settles the discussion before it opens and saves a world of trouble. But even an assumption may be looked in the face; nay, it is best looked in the face when you suspect it of being an imposture.

According to Mr. Le Gallienne, the religious sense—or, as he also writes it, the Spiritual Sense, with capital letters—is not after all a special faculty, but a special compound, or interaction, of common faculties. He does, indeed, treat these common faculties as "tributaries" of the Spiritual Sense; but it is very evident that the tributaries make the stream, which is merely

a name without them. First, there is the Sense of Wonder, which is nothing but the positive side of ignorance; second, the Sense of Beauty, which "is not necessarily a religious sense," but may be pressed into its service; third, the Sense of Pity, which really originates, as we conceive, in parental affection, and has even been noticed in rats as well as in religionists; fourth, the Sense of Humor, which is a peculiarly "candid" friend of religion, so that Mr. Le Gallienne is obliged to give its devotees an impressive warning against running into Ill-nature and Sacrilege; fifth, the Sense of Gratitude, which, in religion, so far as we can see, appears to consist in a lively sense of favors to come, through the medium of prayer, to which thanksgiving is only a judicious preliminary, like the compliments and flatteries that are addressed to an oriental despot by his humble but calculating petitioners.

Now all these senses are perfectly natural. Every one of them is found in the lower animals as well as in man. How then can there be anything supernatural, supersensible, or "spiritual," in their combination? Is it not evident that Religion works, like everything else, upon common materials? Chiefly, indeed, upon the unchastened imagination of credulous ignorance.

We may prove this from Mr. Le Gallienne's own testimony.

"Are there not impressions borne in upon the soul of man as he stands a spectator of the universe which religion alone attempts to formulate? Certain impressions are expressed by the sciences and the arts. 'How wonderful!'—exclaims man, and that is the dawn of science; 'How beautiful!'—and that is the dawn of art. But there is a still higher, a more solemn, impression borne in upon him, and falling upon his knees, he cries, 'How holy!' That is the dawn of religion."

Mr. Le Gallienne does not see that this is all imagination. "The heavens declare the glory of God," exclaims the Psalmist. On the other hand, a great French Atheist exclaimed, "The heavens declare the glory of Copernicus, Kepler, and Newton."

Mr. Le Gallienne does not see, either, that man did not exclaim, "How holy!" when he first fell upon his knees. His feeling was rather, "How terrible!" The sense of holiness is a social product—a high sublimation of morality. Man had to possess it himself, and see it highly exemplified in picked specimens of his kind, before he bestowed it upon his gods. Deities do not anticipate, they follow, the course of human evolution.

The Optimist's God.

Mr. Le Gallienne is an Optimist. He is young and prosperous, and, judging from his poetry, happily married. He is therefore satisfied that all is for the best—if properly understood; just as when an alderman has dined, all the world is happy.

There are such people, however, as Pessimists, and Mr. Le Gallienne hates them. Schopenhauer, for instance, he rails at as a "small philosopher," whose ideas were only the "formulation of his own special disease, the expression of his own ineffably petty and uncomfortable disposition." At which one can only stare, as at a mannikin attacking a colossus. Spinoza too can be treated jauntily if he does not fall into a line with Mr. Le Gallienne. George Meredith is treated with abundant respect, but he is wronged by being enrolled as a facile optimist, and "the strongest of the apostles of faith." He is certainly nothing of the kind, in Mr. Le Gallienne's sense of the words. He has faith in reason and humanity, but this a very different thing from faith in the idols—even the greatest idol—of the Pantheon.

"There is too much pain in the world," said Charles Darwin, who knew what he was talking about, and always expressed himself with moderation. In the moral world, pain becomes evil; and the problem of evil has ever been the crux of Theism. It cannot be solved on Theistic grounds, and accordingly it has to be explained away. Pain, we are told, is the great agent in our development; in the ethical sphere, it is the "purifying fire," which purges the gold in us from its dross. All of which sounds very pretty in a lecture, and looks very pretty in a book; but is apt to excite disgust when a man is suffering from incurable cancer, or utter destitution in the midst of plenty; or when a mother stands over the corpse of her child, mangled in some terrible accident, or burnt to a cinder in a fatal fire.

Certainly, pain subserves a partial purpose. It is sometimes a warning, though the warning is often too late. But its function is immensely overrated by Mr. Le Gallienne and other religionists. It is all very well to talk about the "crucible," but half the people who go into it are reduced to ashes. Mr. Le Gallienne will not accept Spinoza's view that "pain is an unmistakable evil; joy the vitalising, fructifying power." But the great mystic, William Blake, said the same thing in, "Joys impregnate, sorrows bring forth." George Meredith has expressed the same view in saying that "Adversity tests, it does not nourish us." Even

the struggle for existence does not add any strength to the survivors. It sometimes cripples them. By eliminating the unfit—that is, the weak—it raises the average capacity. But what a method for Infinite Wisdom and Infinite Goodness! There was more sense, and less cruelty, in the ancient method of infanticide.

Mr. Le Gallienne seems to feel that his theory of pain is too fantastic, so he falls back on "mystery." "We can form no possible conception," he says, "of the processes of God." Why then does he talk about them so consumedly? Ignorance is a good reason for silence, but none for garrulity.

We must be "humble," says Mr. Le Gallienne, and recognise that we only exist "to the praise and glory of God." We are his servants and soldiers, and the pay is life!—"Had he willed it this glorious gift had never been ours. We might have still slept on un sentient, unorganised, in the trodden dust." Very likely; but who could lose what he never possessed? It is a small misfortune that can never be realised.

Mr. Le Gallienne leaps the final difficulty by exclaiming that "Man has no rights in regard to God." He shakes hands with St. Paul, who asserts the potter's power over the clay. Yes, but man is not clay. He lives and feels. He has rights, even against God. The parent is responsible for his child, the creator for his creature. The opposite doctrine is fit for cowards and slaves. It comes down to us from the old days, when fathers had the power of life and death over their children; it dies out as we learn that the first claim is the child's, and the first duty the parent's.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be concluded.)

SAVE THE CHILDREN.

Rettet die Kinder—"Save the Children"—is the title of a Freethought brochure, for which the German author, Herr Otto Wichers von Gogh, has been sentenced to two years' imprisonment. I have not seen the work, which, I believe, advocates entire non-religious education. But the very title is inspiring, and, in my feeble way, I would repeat the cry.

If there is one thing more hateful than another in theology, it is the impositions on the minds of little children in order to make them religious. The nonsense palmed off as the will of God often tends to dwarf and darken their lives. The will of God is nearly always invoked on the side of repression, to hinder and prohibit the free development of the child's nature. It is God's will that there shall be no joyous play on Sundays; that his day shall be consecrated to gloom, not to gladness. The influence of theology is the influence of fear and credulity. Fear places the fetters of religious terror on the brain of the child, and credulity stamps it. Children, says Mr. Athelstan Riley, "absorb dogmas as a sponge absorbs water." Tell them Jumbo Jumbo demands bloody sacrifices, or that Jehovah needed the atonement of his own Son, and the impress may remain for life. What manhood would reject as an insult to reason is accepted with unquestioning faith in childhood.

The just published recommendations of the Norwich Diocesan Conference, show pretty plainly what the clericals are striving for. They ask for "larger support of Church training colleges; the candidature of more Churchmen for election on School Boards; the admission of the clergy to teach in Board Schools; pastoral care of children in Board schools not receiving religious education; diocesan inspection, with prizes for examination in religious subjects; more attention on the part of Church members of School Boards to the religious instruction in the schools; and the inculcation of private prayer upon the children brought up in the schools." The clerical program means that the children shall be trained as submissive subjects of their spiritual pastors and masters. The

real purport, the true inwardness, of the whole business may be described as subjection and stultification.

Scotland boasts, and with justice, of its educated people. Yet how far is the work of education thwarted and distorted by rubbish taught to the children under the name of religion. In the Second City of the Empire the committee of the School Board appointed on religious teaching strongly recommended for the schools a popular pious production, entitled *Line upon Line*. Mr. Adam Drysdale gives in the *Glasgow Herald* some samples of what this highly-recommended school manual of religious training contains. The first volume begins with the fiction of creation. The writer seems never to have heard even of the sciences of astronomy, geology, or biology. "God had nothing to make the universe of," it is said. The "six days" are given literally and absolutely. "God ordered the sun to come every morning and to go away in the evening." "God spoke, and the beasts came out of the earth." "God spoke to his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and said, 'Let us make man.'" "The seventh day is the day for praising God." "Hymns" are appended to each chapter of the *Lines*. The first one ends thus—for the child to repeat:

I, who am made of sinful clay,
And like the grass, shall fade away.

God, being angry, cursed the Devil (serpent), and said to Eve, "Adam shall be your master." Evidently *Line upon Line*, like the Bible, was compiled by males. It gives, of course, the Flood in an unmitigated form, with Noah's floating menagerie and questionable provision for feeding and sanitation.

Here is a verse of another "hymn," for the infant mind, remember—

And God upon their heads shall heap
Hailstones and coals of fire.
What piercing cries shall rend the skies,
When they who were God's enemies,
Shall meet the Judge's angry eyes,
Flashing with terrors dire!

For moral instruction it gives such stuff as the following: "You have wicked hearts. You make God angry. He will put you into hell." "God does not always make children alive again," we are told in Part 2, p. 122. The bears, of course, who tore the forty and two little children were hounded on to them by God. "Hymn," p. 159:

God quickly stopped their wicked breath,
And sent two raging bears, etc.

P. 165—"God waits till the last day. Then all the children's bodies shall rise from their graves, and the bodies of holy children shall be taken up into heaven, but the bodies of wicked children shall be burned in hell."

How long will parents submit to their children being taught such atrocious absurdities? Just so long will they grow up to be pliant tools of those who keep the good things of this life for their own selves.

In face of such immoral teaching as this, the religionist declares the child cannot be taught morality without religion. I contend it can be taught far more effectually without it. It is not possible to introduce religious dogmas without dwarfing, hiding, or undermining the real foundations of morality. John Morley says with truth: "There is a great peril in having morality made an appendage of a set of theological mysteries, because the mysteries are sure, in time, to be dragged into the open air of reason, and moral truth crumbles away with the false dogmas with which it had got mixed." This is the true danger, that morality is placed on false and insecure foundations. What but confused and self-contradictory ideas can follow any attempt to cement into one structure of thought, the conceptions of the writers of the sixty-six books of the Bible. The earlier portions, which are specially selected for young children, as in the syllabus of instructions issued by the London School Board, contain the most barbarous and unworthy notions of God. He is represented walking in the garden in the cool of the day, repenting he had made man and obliged to destroy them by a flood; as wrestling with a patriarch, and entering into competition with Egyptian magicians.

As I have already urged,* the peril to morals is equally great. What can children make of the story of Jacob's fraud upon his blind father, or the treacherous assassination of Uriah by the man after God's own heart? What candid parent is there who wishes his children to obey all the precepts of the Bible, or follow the example of all its characters?

The Rev. James Martineau, now in extreme old age, wrote the following when in the vigor of manhood, and the words are as true now as when first written, nearly half a century ago:—

"The parents, then, who would guard the moral purity of their child—who would not wish him to find access anywhere to impressions and premature knowledge of wrong, from which they would religiously screen him in a newspaper or a tale; who would dread his contracting a sympathy with ferocious and intolerant passions; who would maintain his estimate of duty wisely graduated, and not suffer him to confound secondary with primary obligations, the forms and means of duty with its ends and substance; who would bring him to acquire his ideas of God to one pure and consistent school; who would mix no taint of selfishness with his morality, of sceptical contempt with his interpretations of men, of ignoble despondency with his conceptions of life and death—will be cautious in their use of the ancient scriptures, and permit no unregulated access to them within their house. Of course there will be a clamor; but their duty is not to the bigot-neighbor, but to the child at home."

