

The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.

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PRICE TWOPENCE.



THE PIT AND UPPER CIRCLES.

[Dedicated to the deity of the New Testament, and to all his worshippers in the Christian Churches.]

"Tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever."—REV. xiv. 10-11.

"That the saints may enjoy their beatitude and the grace of God more richly, a perfect sight of the punishment of the damned is granted to them."—ST. THOMAS AQUINAS.

"Should the fire of this eternal punishment cease, it would in a great measure obscure the light of heaven, and put an end to a great part of the happiness and glory of the blessed."—BISHOP HOPKINS.

"The sight of hell torments will exalt the happiness of the saints forever."—DR. JONATHAN EDWARDS.

THE REVOLT OF THE TEACHERS.

THE last London School Board did some excellent work. It contained only a minority of Progressives, but they were active and enterprising. One of them was a lady of great eloquence, who afterwards came under the spell of a stout old enchantress of the female Cagliostro species, and left her useful labor for the children of London to follow oriental fantasies and pursue barren labors for the brood of folly and gullibility. Her defection took a good deal of heart out of the Progressive party on the Board, which was also numerically weakened at the election in 1891, when the Radicals miserably failed in their duty and left the Church party to sweep the field.

Ever since then the Church party has had a fine innings. It has deliberately, and not unskillfully,

played into the hands of Voluntarism, at the cost of the Board School system which it was elected to maintain and promote. At its head is Mr. Diggle, the astute ex-clerical, who sits as Chairman of the Board. The member of next importance is Mr. Athelstan Riley. This gentleman, who is of High Church proclivities, has steadily pushed forward the Church program of education. At first he was laughed at, but the laughter has turned to bitterness. He is a man, we should say, of a meagre type of mind and character; but, like Robespierre, he is in earnest, and such men are apt to go far. Mr. Riley has gone far. His policy was ratified, quite recently, at a Church meeting presided over by the Bishop of London, in spite of the Bishop's protest against it as dangerous if not unjust. On the Board itself, Mr. Riley has brought the religious question to a climax; and he

has done so with a logical consistency which is in striking contrast to the illogical shiftiness of his Nonconformist opponents. They have sent deputations to the Board and played the fool outside their own houses. They have declared that they want the Christian religion taught to the children; and, when asked whether the Incarnation and the Trinity were not parts of the Christian religion, they have cried out against "tests," and "inquisitions," and "theological controversies." Just as though it were a sensible thing to commission the teachers to give Christian instruction, without seeing whether they gave it as Jews, Turks, or Infidels, instead of honest, orthodox Christians. For our part, we say that the logic—the common sense, if you will—is all on the side of Mr. Riley. We are also delighted at his strategy. He is showing the electors the absurdity, the unworkableness of religious education in public schools, when it is taken up by men who are in earnest about their opinions. As for the Nonconformists, we are equally delighted at their consternation. Their anger is positively amusing. The "Compromise," which was invented to dish the non-Christians, is actually being used by one set of Christians to dish another set of Christians. "We appeal to the majority!" cried the Nonconformists against all the non-Christians. "Very well, then," says the Church party, "here is its verdict!" The poor engineer is hoist with his own petard.

During the whole of this dispute we have felt it to be the best policy for Secularists to lie low. A Secular deputation to the Board was talked about. But why stop the game? Why put an end to the squabble? The more Christians fall out amongst themselves, the more Freethinkers come by their own. Let the Churchmen drive the Nonconformists into a corner. If the latter want Secularist votes, they can have them—at a price; a price that means the closing up for ever of the waters of contention. Besides, it was best to let the Nonconformists commit themselves more and more profoundly to that dear old "Compromise." Our time would come to speak for ourselves in clear, unmistakable accents. Our time would also come to put our own candidates into the field, and all who cared for the "secular" ticket would have to support them or throw away their votes.

The National Secular Society's Executive has had this matter frequently under its attention. It has resolved to open a special fund for the approaching contest in London, with Mr. George Ward as treasurer. One or two victories in the metropolis will re-act upon the provinces; although, up to the present, it must be admitted, the country Branches of the N.S.S. have in some instances given the "forward" lesson to London. Mr. Charles Watts has agreed to fight for the "secular" ticket, and we hope soon to announce the constituency in which he will uphold our banner. Mr. Snell, we hear, is likely to stand for Woolwich, and if he does so he may count on our fullest support. For my own part (speaking in the first person), while I should like to fight for a seat, I am withheld by motives of prudence. The duties of a member of the London School Board, if properly fulfilled, are very exacting. I think it better, therefore, for the President of the N.S.S. to hold himself aloof—at any rate for some time to come—from outside obligations and entanglements; keeping himself free to deal promptly and strenuously with any crisis in our party's affairs, to say nothing of the constant supervision of its ordinary business. Such is my position; but it will not prevent me from fighting for our candidates, during the elections in November, as heartily as though I were a candidate myself.

When the elections are at hand we shall probably flood the London constituencies with bright and striking leaflets. Meanwhile we shall circulate, as an educational agency, the solid and careful pamphlet which is being prepared by Messrs. Foote and Wheeler for the N.S.S. Executive.