The Secularist position is clear and distinct, and amid the warring of the sects it must gradually come to the front. The State should have nothing to do with the teaching of religion. The common school should be the common ground where the children of all faiths and of no faith should meet on a footing of perfect equality, and be taught only the indisputable truths of secular life. From the waste of their valuable time in learning old superstitions and barbarous dogmas, which must be painfully unlearned, let us endeavor to save the children.

J. M. WHEELER.

SECULARISM AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS.

FRIENDS in Liverpool, Sheffield, Bristol, Derby, Nelson, and other places, have asked me to state, what in my opinion, is the relation of Secularism to the various methods which are now being adopted in the endeavor to solve the social problems of our time. There is no doubt that in England, as indeed in other countries, society is passing through one of the greatest social revolutions that ever disturbed the status of a community. After eighteen hundred years of Christian propaganda, we are confronted with evils that theology has failed to remove. There is no mistaking the fact that *the* question of the hour is: "What can be done to get rid of the burdens that weigh so heavily upon the greater portion of the human family?" Even the churches of the different denominations have been holding special meetings to consider what new attitude their members should take in dealing with the present social condition of affairs. Having awakened to the deplorable state of things by which they have been so long surrounded, the masses recognise that, with the duties now devolved upon them, they have also grave responsibilities with regard to the means which should be adopted for bringing about the reforms that are necessary to secure for each and all the highest possible comfort of existence.

On several occasions I have endeavored to point out that the original source from which all the churches profess to draw their inspiration and to derive their authority, does not prescribe any practical method for dealing with social wrongs, or for making this life a harmonious working organisation. The "one thing needful" appears to me to be a wider knowledge than at present obtains of the facts and requirements of the life we now have, allied with a determination to devote our attention and energies to things of earth instead of wasting time in the vain attempt to prepare for what is called heaven. Experience has taught that the belief in such doctrines as the Fall of Man, the Atonement, the Trinity, and a future life have had no useful influence upon the endeavor to better the social condition of the people. On the contrary, these theo-

* *Freethinker* (Feb. 25), "The Bible and the Child."

logical tenets have proved a hindrance both to personal and national improvement. Human conditions are essentially affected only by human considerations, and these are based on the known facts of mundane life, irrespective of any teachings that have reference to an existence after death. Here, we allege, the superiority of the Secular panacea becomes manifest. Secularism, in dealing with social problems, relies upon human reason, not upon "divine" faith; upon fact, not upon fiction; upon experience, not upon a supposed supernatural revelation. It can discover no value in what is termed spiritual proposals as a remedy for existing evils. Hence Secularists can recognise only that as being socially useful which tends to the physical, mental, moral, and political improvement of mankind as members of the general commonwealth. Considerations about matters that are said to transcend the province of reason, and that make the business of this life merely of secondary importance, Secularists deem to be, at the most, only of theoretical interest, and of no real service in the social struggle in which society is at present engaged. The very fact that the theological remedy for social wrongs has had a long and fair trial, with such advantages in its favor as wealth, fashion, and untiring devotion, and yet that it has failed to prevent the present crisis, is ample proof of its utter inability to successfully grapple with the drawbacks to a healthy state of society. It is, therefore, of the highest importance to seek to destroy faith in theology as a reforming agency, inasmuch as it has been well weighed in the balance of time and experience, and has been found wanting.

Our first duty, then, in my opinion, as Secularists, in reference to social problems, is to expose false remedies, and thus make it easier to establish correct ones. True, many of my friends, for whom I entertain the warmest esteem, think the fallacies of theology have already been sufficiently exposed, and they urge that to continue the destructive work is only to "beat a dead horse." But is the theological horse really dead? Let the recent conduct of the clerical party upon the London School Board, and the present persistent efforts of Christian exponents of all denominations to put their teachings forward as the only effectual panacea, answer the question. It is still proclaimed even by some "advanced" reformers, that the solution to our social problems would be in following the example of Christ and in adopting his teachings. A greater delusion was never promulgated, and I deem it my duty to say so. Christ is reported to have said, "My kingdom is not of this world," and according to the New Testament he acted as if he believed what he said. Hence he failed to remove the three leading evils—poverty, slavery, and mental subjection—of his own time, and his teachings in no single instance contain the agencies by which similar evils that now afflict us on every hand can be got rid of. Besides, even supposing that the precepts ascribed to Christ suited people who lived two thousand years ago, it does not follow that such teachings are adapted to us. Conditions of society have changed; this age, instead of being ascetical and only theoretical, is active and practical. Institutions have been broadened, human rights have been extended, and human duties have been multiplied, and therefore different rules and regulations for life have become necessary. The lesson of history proclaims the fallacy of making the standard of one age the criterion for all subsequent periods.

What are our social problems? Principally they are excessive poverty, unjust class distinction, monopoly of the land, unfair accumulation of wealth, the degradation of labor, the predominating rule of the aristocracy, and the absence of genuine secular education among the masses. Probably, the problem of ignorance is likely to be more speedily solved than either of the others named, but Christ did not furnish the key to the solution, and it is worthy of note that his followers have thrown every obstacle in the way of the emancipation of the masses from the curse of the absence of knowledge. In reference to the other stupendous evils mentioned, where and when did Christ propound an efficient scheme whereby the world could be freed from them? Granted, he

exclaimed: "Woe unto you that are rich"; "Sell that thou hast and give to the poor." But would it not have been better to have shown how the monopoly of wealth could have been prevented, and how giving to the poor would have been unnecessary? Poverty is a curse, and to be dependent on charity is humiliating; facts, Christ did not seem to recognise, any more than his principal followers have done since his day, except in connection with themselves. They have preached "Blessed be ye poor," while doing their best to possess unnecessary riches. What the world requires is, to know how wealth can be justly distributed so that poverty shall be unknown, and the amassing of unnecessary riches by the few shall be impossible. Christ has given us no method by which this desirable result can be achieved, and the Church has been equally impotent in solving the question.

Seeing that all attempts in the name of religion have been futile in furnishing solutions for our social problems, the duty of all Secularists is to seek some other plan whereby those solutions may be obtained. Towards every proposal submitted for this purpose our action is clear. Our first business is to ascertain, if possible, if the proposals are reasonable, fair, just, and practical. Do they offer immediate relief? If so, how? It is obvious that there is no consensus of opinion, no general agreement as to by what means the objects that are contemplated can be accomplished. Among other methods, we have Socialism, Individualism, and Anarchism put forward, and each is claimed by its advocates as being the true remedy. Now it is evident to me that the Secular Society cannot, in its official capacity, accept either method in its entirety, for to do so would be to ignore the primary object of the Secular organisation, which is to destroy theological errors and to establish the truths, that morality depends upon no form of supernaturalism, and that the actions of daily life can be usefully performed in the noblest manner, unassociated with any of the religions of the churches. The relation of Secularism to all the "isms" named is the same as it is towards the political and religious movements of the day, namely Eclectic—that is, it selects the best from among them all. Provided he does his best to combat existing evils, each member of the Secular party is at liberty to support any movement that seems to him wise and useful, supposing it to be based upon "peace, law, and order." In fact, Secularists should feel bound to investigate, as far as possible, all proposals made for the redemption of mankind regardless of sect or party. At the same time, a Secularist can only adopt such of them that appear to him to be in accordance with reason and the general good of the community, this being the Secular standpoint or test of all human institutions and of all proposed reforms. Secular philosophy teaches that man's highest concern is human improvement, and whatever tends in this direction should have the earnest support of every Secularist and Freethinker in the country. Special care, however, should always be taken to discriminate between true and false methods, and not to confound vain theories with practical remedies.

CHARLES WATTS.

(To be concluded).

A FREETHINKER AT LARGE.

XVIII.—WITH "T'OTHER FAIR CHARMER."

THE last outrage that I perpetrated upon the readers of this journal was a more or less maudlin attempt to describe an evening with the Frederic Harrison section of English Positivists, at their temple near Fetterlane; and I concluded that article with a covert threat to pay a visit to the more ancient and (perhaps) more orthodox meeting-place in Chapel-street, where the venerable Dr. Congreve has for twenty-five years been high-priest. Newton Hall represents a secession; a divergence which (as I understand it) springs rather from a difference as to method and "ritual" than from any question as to principle. Mr. Frederic Harrison may perhaps stand for the Low Churchman of Positivism; Dr. Congreve for its High Churchman. Comte forgive me if I wrong either of those estimable gentlemen by this suggested classification.

The original home of Positivism in London is in Chapel-street, a turning off Lamb's Conduit-street. There is no outward and visible sign to guide the seeker after Comte; and I had some difficulty in finding the place although I had once before been within its walls. As I entered it became apparent that I was somewhat "previous," the preparatory domestic arrangements being hardly completed. In the lobby stood a tall gentleman, whom I at once recognised as Dr. Congreve. He welcomed me very cordially, and asked me if that was my first visit. "Well, no," I replied; "but it is my first visit for twenty-one years." "Indeed," said the worthy doctor, "you must have exercised wonderful self-denial!" "Not at all," I answered, cheerily; "I have found abundant opportunities for congenial work all the time amongst the Freethinkers." "But we also are Freethinkers," he continued; and this I did not seek to deny, but urged that the cloistered Freethought of Chapel-street was a very different thing practically from the militant propaganda of the N.S.S. Presently Dr. Congreve left me to attend to his duties, and I dropped into a back seat to examine the place at leisure.

The room is small, but comfortable, cheerful, and well lighted from above. The walls are painted and papered in artistic fashion; portraits and busts of some of the world's greatest men afford a pleasant relief to the eye. Chairs are provided to accommodate about fifty persons; but I suspect it is only upon rare occasions that these are filled. On the morning of my visit, the congregation did not exceed thirty. At one corner of the room there is a small, sweet-toned organ, played upon by an organist who stands sadly in need of oiling. Close to this is a pulpit, a reading desk, and—tell it not in Gath!—an altar, covered by a fringed cloth, and decorated with two vases of flowers! By the side of the altar stands a plaster bust of Auguste Comte; above it is an engraving of the Virgin Mother and her child; and near it hangs a large picture of St. Paul preaching. Here, indeed, we are in the very odor of sanctity. In fact, if only somebody had been able to believe in a god of some kind, we could have made up a very respectable religious outfit. The "religious" impression was strengthened by the form of "Ordinary Morning Service," which commenced at 11.15. First there came a soft purring voluntary upon the organ. Then Dr. Congreve took his place at the desk, and read the printed service. This follows pretty closely the lines of the Church Prayer Book. It opens thus:

INVOCATION.

IN THE NAME OF HUMANITY.

Love for Principle
And Order for Basis;
Progress for End.

Live for Others. . . Live Openly.

Then follows a kind of confession of faith, not repeated, it is true, by the congregation, but read, presumably on their behalf, by the officiating minister. After this comes a "reading, from the *Imitation of Christ*, by Thomas à Kempis, or from some other religious book." On the morning of my visit a chapter from Isaiah was selected. Then we had a "prayer," which is so curious an example of the characteristic Positivist desire to put new wine in old bottles, that I give it *in extenso*:—

"Great Power, whom we here acknowledge as the highest, HUMANITY, whose children and servants we are, from whom we derive everything, and to whom we are bound to render everything, may we all seek to love thee better that we may know and serve thee better; and to this end may our affections become more pure, true, and deep, our thought larger and more vigorous, our action firmer and more energetic, that so, according to our measure, in our generation, we may hasten the time when thou shalt, visibly to all, take to thee thy great power and reign; when all kindreds and nations, all the members of the human family now so torn by discord, shall by the power of the unity of thy Past place themselves under thy guidance, the living under the government of the dead, and bound together by mutual understanding and affection, each take their due part in the work of human advancement, in peaceful union moving forwards through the coming ages to a more and more perfect state, to thy glory and the common welfare of the countless generations of men and man's dependents, who shall in succession possess this thy beautiful Planet, the Earth which is thy home.

In communion with thee, in communion with thy Past and with thy Future, may we keep this great aim ever in our sight, to strengthen and ennoble our whole life and work. Amen."

This "prayer" is surely a most tantalising effusion. In form it is of the Church, churchy; and at every turn we expect, from long custom, to hear about God Almighty, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost. But we are disappointed; throughout the whole of the first long-winded, involved paragraph-sentence we are mocked with "Great Power" and "Humanity" and "Past" and "Planet." In the concluding paragraph we jump at something that looks like "Father," but alas! it is only "Future." Let us be thankful for the final "Amen"—which at least has a homely and familiar ring.

But imagine, O my brother, the effect of this wonderful prayer as muttered in spasms by thirty people! It was divided into small chunks, as of old we chopped up the Lord's Prayer in childhood's days: Ourfar—chartineven—allerdbethyname, and so forth. I cannot help confessing that the congregational repetition of the Positivist "prayer" amused me exceedingly. I would rather perish than laugh aloud under such circumstances, and I suppressed my mirth at the risk of sustaining serious internal injury.

After the prayer a gentleman advanced to the desk and read the second lesson—a passage from the writings of Auguste Comte. Then Dr. Congreve recited an "Act of Commemoration" in which were mentioned the names of Moses, St. Paul, Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, Descartes, Archimedes, Bichat, Cæsar, Charlemagne, Frederic and Gutenberg, as representing various phases in the progress and development of Humanity.

Dr. Congreve entered the pulpit in order to deliver his discourse (or "sermon") on "The Family." It was a written essay, and the doctor had occasionally some difficulty in reading his manuscript, for the fog-fiend came over and anon to flutter his sable wings over the skylight. Perhaps the fog also enshrouded my own mind, for I must confess that the sermon conveyed but little of definite meaning to me. This may perhaps be to some extent accounted for by the wide scope and minute attention to detail in the "Positive Philosophy." Comte's works always appear to me to be comprised in about five hundred volumes; and Positivist teachers are generally giving one of a course of two thousand lectures on something or other.

So far as I was able to gather the general idea of the discourse, it was an endeavor to show that the proper destiny of the family is to bring the influence of woman to bear duly upon man. In a primitive state of society the very conditions of existence tend to increase the natural selfishness of man. In our own day we see the truth of this illustrated by such examples as the war in Africa. Greed for land impels men to drive the inferior races from their homes. Hence arises the cruelty and bloodshed which reason finds it difficult to justify. To counteract this tendency towards selfishness the ennobling influence of woman must be extended. The condition of pioneer communities, such as mining settlements, shows by a negative result the incalculable value of women's influence. The intellectual and moral powers of women should be developed in order that the selfish instincts of men may be controlled and modified.

Woman is the moral centre of the family. We are the sons of our mothers more than of our fathers. The devotion of the daughter is greater than that of the son. The Positivist theory of the family assigns predominant influence to the woman over the man. Discussion is gradually establishing the true position of woman in the family and in society.

The family enables us, by special sympathy and attachments due to close and enduring relationship, to identify ourselves so intimately with other natures that we can understand them as we can understand no other human beings. The lessons of sympathy and disinterestedness which we learn in the family must influence us for good in our public life; for private and public life are by nature accordant.

The foregoing represents all that I was able to gather of Dr. Congreve's discourse. It is not, of course, a complete summary, and it has gaping rents in its texture which I would fain fill up if I could. Partially, the

blame for this must rest upon my own thick head; but Dr. Congreve must also bear his share, for of many of his sentences I positively could not hear the concluding portions. For example, I took down this phrase: "We are thrown back on Comte's axiom, 'Universal love, aided by a demonstrable faith—this is—'" The despairing dash simply means that the venerable speaker's words were inaudible; and to me the thing remains a conundrum rather than an axiom.

But, although I did not learn much from the discourse, my visit to Chapel-street was most enjoyable. Everybody is so kind and friendly, so glad to see and to welcome a stranger, that one cannot leave their little room with feelings other than those of peace and goodwill. For the sake of this I willingly forgave them their altar and vases of flowers, their pulpit and "service" and "prayers." And for one crowning mercy I was unfeignedly thankful—they did not sing any "hymns." GEORGE STANDRING.

ACID DROPS.

Some time ago we devoted a few paragraphs to Marie Corelli's description of Jesus Christ in her new novel *Barabbas*. The lady novelist dwells upon his physical proportions, after the style of Ouida, whose aristocratic heroes are marvels of grace and strength. The Prophet of Nazareth is depicted, at least on the physical side, as a mixture of Hercules and Adonis; although, according to the Christian tradition, he was rather insignificant and unattractive in appearance. In any case, the lucious physical details in which Marie Corelli indulges seem inappropriate; for, if Jesus is indeed the savior of the world, it is not on account of his calves or biceps. Curiously, however, the religious journals have nothing but praise for *Barabbas*, and Canon Wilberforce has given it a handsome testimonial, which serves as an excellent advertisement. The secular papers, on the other hand, have treated it with "much disapprobation." Miss Corelli (or her publisher) advertises the fact in the *Athenæum*, at the same time drawing attention to the "warm welcome" of her novel "by the religious papers." Poor Jesus Christ! What a depth he has fallen to! Lady novelists dress him up for sale in three-volume novels, and undress him to show his points, and the Christian papers (heaven save the mark!) vociferously applaud the performance.

"It is finished!" cried Jesus on the cross. He was mistaken. He did not reckon on Marie Corelli.

Good Friday in England was celebrated by many football matches, smoking concerts, etc., despite the protestations of the clergy.

The Dartmouth Football Club arranged to have a match on Good Friday, and this "desecration of the most solemn day in the year" provoked a letter from the three local parsons, who suggested that the match should take place on Easter Monday, out of "consideration for the feelings of others." Good old "feelings"! How much the parsons considered them when they had other instruments of compulsion than letters published in the newspapers!

Mrs. Besant addresses a letter to the *Times* denying, that when in India, she has in any way meddled with political affairs. Her work there, she says, "is an attempt to reinvigorate the ancient Aryan ideals as against those of Western civilisation, and to inspire Indians with aspiration towards spiritual evolution as against the desire for material progress." She encloses a letter she addressed to an Hindu paper, in which she says, "My work in the sphere of politics is over, and I shall never resume it." Some will interpret this as meaning she is now only bent on putting the clock backward.

Yaxley Church, near Eye, seems to have one side set apart for women. This is not common in English churches, but perhaps the vicar is a "purity" man, or his parishioners are particularly inflammable. Anyhow, the division exists, and the men have to put up with it as well as the women. But a couple of lads, the other Sunday morning, preferred the female side of the gospel-shop, and small blame to them! They were requested to leave and wouldn't, and as the

churchwardens declined to turn them out, and the vicar didn't feel equal to the job himself, the service was abandoned and the congregation went home. Selah.

A temperance man says there is no inconsistency in sending cargoes of rum and missionaries together to Africa. The missionaries tell them how to die, and the rum kills them.

At the annual Conference of the National Union of Catholic Teachers, held at Bradford, it was stated by the president that the Catholic teachers were paid considerably below the general average of the country, while their position was full of insecurity. Of course! How could it be otherwise? The priests come first, teachers afterwards—a long way afterwards.

An Armenian fired at the Armenian Patriarch in the cathedral of Koum Kapou during the celebration of Mass. He fired twice at the Patriarch and did not hit him once. He deserves to be hung for a fool.

The *Wexford People* says that the Catholics are preached at by the Protestant street preachers at Arklow, Cork, and elsewhere, and that "a more barefaced and unscrupulous tissue of falsehoods we have never read than that made" by the Rev. C. M. May, the representative of the Irish Evangelical Society. How they love one another!

The Baptist Rev. Dr. A. J. Gordon, speaking on missionary work, said it was a great mistake to begin with education. The greatest foes of Christianity in India are the graduates of our universities and colleges. . . . Let the natives have the gospel first, and they will be driven to education afterwards." Undoubtedly. They will be driven to education at last—and scepticism. Why on earth not begin with them, and save the waste labor of the missionaries?

In Paris religiosity has reached the parody stage. On Good Friday an enterprising flower dealer in the Boulevard St. Germain got up his shop like a shrine, and hired a man to lie extended on a cross amid flowers from two in the afternoon till twelve at night. The man's speciality is to pose in studios for Christ and saints. Those who entered to see him—and they were many—paid fifty centimes apiece. The flower dealer reaped a good harvest, but many irreverent comments were made by the sight-seers.

Prof. Marcus Dods, who is a somewhat liberal member of the Free Church of Scotland, has been lamenting the disunion of the Presbyterian bodies. He said there was a growing number of young ministers who felt it impossible to belong to an Established Church, and he looked forward to troublous times, both in connection with this question and that of doctrine. We suppose he alludes to throwing overboard the Westminster Confession of Faith, which thinking minds find to the full as objectionable as a State Church.

The wife of the Rev. Maurice Jones, curate of the parish church, Solihull, near Birmingham, has been remanded on a charge of maliciously wounding her husband. While at breakfast high words arose between the man of God and his spouse, and the latter took up a knife and inflicted a severe wound in her husband's thigh.

An inquest has been held at Stonar, Kent, on the body of a young woman named Poisson, who was found dead in the River Stour. She appears to have suffered from religious mania, and was seen running up and down the river bank singing hymns. The jury returned an open verdict. They probably hold religion to be a good thing taken in moderation.

The priest Payet, of Curennes, who was charged with the murder of his housekeeper and her daughter, has saved the law some trouble by committing suicide.

"H. D. P." writing to the *Spectator* from a village near the Mendip Hills, declares that the old Bible-supported belief in witchcraft yet prevails in Somersetshire. Sticking pins in a sheep's heart, calling on the lover's name three times, saying the Lord's Prayer backwards, and other charms are still used as in the days of John Ridd.

A Chester member of the N.S.S. was delivering copies of our Atheist Shoemaker pamphlet in the vicinity of a chapel.

when up came a big bug of the city, who, on receiving one himself, demanded to know who employed the distributor. He was informed that the work was a labor of love, whereupon the big bug had the impudence to call a policeman and ordered him to take the distributor's name. It was, of course, a mere bit of bounce. Secularists have the same right as Christians to give away tracts or pamphlets in the street.

Nonconformists are invited by the *Christian World*, in an article on the London School Board, to "make a good fight for the Compromise in November." Of course they will. The Secularists also will make a good fight against the Compromise, and we shall be surprised if they do not gain a few seats on the new Board.

The *Christian World* thinks there is "no serious demand for secularisation" at present. Well, we shall see. Meanwhile we note that our Christian contemporary would "prefer no religious teaching at all" to such religious teaching as is possible under the policy of the reactionists.

Another party which promises to take an active part in the London School Board elections is the new Christian Socialist League. We hear that some of its members are already in the field as "candidates on the right side"—which happens to be the wrong side. Christian Socialists are just as objectionable as Christian anything else when they want to force their "blessed book" upon the children in the public schools.

"Mr. Price Hughes declares that love of Christ supplies a quenchless zeal for humanity." So ran a heading in the *Morning Leader*. Love of Christ, however, doesn't appear to supply any quenchless zeal for telling the truth.

Mr. Hughes was talking about the Resurrection, and with customary exaggeration he declared that there was no fact so well established. The man who will say that will say anything. No wonder Mr. Hughes told his congregation that while Mrs. Besant was an Atheist she could not get any men and women around her to live a noble life. Mrs. Besant never said so. It is another invention of Ananias.

Mr. Hughes hopes that Mrs. Besant will yet find Christ and feel his "constraining love." We should be sorry if she found Christ in the same fashion as Mr. Hughes. She would have to fall far to reach his level of honesty.

Miss E. M. Vance was travelling the other day on the underground railway. In the same compartment there happened to be seated the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes. Having some copies of the "Lie" pamphlet with her, she took out one and laid it on the seat by her side, facing the reverend gentleman, whose physiognomy betrayed that he was passing a very bad five minutes. Presently another gentleman got in as Miss Vance was getting out, and, taking up the pamphlet, he said, "Does this belong to you?" "Thank you," she replied, "I've done with it. Would you like to read it yourself?" And she left the pamphlet with the stranger.