We come now to the special subject of this article—the Revolt of the Teachers. Prompted by a double motive—the instinct of self-preservation and the love of fair-play—the teachers have decided to meet the circular of the Church majority on the Board by

refusing to give religious instruction at all. They do not employ the word "refuse," they say they will claim to be "exempted." But this is practically a verbal distinction. The teachers have really revolted, and four or five thousand of them cannot be easily coerced. Nor is this all. What if the teachers, finding the power of combination, end by refusing to give religious instruction any more, even under the "Compromise"? We have no hesitation in saying that the Revolt of the Teachers is the most encouraging sign in the whole of this struggle.

G. W. FOOTE.

PASCAL'S THOUGHTS.

Lorsque tu te courbais sous la Croix qui t'accable,
Tu ne voulais, hélas ! qu'endormir ton tourment,
Et ce que tu cherchais dans un dogme implacable,
Plus que la vérité, c'était l'apaisement,
Car ta Foi n'était pas la Certitude encore ;
Aurais-tu tant gémi si tu n'avais douté ?
Pour avoir reculé devant ce mot : J'ignore,
Dans quel gouffre d'erreurs t'es-tu précipité !
Nous, nous restons au bord. Aucune perspective,
Soit Enfer, soit Néant, ne fait pâler nos fronts ;
Et s'il faut accepter ta sombre alternative
Croire ou désespérer, nous désespérerons.

—LOUISE VICTORINE ACKERMANN. *Pascal.*

It was the alleged miracle of the Holy Thorn, already alluded to,* which induced Pascal to prepare a work on the evidences of Christianity. The work was never finished, but the fragments known as Pascal's *Pensées* form one of the treasures of literature. It is so, not because of its evidential value, but for its study of man. As an evidential apologist his arguments are often in the air. Thus he says: "If neither Josephus, nor Tacitus, nor other historians speak of Jesus Christ, that makes rather for us. For it is certain Christ lived, and that his religion made a great noise, and these people could not be ignorant of it, so it is evident they have omitted it from design, or that they did speak of it, and what they said others have suppressed or altered." In face of the evidence that a forged reference to Christ, unknown to the earlier Fathers, was inserted in Josephus in the time of Eusebius, how futile is this.

It is in his analysis of human nature that he is strong with the strength that comes of endurance of suffering. Like Hamlet, he dwells on the melancholy antithesis of the greatness of human thought and the littleness of human conditions and human desires. "All our greatness is in thought. It is by this we must raise ourselves, not by time or space which we cannot fill. Let it be our aim to think well, for here is the starting-point of morals." He is penetrated with the mystery of nature. "The eternal silence of those infinite spaces terrifies me." Man is an enigma, the equal of angels and the brother of brutes. The key to the riddle, thought Pascal, was in Original Sin and the Grace of God. To those who have found the key of human incongruity in the doctrine of evolution, the story of the Fall seems a childish absurdity, at variance with the fact that man is a risen animal, and the scheme of Redemption a fiction based upon a fable. Yet to Pascal Original Sin offered the best explanation of the mystery of man. It was the very basis of his theology. An acute, reasoning mind could not be entirely satisfied with this. Hence we find in Pascal a curious mixture of the sceptic with the mystic and the dogmatist. He doubts of all, yet chiefly of human reason. Pyrrhonism or utter scepticism, he says, is true, "for, before Jesus Christ, men neither knew what they were nor if they were great or small." "Pyrrhonism," again he says, decisively, "serves religion." For, as he observed from his own experience, when men are driven to doubt of all, then are they most eager to embrace the refuge of faith.

On the root question in theology he says: "The metaphysical proofs of God are so removed from human reason and so involved that they hardly strike; and, even should they serve someone, it is only for an instant, but an hour after they fear they are deceived." But to the Atheist, whom he seems to look on as a desperate gambler, he offers a gambler's argument.

* *Freethinker*, April 15.

The believer, he says, stands to win an eternity of happiness. "Place against this the free disposition of your earthly life, and surely it is safest to bet on the side on which the gain is greatest. Wager them without hesitation that God exists." Methinks the Atheist might reply: "You ask me to resign what I know, to gain what you imagine. You say this life is a small affair. Yes, but it is all to me. Shall I sacrifice what I feel and enjoy here; wear, like you, a girdle of spikes; put, like you, my sister in a convent; like you deny human dignity and human reason to gain a fancied futurity by a pretended belief? No worthy God could make me as I am and ask such an absurdity." Pascal knew the difficulty of his task. He says: "Let us speak according to natural light. If there be a God, he is infinitely incomprehensible; having neither parts nor bounds, he has no relation [rapport] with us. We are thus incapable of knowing either that which he is, or that he is." How, then, are we to be brought in contact with him? Pascal seems to offer no other answer than the grace of God, or the gift of the Spirit.

Victor Cousin held that Pascal was not a genuine believer; that he only tried hard to believe, but "The doubt before, the doubt after—such was Pascal's fate." This seems to me overstated. M. E. Scherer places the matter more correctly when he says: "I believe that Pascal believes and doubts in turn, but always very seriously; that the boldness and the penetration of his mind show him difficulties which he tries to conquer by reasoning, but which he can sometimes only avoid." The *Pensées* show a great but troubled mind. They do not exhibit a systematic doctrine, but are genuine thoughts. In all that concerns human nature he reasons acutely. But he sees reason will not take him where he wishes to go, and he dismounts to soar on the wings of imagination and hope. He was great-hearted no less than clear-headed, yet his religious twist made him write: "The noble deaths of Lacedæmonians and other Pagans move us little, for what have we to do with them? But we are strongly touched at the deaths of the martyrs, since they are members of our body." The natural goodness of the man is cramped by his creed; and his sympathies, instead of embracing all life, are confined to those of his own sect. A loyal son of Rome, he detests heresy as heartily as he does Jesuitism.

Pascal sees through shams, yet is not bold enough to cast them off. Thus he says: "The power of kings is founded on the reason and on the folly of the people, but far more on their folly. The greatest and most important thing in the world has weakness for its basis; and the basis is wonderfully sure, since there is nothing more so than that people will be weak. What is founded on sane reason is very badly based, like the esteem of wisdom." He anticipates Teufelsdröckh's Philosophy of Clothes, and says: "Our magistrates have well understood this mystery. Their scarlet robes, their ermine, in which they are swaddled liked furred cats,* their palaces, and fleur de lis; all this august array is most necessary; and if the physicians had not cassocks and mules, and the theological doctors no square bonnets and ample robes, never would they have duped the world, which cannot resist so authoritative a demonstration."

Virtually he holds that man must be imposed on. "All men naturally hate one another," he says with offensive exaggeration. "Again, Concupiscence, Desire and Force, are the source of all our actions; concupiscence makes voluntary ones, force the involuntary." "Men are so necessarily mad that he who would be otherwise would be a madman of a new kind." With a keen eye for social as well as natural evils, he does not point out a remedy. The late Sir J. F. Stephen, in his anonymous *Essays by a Barrister*, shrewdly remarked: "It would weaken his cause if they were not there, for it is on the madness and folly of the world that he takes his stand."

Pascal has been considered a pessimist. And as far as regards this world, he is. His religion was not the religion made easy—treacle without brimstone—which is preached in the churches to-day. It was earnest, it was awful. Seek no satisfaction on earth, he said;

hope nothing from men; your good is in God only. "Imagine," he said, "a number of men in chains all condemned to death, some every day strangled in the sight of others, who see their own condition in that of their fellows, and hopelessly await their turn. Such is the condition of men." Himself wretched, he thought others must be so. He takes his own abnormally great and sensitive mind as the standard for measuring others, and he even exaggerates their weakness, wickedness and folly, in order to drive them to the faith.

But not in antagonism can I leave so lofty a mind as Pascal. The heart naturally goes out to one who suffered so severely, with patience and elevation of spirit. If he clung to the Jansenist Catholicism in which he was reared, it was, doubtless, to the best he knew. No man can entirely transcend his education and the influences of his age. Sufficient if he contribute to it his own best thoughts and aspirations. And Pascal has this merit. Moreover, in seeking a philosophy of the Christian religion he actually did make a serious, though a fragmentary, contribution to the philosophy of life. J. M. WHEELER.

PROPOSED REMEDIES FOR SOCIAL EVILS.

IN my two previous articles I endeavored to indicate the relation which Secularism occupies in reference to the various social problems of the day. I also stated wherein, according to my opinion, some of the theories offered as solutions of those problems are defective. I now propose to consider two other plans which have the same object in view, and which for some considerable time have engaged a large share of public attention. Of course, any opinions that I may here express upon the important subject of social remedies must be regarded as my own personal views, and not those necessarily of the Secular organisation. While it is plainly a Secular duty to consider the best means that can be employed to improve the general condition of society, the method adopted by any member of the Secular Society to accomplish this result rests upon his individual responsibility. I am anxious that this fact should be remembered, because it is not my desire that Secularism should be held responsible for the opinions of its adherents upon "outside questions." The official position taken by the National Secular Society in reference to reforms of general social matters may be seen from its published statement under the heading of "Immediate Practical Objects" in the *Secular Almanack* for 1894. Those reckless opponents who are constantly charging us with being engaged only in attempting to "pull down" are advised to carefully study those "Objects," and they will there find that Secular work includes much of the "building up" labor.