According to Mr. H. Baumann, of Brighton, and two other correspondents of the *Daily Telegraph*, a strange phenomenon was visible on Good Friday evening about nine o'clock. Two bands of light appeared in the south-eastern sky, forming a double cross. We daresay a good many "miracle" sermons will be pointed by this "extraordinary" occurrence, though no doubt it was perfectly natural. Had it been otherwise, the figure of J. C., we imagine, would have appeared as well as that of the cross.

Dr. Houghton, the zoologist, was lecturing in Ireland on the subject of anthropoid apes. When the lecture was over, the parish priest asked if he had come to any conclusion as regards the eventual development of moral and religious qualities in the anthropoid ape? Dr. Houghton was in the act of framing a courteous and, I am sure, edifying reply, when Father Healy (the Irish wit) interposed, in the pregnant brogue that always cradles a witticism—"Don't give him a word of information, sir; I know that ould man well; he's only on the look-out for chaps curates!"—*Ethical Echo*.

Mr. Keir Hardie is a Godite, and like other Godites he

talks dreadful nonsense when the fit is on him. "I cannot think it is the will of God," he says, "that things should go on as they are now." Whose will is it, then? Is it Old Nick that bosses the whole world-show? Mr. Keir Hardie doesn't seem capable of understanding that, if God exist, things must happen according to his will. There is no alternative.

Mr. Keir Hardie's god is like the god of Mr. Henry George, a poor deity who is very much to be pitied. These good men are going to help him. But just fancy now! Keir Hardie helping God Almighty!

In his lecture at the British Museum on Early Arab Kingdoms (the third of a course on Oriental Archaeology) Mr. W. St. Chad Boscawen remarked that the rulers in Arabia were a sort of priest-kings. The Minean inscriptions threw light on the Book of Job, and the elimination of Elihu's part in the dialogues maintained by so many critics had been substantiated by early MSS., especially those in the Vatican. The book seemed to date from the point when the less intellectual but more commercial power of Sabea was rapidly superseding the older civilisation of Main.

Mr. Boscawen concluded by showing that the old route of the Israelites could not be maintained, and that the journeying of the Hebrews must have been by the old Minean caravan route to Edom. It was impossible that Sinai of the Peninsula could be the Mount of the Law, as it was constantly garrisoned with Egyptian soldiers.

The reports of the Easter vestry meetings are amusing. At St. Matthew's, Ipswich, for instance, the Nonconformists attempted to get a representative on the Burial Board, and, being defeated, persistently demanded a poll, so that the vestry broke up in confusion. At St. John's, Lowestoft, one of the churchwardens, a coal merchant, complained that "there were plenty of people in the congregation who were independent of any tradesman in the town, and yet never gave him a single order in his business." The clergyman remarked that this speaker showed "sound judgment." Apparently he agrees that the Church should be worked on sound business principles.

Dr. Parker has followed the example of Mr. Holyoake and given Mr. Price Hughes a testimonial. "He is an earnest man," says Dr. Parker, "burningly earnest, and sincere." Our testimonial wouldn't be worded like that. We should say that he was the champion Christian liar in England. Of course the post is one of some distinction.

Dr. Parker's policy is short and sweet—"As many hours as possible for work, and as much money as possible for doing it."

The hereditary principle has triumphed at the Tabernacle founded by the late Mr. Spurgeon. After a long and heated controversy, his son Thomas has been elected to succeed him as pastor. It is said that there are 2,000 seats unlet in the church, and that the party which supports Dr. Pierson's claims threatens a schism.

Bishop Julius, of New Zealand, appears to be highly incensed at the result of the elections under universal suffrage at New Zealand. The women were expected to support the Church, but a majority was returned pledged to oppose clerical interference with the secular system of education in the colony. The Bishop spoke of the new members at a Church Congress at Hobart, as "a lot of rotten fellows." They include our young friend, W. W. Collins, formerly of Birmingham.

The *Daily Chronicle* reviewer, noticing J. H. Hill's translation of the recently published alleged Diatessaron ascribed to Tatian, has no suspicion of the genuineness of the documents, or any explanation why it has been lost for nearly 1700 years; but makes the astounding statement that Justin, who was a Christian in 140, "knew the four gospels as a complete and authoritative record." What bosh! Why does he not mention them? He never mentions one by name. What he does mention is "Memoirs of the Apostles," and these contained statements such as that a fire was kindled in the Jordan at the Baptism, which is not contained in our gospels. The reviewer should really be more careful.

General Booth has dropped into a legacy of £20,000. It is a good round sum, and he is naturally jubilant. He tells a *Chronicle* interviewer that he believes the Salvation Army will grow into the greatest religious organisation in the world. How is that for high? Most people will think that the Catholic Church has a long start.

General Booth has also been interviewed by the *Christian World*. He stated that he had just had a great reception in Holland. "At one town," he said, "the Mayor met me at the station and took me home in his carriage. I found he was an atheist, but he had a deep interest in our movement, and loved us for our work's sake." This story, if true, shows that Atheists excel Christians in toleration and generosity.

The Christian Evidence lecturer who cut such a woeful figure in the debate with Mr. Charles Watts at Jarrow, has been defending Hugh Price Hughes at South Shields, and highly complimenting Mr. Holyoake, who will scarcely appreciate the honor when he learns that his interested flatterer has publicly described all Secularists as "insane devils"—a species of beings on which we daresay this Christian Evidence lecturer is a highly competent authority.

The South Shields Christians who listened to Mr. Hughes's self-elected champion, and applauded him, will probably never read Mr. Foote's pamphlets. It was easy, therefore, for the lecturer to quote passages from the *Lie in Five Chapters* that do not appear in it. It was easy likewise to omit all reference to the Atheist Shoemaker's shopmates, whose testimony is of the utmost importance, as covering the only twelve months during which he could possibly have been a Freethinker. Altogether we can hardly congratulate Mr. Hughes on his defender, though we admit he is worthy of the cause he espouses.

This Christian Evidence lecturer produced, as he said, a letter written to him by Mr. Holyoake, in which that gentleman wrote—"Though not seeing so well as when I was a young man, I can see through Mr. Foote." Now if Mr. Holyoake did indeed write this letter, we have to ask him very seriously whether he thinks it consistent with his position as a vice-president of the National Secular Society to furnish the most scurrilous opponents of Secularism with private communications containing insults to be read out to Christian audiences against the president. Can it be that Mr. Holyoake is deliberately inviting reprisals? There is a limit to what is tolerable even in one of Mr. Holyoake's age and history.

Boy preachers are coming into vogue in America. The latest is Frank Cunningham, of Baltimore. He is only fifteen, and fools three times his age go to hear him.

Half a page of a certain Christian weekly is taken up by the advertisement of a gentleman who cures obesity. What a commentary on the "blessed be ye poor" gospel of its readers! They take up their cross and follow Christ, yet they sweat so little in the procession that they have to be taken down by a "recipe."

Christian Charity seeketh not her own, said Paul. Quite true. She is always seeking other people's.

The Rev. C. J. Besley is very frank in his farewell letter to his parishioners at Ellel. "With many of the parishioners," he says, "I have never come into contact at all; they never come near the church except perhaps at a funeral or wedding, nor as far as appears do they attend at any other place of worship, and apparently live without God in the world." It is shocking, of course. But what was Mr. Besley about during all the twenty years of his pastorate. The entire population of the parish is less than 2,000. Couldn't he have hunted them all up in twenty years? A shepherd ought to find his sheep in that time.

"Here is another example of Christian bigotry," writes W. G. F., a member of the N.S.S. "A few weeks back I was working in the City under a general foreman, who is a Christian. Something was said one day about religion, which resulted in a short argument, and I, knowing that the gentleman (?) is not of a very moral turn, did not say more than I

could help, but nevertheless I had to be discharged. I wonder what Atheist employer would discharge a Christian on account of his religion. I suppose they can't forget the old roasting days. I might say, in passing, that the best employer I have ever had, and who was as near a gentleman as manhood could make him, was an Atheist."

Professor William Wallace, of Oxford, has been delivering the Gifford Lectures at Glasgow before large audiences. According to the Scotch correspondent of a Christian paper issued in London, the Professor's discourses were very interesting, only he "dealt with the Christian verities in too free a spirit." How sad!

Special services have been held at Luton in aid of the Wesleyan Home Missionary Society, in the course of which it was stated that in the Bedford and Northampton district the Society had spent £700, but the results were "not very encouraging." In 14 circuits there had been a gain of 328 members, and in 11 other circuits a loss of 322, the net gain being "the insignificant number of 6." These six souls seem to have cost £116 13s. 4d. each. Is every one of them worth it?

Bishop Sheepshanks, presiding at the Norwich Diocesan Conference, declared that the clergy had the welfare of the laboring classes at heart. Their incomes ought to be larger. He meant that of the clergy, not of the laborers. To have a poor clergy was fraught with danger to the church and to the country. Therefore, let them make their offerings to God—and doubtless the clergy will give a receipt in his name. He said "they claimed the right of entrance into the Board Schools to teach the Church's children." How about the right of entrance into Church schools to teach the children of those who do not belong to the Church.

That modern Christ, the good man Stead, is going to lecture in Glasgow on "If Christ came to Glasgow." He took a similar subject at most of the cities he visited in America, and it drew the remark that Christ would not probably put up at the best hotels, or send round preliminary puffs to all the newspapers. But "they did not know everything down in Judee."

A particularly scurrilous and reckless Christian Evidence lecturer has been conducting what he calls an "anti-infidel crusade" at Leeds. In concluding one of his addresses, according to the *Leeds Mercury*, he announced that "he had arranged to hold a public debate of a week's duration in the summer with Mr. G. W. Foote, President of the National Secular Society." This announcement is without a shadow of foundation. The President of the National Secular Society would never stoop to any sort of intercourse with a man whose attacks on Secularism are of such a nature, that they could not be printed in any journal with the slightest pretensions to decency.

The *Primitive Methodist* (March 29, p. 201) calls Mr. Hugh Price Hughes's statement at Leeds about their body, "an astounding exhibition of ignorance, of bad taste, and of unbrotherly conduct." It continues, "But after the repudiation and correction which came from Rev. J. Travis in the Congress, to publish the statement in the *Methodist Times* of last week, is conduct which we can only characterise in terms taken from the vocabulary of the gentleman concerned as 'monstrous,' 'appalling,' 'outrageous.' He has done the connection an injustice, he has offered it an insult. He owes it an apology."

A little Christian treacle is offered Mr. Hughes, together with the brimstone. It goes on to say "His great ability and energy entitle him to respect. But he has an *exaggerated style of address*; is not altogether devoid of a sense of self-importance, develops a tendency to be autocratic, and is evidently capable of perpetrating egregious blunders. The Primitive Methodist connection will survive his unaccountable and inexcusable ignorance of the number and work of its ministers, and his ungentlemanliness in publishing his assertions after they had been authoritatively and publicly denied; and we advise our friends to be charitable and long-suffering towards him." Perhaps when the Primitive Methodists investigate his career, they will find they have been long-suffering enough.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, April 8, Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C. :—11.15, "Lord Rosebery: Man, Writer and Statesman"; 7, "Is Religion the Cause of Progress?"—(a criticism of Mr. Kidd's new work on *Social Evolution*).

April 22, Bolton.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. CHAS. WATTS' ENGAGEMENTS.—April 15, Hall of Science, London; 22, Failsworth; 29, Dundee. May 6, Glasgow; 7, 8, 9, debate at Glasgow; 13, N.S.S. Conference; 20 and 27, Hall of Science. June 3, South Shields; 10, Sheffield; 17 and 24, Hall of Science. July 1, Liverpool.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent to him (if a reply is required a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed) at 81 Effra-road, Brixton, London, S.E.