Recently Cardinal Vaughan proclaimed that the one remedy for our present social disasters was to be found in the Roman Catholic religion; and, with a view of applying this remedy, he announced the inauguration of a Roman Catholic Social Army, for the purpose of carrying out his plans. He based his action upon the assumption that our social evils and all the revolutionary proposals for their extinction were due to the presence of Atheism and of other "isms," which he recklessly classed together, regardless of their non-relation. Here is the old theological trick of representing disbelief in God and Christianity as being the cause of all the wrongs and woes that afflict the human race, and arguing that the only real remedy for such misfortunes is the adoption of the teachings of the Church. The fact is overlooked that such teachings did not prevent, neither have they removed, the very evils which we have to deplore. If, however, Atheism is such a prolific source of evil, it would be reasonable to suppose that the characters of Atheists would be known to be bad, and their policy destructive of the stability of society. But the very opposite is the truth, as personal experience and general history amply testify. Theodore Parker observes: "Atheists are men who aim to be faithful to their nature and to their whole nature. . . . They are commonly on the side of man, as opposed to

* A reference to the *chats fourrez* of Rabelais, v. 11.

the enemies of man; on the side of the people as against a tyrant; they are, or mean to be, on the side of truth, of justice, and of love." Bacon says: "Atheism did never perturb States." The Right Hon. William Pitt truthfully acknowledges that "Atheism furnishes no man with arguments to be vicious"; and Professor Tyndall remarks: "If I wished to find men who are scrupulous in their adherence to engagements, whose words are their bond, and to whom moral shiftiness of any kind is subjectively unknown; if I wanted a loving father, a faithful husband, an honorable neighbor, and a just citizen, I should seek him and find him among the band of Atheists." Surely the testimony of the above writers, who knew the character of Atheists from practical experience, is of more value than the opinion of Cardinal Vaughan, whose religion doubtless has prevented him from associating in any way with "wicked Atheists." As to the relative influence of belief and unbelief upon the production of evil, it is only necessary to examine the criminal statistics of our own and other countries to test their respective value upon human conduct. From these sources overwhelming evidence can be obtained to prove that crime is committed principally by believers, not by unbelievers. In the *Weekly Sun* of March 25 Hector Graham writes: "I have associated with a great number of Agnostics in my time, and am constrained to admit that I have always found them happy, honorable men. . . . I put the question seriously—How many Atheists destroy themselves? Hardly any. How many thorough unbelievers are found in gaol? How many promote bogus societies and victimise the fatherless and widows? Alas! the press too often shows us that the promoters of such societies and companies have been looked upon with respect and adoration, and have been Christians of an eighteen-carat stamp."

But it is not only the nature of Atheism and the characters of Atheists that refute the pious Cardinal's assumption; there are other facts that are equally cogent against him, and these show the utter impotency of his theological schemes to successfully cope with existing social evils. It is said that an old Grecian Atheist, being on board a ship during a storm, was charged with endangering the vessel; but he pointed to other ships that were in equal peril, and observed that he was not on board all of them! Supposing Roman Catholicism were a cure for social evils, have we not a right to suppose that such evils would have been absent in this country during the Middle Ages, and that they would not be found in Catholic countries to-day? Such, however, was and is not the case. Crime, ignorance, and poverty flourished during the period when the religion of Rome was in the zenith of its power, and when Atheism and other "isms" had comparatively no opportunity to exercise a counteracting influence upon the actions of the Church. And to-day we know of no Roman Catholic orthodox continental country whose government is free from anxiety in consequence of the deplorable condition of the people. Sceptical England, with all its faults, is far ahead socially of many countries where Catholicism is supreme. Before Cardinal Vaughan's spurious remedy can be accepted in this country, credentials of its efficacy must be forthcoming. It has not proved effectual in America, where, John Bright once said, "You will find a free church, a free school, free land, a free vote, and a free career for the child of the humblest born in the land." The progress of that great and grand Republic has for years been retarded, and is now being paralysed, through the increasing power of Rome within its domain. The number of voters who profess the Catholic religion in the United States is becoming larger every year, and it is acknowledged that this fact proves a great danger to the development of American free institutions. The influence of these votes is used against public schools and the secularisation of general legislation. Upon these points I have considerable evidence in my possession. But what is worthy of special note, as demonstrating the fallacy of Cardinal Vaughan's claim as to the utility of his remedy for social evils, is that, notwithstanding the power of his Church on the other side of the Atlantic, the condition of the people there is at the present time most

alarming. The reformer stands aghast at the spectacle of a million sober and industrious citizens being without the means of living, having neither money, food, nor shelter, and not having the means of obtaining these requirements by honest work.

If there be any doubt as to the accuracy of what is here stated, let the reader study Henry George's article in the *North American Review* for February last, and it will be found that I have not over-stated the gravity of the social condition of the American people. Henry George describes many of the principal institutions of that country as being converted into charity-collecting and distributing agencies, and every group of workers as taxing themselves for the relief of the thousands of unemployed. He further alleges that the churches in Chicago are thrown open for the shelter of the houseless poor, and that in Ashland (Wis.) a charity pie had been made twenty-two feet in circumference and a quarter of a ton in weight. The continent is represented by him as being visited by an epidemic of charity, and no other subject is allowed to engage so much of public attention. This certainly is an appalling state of affairs—one which cries aloud for an immediate remedy. The Cardinal's faith evidently is useless as a panacea, for more profession of that faith is to be found in the United States than in any other Protestant country; and yet the social evils have been increasing for some time past, until the state of society has reached a degree of wretchedness and poverty that is a disgrace to civilisation. Of course, Henry George professes to see the cause of this gloomy condition of affairs, which he considers to be the wrong regulations regarding the distribution of wealth and the terms of land tenure; and, like the Cardinal, he thinks that he also has discovered a remedy in what is called "the single tax." This means that the increased increment that "now goes to the mere appropriator" should be used to pay all the expenses of the country, and thus abolish all other taxes now imposed for general purposes. The result of this would be, he argues, that an end would be put to speculation in land, which makes it become dearer every year.