L. WORNALL.—We don't quite understand it, not having a copy of the leaflet.

J. CHARLTON.—The sketch was imaginary. Mr. Ryan did it well if you took it seriously.

NICKY BEN.—Thanks. See paragraph. Glad to hear from you as an ex-Wesleyan, and also that you are distributing the Hughes pamphlet.

O. N. W.—The correspondence threatened to be interminable, and there was only one Theist in the discussion. Perhaps the "Plea for Atheism" will serve as a sufficient corrective, at least for the present.

W. & J. BRIERLY.—Received with thanks. Copies of pamphlets sent. The *Freethinker's Text-Book* is hardly up to date now, but it is still useful to beginners.

A. J. WILLETTS.—The verse shall appear.

E. D. H. DALY.—Your cuttings are always welcome.

H. E. SMITH.—The *Crusader* we quoted from is dated March, 1894. It is published by Everett and Sons, Salisbury-square, London, E.C. Price one penny.

G. W. BLYTHE.—Cartoons and photographs are now resumed. Mill's portrait will appear shortly.

J. SAUNDERS.—Thanks for the cuttings, but we cannot enter upon a discussion of Socialism in the *Freethinker*. The person named Clayden you refer to, who said he had never known a Secularist he could trust, may have spoken the truth, for in all probability he has never known any Secularist at all.

F. ROE.—See paragraph. Hope the Bristol friends will have a good jaunt. Only sorry we cannot be with them.

W. SWEETMAN.—We know absolutely nothing of the Christian Evidence man, Mee, who is on the war-path at Cardiff.

G. E. FULLER.—We did not invent that extract from the *Crusader*. The paper is a real one, and our extracts were from the March number. Its editorial office is at Cardiff, and it is published in London and Carmarthen. Its sub-title is—"A journal for Progressive Methodists: with which is incorporated the Wesleyan Methodist Journal for South Wales." We haven't caught the Hughes infection yet.

J. SANDERSON.—See this week's list.

R. CHAPMAN.—Sorry to hear of the death of such a sturdy Freethinker. Obituary inserted.

H. JONES.—See paragraph, to which you are very welcome.

E. P. 42.—A sad business! It is strange, as you say, that a gentleman should object to "liar" and revel in "ruffian."

F. GOODWIN.—Thanks for the cuttings. They may prove useful.

J. THATCHER.—Lecture Notices must be written on separate pieces of paper.

CELSUS.—(1) Robespierre, the leading spirit of the Terror, was a Deist, who induced the Convention to decree that a belief in God and Immortality was necessary to human society. Atheists like Danton lost their lives in trying to stop the bloodshed. (2) The Protestant Reformers never asserted the right of private judgment. They held it a mortal crime to deny or dispute any essential doctrine of Christianity, and punished the offenders with death.

BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss E. M. Vance acknowledges: Bolton Branch, 4s. 8d.; Nottingham Branch, 5s.; Dundee Branch, 11s. 6d.

E. V. S.—See paragraph. We generally remark, as the season comes round, on the shifting anniversary of the death of Christ, which ought, if an historical event, to fall on the same day every year.

STANLEY JONES.—Sorry to hear of the disturbance in Finsbury Park, but we cannot give the disturber the advertisement he seeks. We agree with you that Branch members should attend to support their open-air lecture-stations.

J. T. IVES.—Not quite suitable for our columns. Thanks all the same.

J. YATES.—Mr. Fordor received your remittance, and will forward pamphlets if you send him your full address, which you omitted.

J. GLEDHILL.—A monstrous lie. See "Acid Drops." Many thanks.

T. MORGAN.—Thanks. See paragraph.

MARS.—(1) Miss Vance, sec., 28 Stonecutter-street, London, E.C., will be happy to enrol you a member of the N.S.S. The minimum subscription is one shilling per year. Apply to her direct. (2) We cannot print a literal translation of the Latin verses in the *Jewish Life of Christ*. You may guess their meaning after reading the first sentence of Leviticus xx. 18.

E. ANDERSON.—In our next.

J. W. MEIN.—We thank the Newcastle friends.

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—Freidenker—Two Worlds—De Arme Teufel—Western Figaro—Liberator—Liberty—Clarion—Flaming Sword—Liver—De Dageraad—Progressive Thinker—Post—Secular Thought—Truthseeker—Ironclad Age—Pioneer—Twentieth Century—Independent Pulpit—Islamic World—Freethinker's Magazine—Pall Mall Gazette—Rad—La Vérité—Eastern Daily Press—Morley College Magazine—Glasgow Herald—Reading Observer—Lowestoft Journal—Dartmouth Chronicle—Isle of Man Times—Church Reformer—Echo—Progress—Lindsey Star—Scottish Weekly—Wexford People—Derby and Chesterfield Reporter—Norfolk Daily Standard—Spare Moments—Primitive Methodist—Uitenhage Times—Somerset and Wilts Journal.

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

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.

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.

SUGAR PLUMS.

Mr. Foote had good meetings at the London Hall of Science on Sunday. To-day (April 8) he occupies the platform again. His evening lecture should be one of especial interest. Mr. Benjamin Kidd's book, which he will criticise, has excited a good deal of attention. It has been highly praised in the *Times* and other influential organs, and is already in a second edition. Mr. Kidd treats Religion as the chief cause of human progress, and Mr. Foote will endeavor to show the fallacy of this position. Prior to the lecture Mr. Foote will have a very important announcement to make on a matter of grave interest to the Secular party, and he would like to make it to a large assembly of the past and present frequenters of the Hall of Science.

The National Secular Society's annual Conference will be held, as usual, on Whit-Sunday, and Branches should be making arrangements to be represented. This year's gathering ought to be an especially large one. Three places have offered to entertain the Conference—Chatham, Bristol, and Liverpool; and our opinion has been asked for as to which place should have the preference. Chatham has many claims; the Freethinkers there have made a gallant fight for the cause; but it is rather out of the way, which is a serious disadvantage. The Bristol Branch has also done good work, and the city is an inviting one, on account of its general attractions. Liverpool, however, is a more likely centre for a good Conference this year, especially as it is most desirable that Scotland and Ireland should be well represented. Liverpool is the largest city in England after London, unless we reckon Salford and Manchester as one, and it has never had a Conference yet. Year after year it has modestly kept in the background, though doing capital work at home, and now it has come forward it might well be treated with proper recognition. We may add that the Liverpool Branch is one of the oldest in the kingdom.

It must be distinctly understood that we are only giving our advice, as we have a right to give it. We are not seeking to exercise any undue influence. Branches should at least

vote upon information, and we are in the best position to give it. The supreme consideration, in any case, is this—Which is the best place, this year, to secure the best possible Conference? All other considerations are subordinate.

Branches or individual members who wish to move resolutions at the N.S.S. Conference should send them in to the Secretary *immediately*, so that they may appear on the Agenda, which must be published a fortnight before the Conference.

Colonel Ingersoll is on the war-path. His lecture list for March is a long one. The London *Sun* the other evening referred to Ingersoll as a famous after-dinner speaker, and said that to hear him was one of the treats of a visit to America. This was probably as far as the *Sun* could go in the way of eulogy. It wouldn't do to praise Ingersoll as a Freethought orator. The Nonconformist conscience would be alarmed.

The *Truthseeker* (New York) for March 17 contains several columns of "Secular Notes from England" by Mr. Charles Watts. One of the paragraphs deals with the Atheist Shoemaker story and its exposure. Mr. Watts describes Mr. Holyoake as "caught with theological guile," and says that the action of Mr. Hughes "now he has been found out is as cowardly as it was before questionable." The same number of the *Truthseeker* contains a supply of "Observations" from the keen and humorous pen of George Macdonald.

The *Freethinker's Magazine* for March is a Tyndall number, with an excellent portrait and special articles on the great scientist by G. J. Holyoake, Charles Watts, Elizabeth Oady Stanton, Parker Pillsbury, M. D. Conway, etc. The April issue of this magazine is to be a Charles Watts number. We regret to see that Mr. H. L. Green's venture is not yet self-supporting, as it ought to be. He is appealing for five hundred dollars to keep it going through 1894. It is a modest sum, and we hope he will quickly obtain it.

The *Scottish Weekly* calls Mr. Foote's pamphlet on the Atheist Shoemaker case "a formidable indictment," and says that he has torn Mr. Hughes's story "to tatters." "Mr. Hughes," it adds, "has never attempted to meet the charges," and "the suspicion is growing in the minds of eminent men in Mr. Hughes's denomination that the story of the Atheist Shoemaker is purely mythical, and of the Rider Haggard type of productions."

The Bristol Branch is going in for fortnightly rambles during the summer. The first will take place this afternoon (April 8). Members and friends are requested to meet outside Shepherd's Hall at 2.30. Those desirous of taking tea at Trenchay, which will be provided in the Tea Gardens, should send word to the secretary, Mr. F. Roe, 2 Upper Somerset-terrace, Windmill-hill, Bedminster, or to Mr. Harvey, newsagent, Lower Arcade. The cost of the tea is tenpence.

Mr. Ernest Newman, of the *Free Review*, lectures this evening (April 8) in the Secular Hall, Manchester. He is a man of extensive information and very considerable ability, and a pronounced Atheist. His address is sure to be interesting and instructive, and we hope he will have a large audience.

The Brighton Branch resumed its open-air work last Sunday. Mr. G. H. Baker lectured on the Level. His audience was attentive, and resented the attempt of some orthodox rowdies to create disorder.

The London Secular Federation has arranged a course of Wednesday evening free lectures in the Workmen's Hall, High-street, Walthamstow. Mr. H. Snell delivers the first on April 11, and will be followed by Messrs. Foote, Standing, and Heaford. Discussion is invited, and the local Freethinkers should try to bring their Christian friends to the meetings.

The annual Concert and Ball of the London Secular Federation takes place on Wednesday evening (April 11) at the Hall of Science. The tickets are one shilling. A good program is provided for all tastes, and we hope there will be a large assembly, especially as any profit will go towards the Federation's outdoor propaganda.

The Bath Branch held its first annual meeting on Sunday. According to the secretary's statement, seven public meetings

had been held with fairly favorable results, and the new year opens with a prospect of greater success. A special vote of thanks was tendered to Mr. Keast for his valuable services.

Mr. J. Allanson Picton, the Radical member for Leicester, who is retiring from Parliament on account of ill-health, writes a long and interesting letter to the *Christian World* on "School Board Fetichism." In his opinion the Bible is regarded in the Board schools as a fetich, and he pleads for "exclusive secular instruction." Mr. Picton was one of three members of the first London School Board who voted against the compromise of 1871. He remarks that the Compromise party were led by Professor Huxley and Mr. W. H. Smith. The latter gentleman afterwards became the leader of the House of Commons and was nicknamed "Old Morality." But he was not a fool. It was he who proposed the Compromise, and in the negotiations before it was voted upon he "entirely outwitted both men of science and religious rationalists." Such, at least, is Mr. Picton's opinion. It is also evident that the member for Leicester regards the recent ridiculous scenes on the London School Board as a *reductio ad absurdum* of Professor Huxley's old view of Bible reading—which we understand the Professor has since abandoned in favor of absolute secular education.

The *Two Worlds* has a pronounced article on the Board School question. It says: "The time has come to nationalise the schools. No religious tests should be imposed upon teachers, neither should Christianity nor the Bible be enforced upon the children. After all, it is the Bible which is the cause of the strife and divides people. It does not bring peace."

Secular teaching, wherever it has been attained, has been the result of the division of the sects. The nearest approach in Great Britain is in the pious principality. Wales has, in round numbers, 300 Board-schools; in 123 of these the Bible is not read at all; in 119 it is read without comment: in 290 there is no examination in religious knowledge.

The *Morley College Magazine* reports a debate on the question of education. Mr. J. Clough's motion, "That all public elementary education should be purely secular," was carried by a considerable majority. This is a question which should be as extensively ventilated as possible.