CHARLES WATTS.

(To be concluded.)

ACID DROPS.

Sir William Harcourt has sent a handsome testimonial to "General" Booth. Eleven years ago he grossly libelled Mr. G. W. Foote in the House of Commons—where libels are privileged. He does not seem to have altered much.

In the course of his first speech to the jury at the Old Bailey, before that judicial and injudicious bigot, Judge North, Mr. Foote read a few extracts from the *War Cry*. They were so ridiculously vulgar, as well as shockingly "blasphemous," that North declared he wouldn't hear any more of them. "General" Booth has become respectable since then. He'll get a testimonial from North yet.

Archdeacon Farrar, in his certificate to General Booth, says, "You have been a conspicuous mark for the calumny and hatred of the world and of the nominal Church." We should like to have Dr. Farrar's explanation of the difference between the "nominal" and the real Church. Which of the two gave him the rectory of St. Margaret's, the Archdeaconry of Westminster, and the Obaplaincy of the House of Commons?

"Yes," said Mrs. Besant to a *Christian World* interviewer, "I felt in complete rapport with the Hindus. The real reason is that my past incarnations have been in the East. I acquired certain kinds of knowledge from my teachers, and attained it speedily, surprising the Indians often by my knowledge of small details, and my ability to look at things from their standpoint; it is the real explanation." Well, well! As Ophelia says, "We know what we are, we know not what we may be."

Price Hughes has been holding forth at Bristol. He took for his text a verse in Job, ending with the words, "Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." It was

a very appropriate text; but, after all, Hughes said nothing about the Atheist Shoemaker affair. However, the Bristol Freethinkers kept it well to the front, by distributing hundreds of copies of Mr. Foote's pamphlet.

Hughes's little program set forth to the Bristol Wesleyans was short and simple. "They had before them," the report says, "plenty of work in slum life, in checking public-houses, gambling-houses, and haunts of infamy." Pretty work, to be sure, for "spiritual" reformers! We thought it was the work of the police. According to this program, the men in black are only jackals to the men in blue.

Another sky-pilot has been holding forth at Bristol on "Authors in Heaven." He doesn't say how he knows they are there. We guess he hasn't visited the establishment, and, maybe, he never will. Even if he does he may find some of the said "authors" not in stock; and others, perhaps, not in the register of heaven or hell, but only on the dictionary of imaginary writers.

Melksham has been visited by Price Hughes, and two of our local friends took the opportunity to circulate some copies of the *Crusader*—the Methodist paper from which we quoted the other day, and which calls upon Hughes to defend himself openly like an honest man. The chairman of the meeting referred to this matter in his speech. The man who wrote that article in the *Crusader*, he said, "had sold himself to Atheism, or, in other words, had sold himself to the devil." Hughes sat and heard this without a murmur of dissent. Christians who criticise him are sold to the devil.

The editor of the *Glamorgan Free Press* seems to have no high opinion of Mr. Hughes's veracity. He says: "What a sinful lot of people the Welsh are! Mr. Hugh Price Hughes says 'only a minority of the people attended any place of worship.' Shades of fiction."

Shortly after follows this paragraph, the allusion in which we do not understand. "'My father,' said Hugh Price Hughes, 'was a magistrate, but never licensed a house next to his own.' We would like to know who gave the licence to the Stag and Pheasant, Spilman Street?"

Artemus Ward once announced that he was going to give some lectures on science. His imagination, he said, would expatiate without being trammelled by the least knowledge of the subject. It was in the same way that the Rev. E. J. Simons preached at Hawes, from the urbane old text, "The fool hath said in his heart there is no God." He declared that Atheists were mostly wicked. Of course there were some exceptions. Mill had been called a saint, and Bradlaugh was not a very bad man, though not a good one. Herbert Spencer too was "not as bad as those blatant Atheists, Ingersoll and Foote." The worthy Simons overlooked Mr. Holyoake.

That pink of good manners (*teste* Mr. Holyoake), the editor of the *Methodist Times*, referring to Mr. Page Hopps's criticism on the Rev. Dr. Horton, says that this "very militant Unitarian" was thrown into a state of "uncontrollable fury." We also note that the *Christian Commonwealth* alludes to the leading Secular advocates as "blatant orators." Such are the amenities which Secularists are apparently asked to cultivate.

Mr. Holyoake is gaining his reward. An article from his pen on "Kossuth" appears on the front page of last week's *Methodist Times*, and it must be very gratifying to Christian readers. Kossuth is said to have been "inspired by religion and patriotism," and the only passage quoted from his American speeches is a favorable one about "reverend ministers" and "the Word of God" in capitals. Not a word is said about the Free-thinking views Kossuth is reported to have entertained in later years.