Apollo rose from the dead this Easter. At least, an ancient hymn was sung in his honor before the King of Greece and the élite of the citizens of Athens. The hymn with the ancient music was only recently discovered, and has not been heard for two thousand years. It is said to have made a profound impression on the audience, the King being deeply affected.

The late M. Victor Schœlcher, a pronounced Atheist and a friend of Mr. Bradlaugh, left by his will a sum of ten thousand francs for the Orphanage Society of the Seine.

Last Thursday (March 29), Dr. Ludwig Büchner, author of the famous atheistic work, *Force and Matter*, celebrated his seventieth birthday at Darmstadt, where he received many congratulations from far and near. A late portrait of Dr. Büchner appeared in our last Summer Number.

In his account of Milton, supplied to the *Dictionary of National Biography* (vol. 38), Mr. Leslie Stephen says: "Milton had come to stand apart from all sects, though apparently finding the Quakers most congenial. He never went to any religious services in his later years. When a servant brought back accounts of sermons from Nonconformist meetings, Milton became so sarcastic that the man at last gave up his place." In his *Paradise Regained*, Milton showed high Arianism, and in his *Last Thoughts on the Trinity*, he completely discarded that dogma.

In the notice of Dean Milman, in the same volume, we are reminded that when he issued his *History of the Jews* for daring to treat them as an Oriental tribe and discarding some of the more monstrous of their miracles, so great was the outcry raised by the orthodox, that the sale of the book was stopped, and even the publication of the series ceased.

The last number to hand of the *Open Court* (Chicago) contains a careful paper by Mr. Moncure D. Conway on

"Senatorial Reform," in which high praise is given to Thomas Paine's views on government.

The Battersea Branch's quarterly meeting took place last Sunday evening, when a fair number of members were present. Nine new members had joined during the quarter. The balance-sheet showed a deficit of £1 8s. 3d., partly owing to some members not keeping their contributions paid up, also to bad collections. Mr. J. Wilkes was elected chairman, and Messrs. Sears and Smith vice-chairmen, the latter also as member of Executive. Treasurer, secretary, and delegate to L.S.F. were re-elected. Some energetic members were added to the committee. The meeting was adjourned till Thursday, April 12, to consider resolutions for the Conference.

A pleasant change will be made in the Battersea program this Sunday evening, April 8. Mr. H. Snell will give readings and recitals from well-known authors, chiefly bearing on Freethought. Friends who appreciate Mr. Snell's elocutionary powers will be sure to attend on this occasion. The admission is free.

Kossuth, the great Hungarian patriot, who has just been buried in his native land after a generation of exile, is spoken of as a Protestant. But he must not be regarded as such, according to the English usage of the word. Strauss himself, the famous German sceptic, was a "Protestant." The fact is, that this designation, on the continent, often means no more than non-Catholic. It is well known that Kossuth was what we should in England called a Freethinker. He was a Freemason, which on the continent means an anti-clerical. The Catholic Church hated him in life, and flouted him in death, because he represented far more than a mere objection to the Papacy; namely, the Liberalism which aims at the complete secularisation of public life, and the relegation of religion to the sphere of individual preference.

Men like Kossuth are failures according to vulgar standards of success, but in reality they are the saviors of the race, as they nurse the idealism without which nations feel that life has no dignity. The Hungarian people know that the living martyrdom of Kossuth was worth more to them than any quantity of statecraft or diplomacy. Only a hero could have excited such enthusiasm after an exile of more than forty years. Nothing less could have prompted the march of the five thousand inhabitants of Czeglet to Budapest. They were too poor to pay the railway fare, and they travelled for two days on foot to be present at the funeral of Kossuth. There is always hope for mankind while such simple devotion is found in the hearts of the common people.

MR. HOLYOAKE AND HIS INJURIES.

PROEM.

MR. G. J. HOLYOAKE'S action in regard to the Atheist Shoemaker story and the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes, its "eminent" author, was under consideration at the monthly meeting of the National Secular Society's Executive on Thursday, February 22. His long and strange silence, after Mr. Foote's discoveries, was the subject of severe comment. A resolution was passed, expressing "warm approval" of Mr. Foote's action, and trusting that Mr. Holyoake would "see his way to send a communication to the President that will satisfy the expectations of the Secular party." Mr. Holyoake did send a communication, which was printed in the *Freethinker* of March 4. Whether it satisfied the expectations of the Secular party is quite another matter. Mr. Holyoake does not appear to have thought that it did, for a fortnight later he penned a long letter to the Executive, which was discussed at the last monthly meeting on March 29. Some members were for letting the communication lie upon the table and passing on to the next business. Ultimately, however, it was decided that Mr. Holyoake should have a reply, which was carried in the form of a resolution, to be forwarded to him by the Secretary. Mr. Holyoake wished to have his letter published, but the Executive declined to incur that responsibility; although, if he insisted on pressing what he regarded as a moral claim, both the letter and the reply

should be sent to the *Freethinker*, to be published or not at the editor's discretion. This intelligence was conveyed to Mr. Holyoake, who replied that he still wished the correspondence to appear. Whatever blame may attach to its publication, therefore, rests entirely upon himself.

TO THE EXECUTIVE OF THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—

The singular communication you have directed your Secretary to send me, and which has been inserted in the *Freethinker*, is one to which evidently you expect me to reply.

It informs me that Mr. Foote's recent action has your "warm approval," and that you "subscribe £5" of the funds of the Society towards the expenses of calling a gentleman a "liar." This vote makes the Society, its officers, and its members, responsible for the official expression of "warm approval" of hysterical cries of "damnation" to one who, however mistaken or unfounded some may regard his representations, has not attacked us, but has born honorable testimony to the personal integrity which may co-exist with Atheism. Your endorsement of this policy is not, I venture to submit, calculated to encourage the pursuit of truth, or the desire to know those engaged in it. Were I a member of the Executive I should not desire to share the responsibility.

Your President has given public notice that "I do not understand the gravity of the situation" of not concurring with him, and that he shall cease to use towards me terms of civility but "address me in his character as President," whatever that may imply. Are there "chiefs" or "mahatmas" about? Is the National Secular Society a Papacy of Freethought? Has the President come upon us by apostolical succession? On his election did a supernatural spirit descend upon him that absolves him from the laws of courtesy? Are the members of the Society reduced to inferiority on his ascendancy? By what authority is he empowered to annul the equality of Freethought? Did not our forefathers rebel against ecclesiastical dictation over speech and conviction in order to endow Freethought with the Homeric principle that—

To speak his mind is every freeman's right
In peace or war, in council or in fight?

These are questions which I find, from letters I receive, others are asking as well as myself.

When I was formerly one of the Executive of your Society, I found that any one who expressed an opinion different from Mr. Bradlaugh was put down by him with a fury of arrogance because he did not "understand the gravity" of differing from the President. No rudeness was shown to me, but I saw that an Executive could do nothing to protect the rights of members which had none of its own. I resigned my seat and gave my reasons in a letter to the President, which was concealed from the knowledge of my colleagues and the Society whom it concerned. Freethinking was no longer free among "Free" thinkers. The National Secular Society became a personal Society. Mrs. Besant, a fugitive from spiritual dominion, caught the disease of priestliness and talked of "submission to the chief." We know now to what that has brought her. Mr. Bradlaugh won distinction with his dictation: so did Napoleon win victories with his despotism, but he ruined France. Like Grote, I regard priestly policy and pretension, if encouraged, as the ruin of Freethought—as reducing it to the level of Christianity.

Freethought does not confer on men equal capacity, but it confers upon them equal rights of conviction, and a President should protect the members in the exercise of this right, and to do what in him lies to protect them from the dishonoring imputations of others. But how can he, or you, do this after your vote? How can you restrain odious language in Secular Societies, which always include converts to whom vituperation is easier than argument, and now it seems is sure of official applause.

A man of ability can call names and reason too: but persons without ability can excel in vituperation. To call anyone a "liar" is not a "matter of taste," as some appear to think, but a breach of the peace. A man who did this to a gentleman in America would be shot on sight. This language is fiercely resented when used towards those who apply it to others.

I say nothing against Mr. Foote personally, nor do I doubt that his policy is honestly intended for the advancement of Freethought. When I first knew him he appeared to understand Secularism, and one or more pamphlets of his on the subject I read with pleasure. He has great ability in many ways, and my belief was when he became President that he would increase the reputation of our cause. I am concerned that this should be so, as I take pride in the repute of all who appear as the combatants of the errors of the Churches, Methodist or otherwise.

Under Mr. Bradlaugh's presidency the Society came to be regarded generally as intolerant, the very thing we complain of in Christians. It does not concern me personally if dictation is set up, for I shall know how to protect myself against it. Nor will it enter my mind to abandon either the party or the cause. The principle of Freethought is in itself essentially tolerant and fair, and the Secular principle means public usefulness founded on consideration for others, and in the long run both will prevail. A Freethought Society should command respect, should respect itself, and be able by its example and influence to protect its members from outrages of speech.

This letter will, I hope, meet what you call "the expectations of the party" for whose information it is intended, since they do me the honor of taking interest in my opinions.

As the communication you address to me has been published in the *Freethinker*, I shall be obliged if you will send this letter for insertion there.

Very faithfully yours,

GEORGE JACOB HOLYOAKE.

Eastern Lodge, Brighton, March 12, 1894.

THE EXECUTIVE'S REPLY TO MR. HOLYOAKE.

(Passed at its Meeting on Tuesday, March 29.)

The Executive of the N.S.S.—of which Mr. Holyoake does not appear to know that he is a member by virtue of his vice-presidency—having considered his letter of March 12, begs to make the following brief reply.

(1) Mr. Holyoake's letter is based upon a fantastic misconception of the Executive's very plain and civil message. As he had given a certificate of truthfulness to a story, circulated by the Rev. H. P. Hughes, which was subsequently proved to be false in all its principal features; and as, after the exposure of this story, he maintained an obstinate silence for several weeks, while his certificate was being widely circulated; the Executive ventured to hope that he would send a letter to the President which would satisfy the expectations of the Secular party. It never occurred to the Executive that Mr. Holyoake would continue to vindicate the truth of a demonstrated falsehood; still less, if possible, that he would take the Executive's message as a provocation to an attack on the President and his great predecessor Charles Bradlaugh, whose leadership is so gratuitously—it might be said wantonly—brought into disrepute.

(2) The Executive begs to assure Mr. Holyoake in particular, and the party in general, that the President acted as a restrainer rather than an instigator. It was his modifying influence which prevented the message to Mr. Holyoake from being couched in stronger language.

(3) The Executive also begs to say that when it finds the President despotic, or in any way exceeding his powers, or regardless of the responsibilities of his office, it will not need incitement from Mr. Holyoake to attempt a remedy.

(4) The Executive is unable to understand Mr. Holyoake's objection to Mr. Foote's speaking or writing as President of the National Secular Society, and is confident that he has not addressed Mr. Holyoake with incivility.

(5) The Executive does not consider the President's pamphlet as liable to Mr. Holyoake's censures. On the contrary, the Executive is obliged to express its profound regret that Mr. Holyoake's tender regard for the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes has led him to act so ungenerously and unjustly to the President of the National Secular Society and to the whole of the Secular Party.

MR. HOLYOAKE AND THE "LIE" PAMPHLET.

MR. HOLYOAKE'S style is characterised by a certain playfulness, but his letter to the N.S.S. Executive carries irony to the point of mystification. Naturally he does not like my pamphlet. It is a frightful exposure of Mr. Hughes, and in an

unlucky moment he accepted the post of Mr. Hughes's vindicator. The reverend gentleman stands upon his dignity. Mr. Holyoake adopts a different policy. He tries to get up a quarrel with me. But I am not to be caught. I have learnt patience. I waited twelve months (in Holloway Gaol) for a door to open. It was a severe schooling, but I have never given way to impatience since. I can afford to smile at Mr. Holyoake's denunciations of my despotism. I merely asked him to open his mouth, and when he did so I replied to what he said. I am not bound to agree with him, nor to accept the Holyoake rules in fighting; and because I do not, he affects to regard me as a tyrant. Well, I know that I am not, for I was born with a sense of humor; and if Mr. Holyoake will only come to the Conference, he will probably find that the Secular party does not share his opinion.