Malaprop Mr. Hughes, ever hampering and harassing every cause which he espouses by his indiscretion. We sympathise with those brethren of the Primitive Methodist Church who have been grieved and hurt by Mr. Hughes's statement, and whose inclinations towards Methodist Reunion may have received a check. It is probably difficult for them to appraise Mr. Hughes's utterances at their true value; but among

Wesleyan Methodists, where he is better known, nothing he says excites astonishment. It would not surprise us if, in the next issue of the *Methodist Times*, he expresses great astonishment that he could possibly have been understood to mean what he said. We also feel instinctively, although "there is no reason for concealment," that prominent Primitive Methodist minister "shrinks from publicity," and Mr. Hughes will "conceal his real name."—*The Crusader*.

Answering a correspondent, the *Crusader*, an organ of the Welsh Methodists, says: "We agree with you that neither the Hughes-Foote controversy nor the Olver-Recorder-Indian question should be allowed to rest. But who is sufficiently vertebrate to take them up in Conference?"

Dr. Parker declared, some months ago, that the great mass of Christians were grossly ignorant of the Bible. The *Christian Commonwealth* bears similar testimony. "There is very little really earnest Bible study by the people generally," it says; and it adds that many ministers even "do not study the Bible except so far as is necessary to enable them to prepare their sermons." And as they prepare their sermons for people who know the Bible less than they do themselves, we can guess how much that is.

The May religious meetings now extend from mid April to June. The Children's Scripture Union have already had their annual meeting, and much was said of the importance of juveniles having a knowledge of the Holy Scriptures. In view of the filthy character of some of the Bible stories the C.S.U. might do well to issue an expurgated edition of the Word of God before insisting on its being brought before the youngsters.

"Peter Lombard," who is understood to be an eminent Church dignitary, writing in the *Church Times*, says of the writers of the lithographed and manuscript sermons which are so largely used in the country pulpits, "I know as much about these people as most men. One gave initials, another was 'Presbyter-Catholicus,' another 'Ecclesiaster-Protestans,' and most of them were men of disreputable character, men who had lost their licences."

"Peter Lombard" continues: "Let us look in on one. There he sits, in a two-pair back, his stock-in-trade before him, consisting of paper, pens, three or four volumes of sermons (bought at the miscellaneous box of a second-hand bookseller, 'all these at twopence'), and a glass of gin and water." What a choice picture of those who probably purvey more of the Gospel every week than Peter Lombard does in a year.

Another touching thing about these sermons, according to P. L., is that once a minister buys them he cannot leave off. He may decline to buy any more, but they come and the bill with them. The parson declines to pay, and gets served with a summons. To be dragged into court is to expose himself, so usually he pays up, lest it come to the knowledge of the bishop and people.

They've been having a Conference at Dudley on the old question, Why people do not go to church. The Rev. A. M. Gardner said it was lamentable; Mr. Williams said it was the drink; Councillor Taylor said it was the partiality shown to the rich; and when there came a question of reduction of salary the minister soon cried out. In short, they liked sweating others, but did not like to be sweated themselves. Councillor Lloyd said the churches should be made more attractive, and establish recreation rooms for young people; while Councillor Ashton was of opinion that one great cause was indifference to religion.

The medical journals frequently protest against that form of madness which depends upon "prayer and faith," instead of upon medical remedies, for the cure of diseases. Of course these deluded sufferers die. But who is to blame? Those who have taught them that the collection of Hebrew and Greek books, known as the Bible, is a God-inspired production. In those books, undoubtedly, the principle is taught that faith will overcome every obstacle, even to the removing of mountains. Now this is either true, or it is not true. If true, the faith doctors are right; if not true, it proves that the Bible is not a compilation of supernatural origin. Indeed, the God of Battles in the Old Testament is simply a monster.—*Reynolds's Newspaper*.

According to Sir G. Portal's Uganda report, the presence of five hundred Soudanese is said to be required "in view of the excited state of popular feeling, which is kept alive by the presence of two rival parties of European missionaries." The gospel of love needs backing up with gunpowder.

Sir Gerald Portal further says: "Catholics and Protestants here seem to look upon each other as natural enemies. It is this feeling which, since the introduction of the two forms of Christianity into Uganda, has cost so many hundreds of lives, and has thrown the country fifty years back in its advance towards prosperity."

King Mwanga is now a Protestant. He had his eyes opened to the beauty of Protestantism after Captain Lugard's exploits with the Maxim gun. He had previously been by turns a heathen, a Moslem, and a Catholic. He has pleasant manners, and he murdered Bishop Hannington. Now he is a pillar of the English Church, and, if not captured by the Jews, will join the saints in heaven.

The Committee of the Church Missionary Society send out an appeal to make up a deficit of £13,000 excess of expenditure over income. Owe no man anything, said Paul; but the religious societies could never get on unless they could appeal to the honor of their supporters to make up the amount of their debts.

The Moplah Mussulmans, who recently made a murderous attack upon the Hindus in the Malabar district, fought desperately with the troops sent against them, thirty-three being killed outright.

The Jews of Jerusalem complain that the Medical Mission established in the holy city, instead of being a philanthropic endeavor to heal disease, is but a trap to catch souls. They have issued a placard exhorting their co-religionists not to resort to the Christian dispensary, but to patronise physicians of their own race.

The Rutherglen Evangelistic Institute is not a very important establishment, but one of its tracts has fallen into our hands, and we will give it a word of comment. It is a story of a converted infidel. He was working in a pit, when a big lump of coal fell on his head, and made him a Christian. Very likely! Any head might suffer from such treatment. Moral—if you want to convert an infidel, hit him on the head with a big lump of coal. If he doesn't die, his brains will become orthodox.

The Rev. F. E. W. Langdon, writing from Seavington Rectory, Somerset, to the *Spectator*, tells of the following spell used to charm away disease in Devon. He says the woman who is in the habit of using it, and receives no money for doing so, is as firmly convinced of its efficacy as she is of her own existence. "As Christ was walking he saw the Virgin Mary sitting on a cold marble stone. He said unto her: 'What aileth thee?' He said unto her: 'If it is a white ill-thing, or a red ill-thing, or a black ill-thing, or a sticking, cracking, pricking, stabbing bone ill-thing, or a sore ill-thing, or a swelling ill-thing, or a rotten ill-thing, or a cold creeping ill-thing, or a smarting ill-thing, let it fall from thee to the earth, in my name, and the name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen. So be it.'" The charm is to be said nine times, and each time the Lord's Prayer is to be said.

Fact.—At the Sabbath-school. To the question why the doors were shut when the Apostles were gathered together on the first Easter Day, a youngster answered, "Because of the police."

Scotland is getting less Puritanical. Dances and dramatic entertainments in church halls are becoming quite common. In the Church of St. Mary Magdalene, Dundee, "there is a minstrel troupe in connection with the congregation." In Forfar, the guild in connection with St. John's Church brought their sessions to a close with a dance. In the hall of old St. Paul's, Edinburgh, a concert is about to be given followed by a dramatic sketch entitled "Aunt Matilda." What would John Knox say?

America, however, takes the cake for the churches out-rivalling the showmen. At the Church of the Messiah,

Brooklyn, they have had a Mischianza, which seems to be Yankee-Italian for a medley. The *Brooklyn Eagle* gives the program, which comprises such items as: "Vista of Thespians," "Numbers of Nimble Nymphs," "The Refectory of the Epicures," "The Gangway of Gallimauffery," and "The Noggery of the Nectar Dew." Never mind what it means; like the painting outside a showman's booth it excites curiosity, and that is the main point.

At the annual meeting of the Manchester Diocesan Societies, Bishop Moorhouse, after mentioning that no fewer than thirty-one of their voluntary schools were in serious financial difficulties, proceeded to reiterate his assertions about the moral mischief of the secular system in Victoria. Now it has been shown that until 1888 there was a great diminution of crime. Of late years financial depression has led to an increase. But in New Zealand, where education is to the full as secular, the decrease in crime has been constant, and the electors at the last election decided, by an overwhelming majority, that they would have no clerical interference with secular education.

The boycotting which the clericals set up in villages against all opposed to their politics they sometimes apply to their own order. Canon Bulstrode, for example, says the *Daily News*, was promised a night's lodging by one country clergyman, and turned away when his political leanings were discovered.

A *Standard* dispatch from Paris says: "The mania for duelling seems to have spread to the clergy. Thomas à Becket is specially honored as a Saint in the diocese of Sens, which includes the celebrated Abbey of Pontigny, and his chasuble is still kept as a relic in the Sens Cathedral. Some little time ago the *Libre Parole* accused the Archbishop of Sens and his Vicar-General, Monsignor Ardin, of desecrating this venerable relic by cutting off a piece of it and presenting it to a neighbouring shrine. One of M. Drumont's writers, M. Gaston Méry, attacked Monsignor Ardin in strong terms, and the latter, not being able on account of his cloth to exact satisfaction, deputed his brother, Captain Ardin, to act as his champion. M. Gaston Méry is always as ready with his sword as with his pen; but the seconds raised a question whether Captain Ardin could espouse the quarrel of his brother the Abbé, and fight in his place. This nice question has been referred to arbitration, the umpires being Colonel Lannes de Montebello and M. Aurélien Scholl."

There is no end to pious impiety. In a sermon by the Rev. Andrew Leggatt, reported in the *Yarmouth Independent*, he spoke of God as trying to establish a Kingdom of Grace within them. Poor God! He is always being thwarted by the Devil. In the kingdom of heaven, said Mr. Leggatt, "gold was as common as dust in this world." The child who said God was occupied in making sweets and other nice things for children had about as worthy a notion.

By the little lamented death of the Marquis of Ailesbury, six Church of England livings lose their patron. With the prayers of the clergy whom he presented to their livings he ought to have a front seat in his beautiful home on high.