I will not be dragged into a personal squabble with Mr. Holyoake, though there are some of his remarks which might elicit a caustic reply, that would please a great many Freethinkers in their present mood of annoyance. I will only say that Mr. Holyoake's sermons to me on "taste" are curiously illustrated by his gratuitous references to the hero who sleeps at Woking. That great man had his faults, like meaner men, but he never displayed the vice of vindictiveness. I do not hesitate to say that he was singularly magnanimous, and I believe he exhibited that virtue in his relations with Mr. Holyoake.

"Something too much of this," as Hamlet says; and, to add a quotation from the same lips, "The rest is silence."

What we have to do to counteract Mr. Holyoake's vindication of Mr. Hughes is to circulate my pamphlet, and let the facts tell their own story. They have been carefully concealed from the readers of the *Methodist Times* and garbled in Mr. Holyoake's communications. I make a fresh appeal to the Secular party. The resources they have placed at my disposal are nearly exhausted, and there is still a great demand for the exposure. Nearly one hundred thousand copies are already in circulation, and I do not see why we should not distribute a quarter of a million. I am preparing a new edition, with slight alterations and some additions, bringing the controversy right up to date; and how many I shall print will depend on the subscriptions I receive from my readers, of whom there are enough to supply me with ample sinews of war for this campaign.

So far from regretting the exposure of the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes, I am on the track of some other sinners. I was obliged to bring a certain matter before the Executive at its last meeting, and in the next issue of the *Freethinker* I shall probably have to announce a prosecution.

G. W. FOOTE.

FUND FOR NAILING DOWN THE "ATHEIST SHOEMAKER" LIE.

R. Gibbon 2s. 6d., Reading Branch 3s., W. S. C. 1s., McSicar 1s., few friends in Soho (per L. Fraser) 5s., John Sanderson 2s., — Johnson 2s. 6d., E. P. 42 £1, National Secular Society's Executive £5., a few members of the Newcastle Branch 17s.

BOARD SCHOOL RELIGION.

Children are taught to regard the Bible as the Word of God, miraculously given, miraculously preserved with a multitude of commands binding, in some sense, on their consciences, and, at least, demanding authoritatively an implicit belief of all its utterances. This of itself introduces an element of discord between the growing life of the child and the growing life of the world—an element, the incongruity of which must be more and more keenly felt as scientific instruction and scientific habits of thought are gradually pervading society. If custom did not blunt our sensibilities, we should resent, as a cruel anomaly, the practice of inculcating at one hour the infallible truths of a history which, on any interpretation, limits the lifetime of humanity to a few thousand years, while at another hour we teach the element of sciences that imply a development of countless ages.—*J. Allinson Picton, M.P.*

Sydney Smith was sitting at breakfast one morning at Combe Florey when a poor woman came begging him to christen her new-born infant without loss of time, as she thought it was dying. He instantly went to her cottage, and on his return was greeted by queries as to what state he had left the child in. "Why," said he, "I just gave it a dose of castor oil, and then I christened it; so now the poor child is ready for either world."

THE PRAYER QUESTION UP TO DATE

THE question of prayer—like, indeed, most questions of belief—has always been a stumbling-block to the orthodox. God is unchangeable; yet he is asked to change his purpose. He is omniscient—so we are told; yet the devout enlighten him as to their desires and wants. Smart people get out of the difficulty by a double-barrelled kind of explanation that, though God knows everything that everybody wants, still he requires to be asked all the same, as an evidence of regard and “humility.” This explanation, of course—like too, to most religious “explanations”—leaves the question still unsettled. One can never precisely gather from these smart people whether, if God were not asked to do good, he would do evil; and if he would not do evil, what is the necessity of asking him to do good? But a recent writer in the *North American Review* has started a delightful view of prayer, which solves all the difficulties. The religious world will be interested to know, on Mr. E. S. Martin's authority, that man has not yet even learned to pray properly or scientifically. Man is still in the dark as to the proper method of going about the thing; which is sad to hear after all these centuries. “If he [man] can,” says Mr. Martin, “ever become the reverent master of scientific prayer, we may expect to see the rate of his progress indefinitely accelerated.” And the argument is illustrated by examples. We could never cause water to run uphill; but when we know that it runs down, we can lay our plans accordingly, and so utilise its force. So, if only we knew how to pray “scientifically,” we might work wonders. Verily, then, would mountains skeddaddle at the behests of the devout, and the world be turned upside-down by the prayers of the pious. There are, undoubtedly, difficulties to be encountered, and unpleasantnesses to be endured. It would hardly be desirable to have your house carted wholesale away, merely because an enemy had gone in for a little “scientific” prayer; nor is it conceivable that one would like being placed unreservedly at the mercy of any gentleman who “gawded” it in a scientific manner. We fancy if such a state of things came about, we should have to take steps to stop the “scientific” nuisance, and restrain the people whose religiosity took that objectionable form. Of course, at present prayer, of the common or garden-kind, like Mr. Oscar Wilde's House of Commons, does very little harm, beyond perhaps wasting the time of those whose time, after all is not very valuable.

But perhaps the worst of the picture Mr. Martin discloses, it seems to us, is the scope it offers for speculation. If we could utilise the prayer-force of the world in a commercial way, what would be the result? Why, we would have Limited Prayer Syndicates, Joint Stock Praying Companies, Union Prayer Trusts, on every side. We may be sure the capitalists would run the scheme if any profit could be got out of the business. And we would then be pained to see the worship of God and Mammon combined—a thing, as we all know, of which the religious people to-day are completely ignorant. Suppose that, as Mr. Martin suggests, “if only man can learn how,” prayer can accomplish anything, what is there to prevent us running a railway by prayer-power and dispensing with the use of steam and electricity. “If only we knew the way” we might do many things—might journey to the moon and make loaves out of tramcars; might even make pious people write sense. But then these—especially the last—are big tasks, and we fear it will be a long time before the race learns how to accomplish them.

Mr. Martin is good enough to tell us that “man is not the supreme force in the universe; but he is akin to it.” Now, it is right to say that we really find it difficult to take Mr. Martin's short article quite seriously. At times one would fancy the sarcasm is obvious; and the whole thing smacks very much more of clever irony than of serious essay. If Mr. Martin—of whose personality we really know nothing beyond this article—is in earnest, he must verily be one of the most colossal simpletons that ever found entrance

to a serious magazine. But the above sentence reveals a good deal. Man; almost the supreme force in the universe—this is the idea at the bottom of all the theologies. And the idea comes down to us from our savage ancestors. To them man was the most important phenomenon. They could not appraise his true place in the economy of nature. To them, their own wants and longings, their dreams and visions, their births and their deaths, were their whole and natural concern. But, as man's view widened, he perceived that he was surrounded by natural forces that heeded him not, that he was not the only animal in the world, and that other animals were possessed of the same passions and desires, the same wants and necessities, together with the same means for gratifying their desires and satisfying their wants as he; and he perceived that the universe was not convulsed about his destiny. But the old idea lingers on languidly in the popular religion and amongst the thoughtless multitude. Mr. Martin expresses it when he naively tells us that man is akin to the supreme force in the universe.

When man has learned to pray properly, Mr. Martin says: “The incurable will be cured then; the impracticable will be done; the secret of perpetual motion will be revealed; the fountain of youth will gush out.” We do not pretend to understand what these things are, but from the way in which Mr. Martin speaks of them we infer that they are very much to be desired, whatever they may be. Thus we haven't the slightest doubt that doing the impracticable is an admirable pastime—if you know how to do it; whilst curing people that cannot be cured is a thing for which we have profound respect. Man, however, as yet must do without the perpetual motion and the gush; though we should have thought that Mr. Martin's article was a standing evidence that this latter commodity is not entirely unknown, even in man's present unregenerate state.

FREDERICK RYAN.

CORRESPONDENCE.

BIGOTRY AT LIVERPOOL.

TO THE EDITOR OF “THE FREETHINKER.”

SIR,—The committee of the Liverpool Branch of the N.S.S., with a view to inviting the Conference to meet here, applied for the use of the Picton Lecture Hall for the public meeting in the evening, on the same terms charged to everyone else. The Library and Fine Arts Committee of the Corporation, with whom the decision rests, refused the application without assigning a reason, but there is no doubt religious prejudice is the cause. The hall is freely let to entertainers and lecturers, and even the Salvation Army satisfied the æsthetic requirements of the Committee. It has been let to the Theosophists and the Sunday Society. The committee feel that this is a gross injustice, and contrasts very unfavorably with the action of public bodies in Birmingham, Hanley, etc. They have been informed that a letter on the subject, addressed to a local Liberal (?) paper has been “burked,” and therefore ask you to let the facts become public through your columns. The following appeared in one of the papers issued from the office of the journal referred to—

I honor the man who is ready to sink
Half his present repute for the freedom to think;
And when he has thought, be his cause strong or weak,
Will risk t'other half for the freedom to speak,
Caring not for what vengeance the mob has in store,
Let that mob be the upper ten thousand or lower.

James Russell Lowell.

Hope Hall, which was also applied for and refused, is frequently used for meetings, at which Roman Catholicism, Ritualism, and Freethought are “discussed” in a very one-sided fashion; and there is occasionally a wail there that Protestants are hampered in their propagandist work in Roman Catholic countries. The committee think it only right that such inconsistency should be as widely known as possible, as showing the *mala fides* of those who claim to be champions of “civil and religious liberty.”

CHAS. G. G. DOEG (Sec. Liverpool Branch).

DARIUS THE MEDE.

SIR,—Referring to the article in your issue of March 18, on Darius the Mede, I think I can explain to “Nobo” who that personage was, and the matter is important as showing the utterly unhistorical character of the Book of Daniel. There were two captures of Babylon by the Persians (see Herodotus i. 191, § iii. 159), one by Cyrus in B.C. 538, to which the legend in Daniel v. mainly refers. The Greek historian says that the Persian king surprised the city by diverting the course of the

Euphrates and entering through the river gates while the Babylonians were celebrating a festival. This circumstance suggested the story of Belshazzar's feast to the Jewish mythologist. About twenty years later the Babylonians revolted against Darius Hystaspes, who was chosen to fill the Persian throne when the male heirs of Cyrus became extinct. After a long siege he took the city, and cruelly punished the inhabitants, impaling three thousand of the principal citizens. The Alexandrian Jew who composed the romance of Daniel four centuries later (after the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, B.C. 170, who is the "little horn" of Dan. viii. 9) confounded the two sieges. Darius the Mede was Darius I. of Persia (the Persians were often called Medes by the Greeks), and Daniel, who was of the children of the captivity B.C. 606, must have been at least ninety years old when this king began to reign—rather old for public employment and the den of lions.

JAMES A. RICHARDSON.

JESUS' AUREOLE.

SIR,—In reply to W. Cabell, in a recent issue, respecting the probability of the aureole of our blessed Savior, I beg to say that if he had referred to the works of Longbowstratus, the great Esquimaux historian, he would find the origin of the ring of light round Christ's head was in consequence of his riding into Jerusalem on donkeys that were damp, and the perspiration and gory sweat of these two holy animals, at finding they were sustaining the weight of the third part of a god, the maker of thistles and the bestower of that rich contralto voice whereby donkeys have always evinced their worship ever since, caused the vapor of their bodies to condense and surround them with a lambent flame. When they arrived at their destination with their holy burden and Christ was shot off, they had nothing else to bestow, so they hung this nimbus on the cranium of Jesus, and hence the origin of the circle of light round Christ's head, that was so useful (but dangerous) in lighting up the humble home of the Carpenter, but lowering the dividends of the Jerusalem Gas Company.

F. A.

WAS DICKENS A CHRISTIAN?

SIR,—I am aware that Dickens is usually claimed as a Unitarian, though he is sometimes classed as an "Undenominational Christian." Now I do not want to raise the question whether a Unitarian is a Christian, though some eminent persons, including Coleridge, a sometime Unitarian, have answered in the negative. Nor do I ask what on earth an undenominational Christian can be. But it seems to me no one can be a Christian who deliberately ridicules the teachings of Christ; and this Dickens did in the first edition of his *Pickwick Papers*. Christ said, and the Christian Church after him, "Ye must be born again." In the person of Mr. Samivel Weller, senior, he finds only occasion for fun in this Stiggins' doctrine. The old man would like to see his second "the widdier" born again, and wouldn't he put her out to nurse. To me it seems quite safe to affirm that the caricature of Stiggins could never have been produced by a genuine Christian.

A. HUMM.

LAT. 31 43 N., LON. 35 13 E.

To the land of the Lord and his favorite horde,
At the end of the midland-sea,
Where the worst of the East, with the worst of the West,
Makes a worst of the worst degree,
We are told in a book that the senior Spook
Sent the junior Spook, J. C.

In a country of knaves and of ignorant slaves,
There will always be gods and spooks;
But the gods and their bands are afraid of the lands
That are partial to schools and books;
So the senior Spook sent the junior Spook
To a country of priests and "crooks."

We are told that J. C. was commissioned to be
The contractor for some repairs,
That Jehovah and Son came to think should be done
To a part of the world's affairs;
So the Son went away, but was cautioned to lay
All the blame on the firm downstairs.

But the Son didn't fly, ready-made, from the sky,
To begin in a business way:
He came down to be nursed—though the people were cursed
While he wasted the time away;
And when he, as a man, his repairing began,
They impaled him without delay!

If you know why the Lord sent his Son to be gored
By a rabble of priests and "cranks,"
With their spikes and their spears, mid' their jibes and
their jeers,
To a couple of posts or planks,
And will kindly explain, you will surely obtain
From a mystified world its thanks.

G. L. MACKENZIE.

STATE OF THE OBITUARY.

WE have to record the death, at an advanced age, of Sophia Dobson Collet, who many years ago contributed to the *Reasoner* over the signature of "Panthea."

DR. HENRI CHARLES GEORGE POUCHET, Professor of Comparative Anatomy at the Natural History Museum in Paris, died on March 29. Deceased, who was born in 1833, was the son of the famous naturalist, and defender of spontaneous generation, Dr. Felix Pouchet, and followed his father's example in devoting himself to physical science. He was a Freethinker of the Positivist school. He wrote on *The Plurality of the Human Race*, and collaborated on the *Siccle*, *La Philosophie Positive*, and the *Revue des Deux Mondes*. In 1880 he was decorated with the Legion of Honor. He has left his entire fortune to the Society of Biology, and, in accordance with his will, he was cremated on Sunday, April 1.

It is with deep regret that I have to announce the death, at Hobart, Tasmania, of Mr. William Willis, of N.S.W., and formerly of London, at the age of sixty-three. Old Freethinkers will remember Mr. Willis as an earnest, effective speaker and writer for the last forty or more years. He was a solid reasoner, and his addresses were models of terseness brightened with wit and pathos. His amiable and accomplished wife, like himself, was an ardent Freethinker, and frequently displayed her elocutionary powers on our platforms and at social gatherings. Mr. Willis left England for Australia some years ago and established a Freethought publishing business at Sydney, which was fairly successful until the great bank failures of last year, which, in his last letter to me, he said had hit him very hard. On behalf of the whole of the British Freethought party I tender to Mrs. Willis the sincere and deep sympathy of our people. This is also accorded to her daughter, and to Mr. W. Willis, junr., the colleague now of Mr. John Burns in the representation of Battersea at the London County Council.—R. FORDER.

AFTER a long illness, borne with great fortitude, William H. Taylor, of Tyne Dock, South Shields, died at the residence of his father on Wednesday, March 28. He had been a member of the South Shields Branch for nine years, and during the earlier part of that time was an active worker in connection with the lectures, branch meetings, and picnics in the locality. For over a year he had been prevented from following his employment as engine-driver, and during the whole time remained firm in his convictions. Before the end, which was long and clearly foreseen, he selected the burial service of Austin Holyoake to be read at his graveside. After giving his last request to his relatives, and bidding them all farewell, he passed quietly away into rest. The funeral took place at Harton Churchyard on Sunday last, and there was a large attendance of relatives, friends and fellow workmen belonging to the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants. The Secular Society (of which his father is also a member) was well represented. Mr. S. M. Peacock, after thanking the vicar of Harton for his kindness and courtesy when the necessary notice was served upon him, read the service in a most distinct and impressive manner, which gave every satisfaction to those present, including those of many denominations.—R. CHAPMAN.

PROFESSOR WILLIAM ROBERTSON SMITH, who died on March 31, at the age of forty-eight, did good work in aiding the clergy-cowed Scotch out of the trammels of Bible superstition. His success in Hebrew scholarship led to his appointment as Professor of that language in the Free Church College, Aberdeen, and his selection by Prof. Baines to write some biblical articles in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. These gave such currency to the results of modern scholarship that an outcry was raised. In 1877 he was "libelled" by the Free Church Presbytery of Aberdeen, for publishing opinions opposed to the Scriptures and the Confession of Faith. He was eventually removed from his chair, but soon obtained the Professorship of Arabic at Cambridge. Meantime he wrote *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church* (1881), which, though somewhat veiling the facts in orthodox phrases, showed the untrustworthy character of much of the old Hebrew records. This removal from Free Church influence improved the quality of his criticism, and in his later articles in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*—notably the one on "Sacrifice"—he showed how akin were the divine ordinances of Jehovah to the brutal superstitions of savages. In his work on *Early Marriage and Kinship in Arabia* he brought out the affinity of the various Semitic tribes, and in his most important work, *The Religion of the Semites*, he clearly showed that the faith of Israel had at its root ideas and customs common to the entire Semitic family. Prof. Robertson Smith was notable, not only for his own work, but for his influence upon others, such as Mr. J. G. Frazer, author of *The Golden Bough*.

The very attempt to destroy reason by reason, is a demonstration that men have nothing but reason to trust in.
—Matthew Tindal.

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, "Lord Rosebery: Man, Writer, and Statesman" (free); 6.30, musical selections; 7, G. W. Foote, "Is Religion the Cause of Progress?—a Criticism of Mr. Benjamin Kidd's New Book on *Social Evolution*" (admission free: reserved seats 3d. and 6d.). Wednesday at 8, London Secular Federation Concert and Ball (tickets 1s)

Battersea Secular Hall (back of Battersea Park Station): 7.45, H. Snell, Freethought readings and recitals (free). Tuesday at 8, social gathering (free). Wednesday at 8, dramatic club (free). Thursday at 8, adjourned members' meeting.

Camberwell—61 New Church-road, S.E.: 4.30, general meeting of members and friends; 6, tea. Friday at 7.30, free science classes in chemistry and astronomy.

East London—Swaby's Coffee House, 103 Mile End-road; 8, W. O. Lyons will lecture.

Finstury Park—91 Mildmay Park; Monday at 8, members' meeting.

Hammersmith Club, 1 The Grove, Broadway; Thursday, April 12, at 8.30, Stanley Jones, "Priests and People" (free).

Notting Hill Gate—"Duke of York," Kensington-place, Silver-street; Monday at 8.30, business meeting of the West London Branch.

Wimbledon—Liberty Hall, Curtis's Coffee House (Broadway entrance): 7, Stanley Jones, "God, Man, and Design" (free).

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Battersea Park-gates: 11.30, H. Snell, "Religion in Board School's."

Camberwell—Station-road; 11.30, a lecture.

Finsbury Park (near the band-stand): 11.30, E. Calvert, "Religious Symbolism"; 3.30, F. Haslam, "The Exodus from Egypt."

Hammersmith Bridge (Middlesex side): 6, W. Heaford will lecture.

Hyde Park (near Marble-arch): 11.30 and 3.30, W. Heaford will lecture. Wednesday at 8, Stanley Jones, "Priests and People."

Islington—Prebend-street (south of Essex-road North District Post Office): 11.30, A. Guest, "The Fall and the Atonement."

Mile End Waste: 11.30, A. J. Herzfeld, "Conversion and Converts."

Old Pimlico Pier: 11.30, Stanley Jones, "Miracles and Medicine."

Regent's Park (near Gloucester-gate): 11.30, J. Rowney, "The Death and Resurrection of an Immortal God."

Tottenham Green: 3.30, Sam Stranding, "The Converted Atheist Shoemaker and Kindred Lies."

Walthamstow—Workmen's Hall, High-street; Monday at 8, members' quarterly meeting. Wednesday at 8, H. Snell, "The Bible in Board Schools."

Wood Green—Jolly Butchers'-hill: 11.30, F. Haslam, "Old Testament Miracles"; 7, J. Rowney, "The Death and Resurrection of an Immortal God."

COUNTRY.

Chatham—Secular Hall, Queen's-road, New Brompton: 11, members' monthly meeting; 2.45, Sunday-school; 7, concert and entertainment.

Chester-le-Street—Gray's, Old Pelton: 7, meeting of Freethinkers in the district.

Derby—41 Copeland-street (off Traffic-street): Tuesday at 7.30, Mr. Whitney, "Secularism."

Dundee—Cutlers' Hall, Murraygate: 11.30, mutual improvement class; 1 to 2, music class; 2.30, concert; 6.30, a night with freethought authors.

Glasgow—Ex-Mission Hall, 110 Brunswick-street: 12, discussion class, impromptu speeches; 6.30, A. Paul, "An Hour with Darwin."

Hull—St. George's Hall, 8 Storey-street: 7, a lecture.

Jarrow—Co-operative Hall (small room), Market-square: 7, business meeting.

Liverpool—Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street: Touzeau Parris, 11, "Evils Wrought in the Name of Liberty"; 3, "The Genesis of Life"; 7, "The Mystery of the Dying God."

Newcastle-on-Tyne—Good Templar Hall, 2 Clayton-street, East: 7, W. R. Stansell, "Why I do not Believe in a God" (free).

Portsmouth—Wellington Hall, Wellington-street, Southsea: 11, C. Cohen, "Science and Man"; 7, "The Origin of Man." Tuesday at 8, C. Cohen, "The Christian Doctrine of Hell and the Devil."

Reading—Foresters' Hall, West-street; 7, H. Jones a reading.

Sheffield—Hall of Science, Rockingham-street; 3, members' quarterly meeting; 7, special musical and other recitals, etc.

South Shields—Capt. Duncan's Navigation School, King-street: 6.30, ethical class; 7.30, D. Bow will lecture.

Sunderland—Bridge End Vaults (long room above), Bridge-street: 7, C. Thompson, "Revelations in Nature by the Microscope," with limelight illustrations.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Brighton: Lecture on the Level at 3, and on the Front at 7.30.
Portsmouth—Southsea Common: 3, C. Cohen, "Secularism."

LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

C. COHEN, 12 Merchant-street, Bow-road, E.—April 8 and 10, Portsmouth; 15, m., Battersea; a., Victoria Park; e., Camberwell; 22, m. and a., Victoria Park; e., Battersea.

O. J. HUNT, 48 Fordingley-road, St. Peter's Park, London, W.—April 15, m., Finsbury Park; 22, m., Pimlico Pier; 29, m. and a., Hyde Park; e., Hammersmith. May 13, m., Clerkenwell Green; 20, e., Edmonton; 27, m., Pimlico Pier.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Oredon-road, Rotherhithe, London, S.E.—April 15, m., Hyde Park; e., Hammersmith; 22, m., Wood Green. May 6, m. and e., Camberwell; 13, e., Edmonton; 20, m., Clerkenwell Green; 27, m., Hyde Park; e., Hammersmith.

TOUZEAU PARRIS, Clare Lodge, 32 Upper Mall, Hammersmith London, W.—April 8, Liverpool; 15, Sheffield; 22, Camberwell.

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