Probate duty has been paid on £340,503 4s. 7d. as the value of the personal estate of the late Hon. and Very Rev. George Herbert, Dean of Hereford. For of such are the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus is reported to have said "Moses wrote of me." Father Robert Clarke, however, writes in the *Tablet* that only "vulgar Protestantism adheres to the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch." Father Clarke acknowledges the presence of contradictory statements in the story of the Deluge, but he says "an historian who quotes two contradictory extracts and lays them, side by side, before his readers, cannot be supposed to commit himself to either." Now, to quote and to be discovered and to have borrowed, are two different things, and what the compiler of Genesis evidently has done is not to lay two different stories side by side, but to weave them into one single continuous story, in which criticism discovers the contradictions.

A parson demands where the books are now which were written against Christianity at about the time of the French Revolution. Well, Paine's *Age of Reason* has had, and still

has, a perennial sale and plenty of readers. There are, probably, far more people living who have read every line of that book than can boast of having read the entire Bible. In truth, we have never known twenty persons, except Freethinkers, who declare they have read the whole Bible. If other books have superseded many of the old ones written against Christianity, it is because the literature of scepticism has been improving in every way during the past few years, and the leading lights of the churches are rapidly veering round to our side. Can the clergy name so much as one point at which they have won a victory over unbelief and Rationalistic criticism?—*Liberator*.

Prophet Baxter, aided by another clerical juggins, the Rev. Joshua Kaye, has been holding end-of-the-world meetings at Bristol. That great event, the second descent of J. C., is, it appears, to happen in Passover week, April, 1908—possibly on the 1st of the month. We haven't time to consult the calendar. Anyhow, it *ought* to be the 1st. Meanwhile, the great Prophet Baxter finds the game pay, in spite of all his previous failures in prophecy. He holds meetings, with a "collection for expenses," and his silly paper is bought by tens of thousands of readers—mostly fools.

A young woman named Bejeon has been convicted of throwing vitriol in the face of a curé named Des Touches, at Périguy, in the South of France, and sentenced to six months' imprisonment. Her father and mother have been sent to prison for two months as accomplices. This enlightened family were of opinion that the curé had been guilty of using a host that was bewitched when the girl went up for communion. We are told that the Devil entered into Peter, but these people evidently think he can enter Jesus Christ also, for the host contains the blood, bones, and divinity of the blessed Savior.

As an advertisement to a religious picture exhibiting in Newcastle there is given, as a genuine "Description of the Person of our Savior," the old forged letter ascribed to Publius Lentulus, telling how Jesus Christ had chestnut hair, parted in the middle and curling and waving about his shoulders. The description was not based on Isaiah's "He hath no form nor comeliness," but written for the especial delectation of the ladies.

A person, signing himself E. G. S., is not ashamed to air his religious bigotry in the *Liverpool Mercury*, where he urges the City Council to unanimously refuse the use of the Picton Hall for the National Secular Society's Conference on Whit-Sunday. The *Liver* has already well spoken out in favor of fairplay, and the bigots are by no means likely to find the City Council unanimously with them.

Truth says the Library and Museum Committee of Liverpool Corporation have just accomplished a highly successful stroke of narrow-minded intolerance by refusing to let the Picton Lecture Hall for a Sunday evening meeting of the National Secular Society's Conference. The objection is not to a Sunday meeting, as the hall is let to other societies on Sundays, and there was no other application for this particular date. The refusal is manifestly a mere display of the animosity of Liverpool Toryism to the National Secular Society, and it is rendered the more conspicuous by the fact that elsewhere town halls have been freely let to the society, including Birmingham. Even Birmingham!

The Sunderland Guardians are much disturbed because good Mr. Stead, lecturing on "If Christ came to Sunderland," impeached the Board of Guardians of the town as having the very spirit of the devil among them, and declared that "Glasgow and Edinburgh would pass into the Kingdom of Heaven before Sunderland." Irresponsible denunciation is always an easy rôle for the prophet, and suits good Mr. Stead.

Mr. W. T. Stead asks, "If Christ should come to Edinburgh to-day, what would he do?" Well, if he found Mr. Stead was there, he would leave by the next train. One city couldn't hold two such gentlemen.

Old Friend (quite ignorant of the recent demise of his entertainer's father): "My dear, I am delighted to see you again. And your father—how does he stand the heat?"

JOSEPH SYMES ON "THE ATHEIST SHOEMAKER."

MR. GEORGE JACOB HOLYOAKE is an aged Freethinker of very erratic temperament, and most unreliable in his course of action. Again and again has he betrayed his own party by some indiscreet step, and played into the hands of enemies in a most provoking manner. We could give several examples, but one (the most recent up to date) may suffice. Not long before Mr. Bradlaugh died, Rev. Hugh Price Hughes, an old college mate of Mr. Symes' and a noted Wesleyan minister, published a—well, lying is the most appropriate term—work giving sundry false statements respecting a shoemaker converted from Atheism. Had Mr. Hughes's statements been true, Mr. Bradlaugh, Mr. Foote, and many others must have known of it. Mr. Bradlaugh wrote to Mr. Hughes inquiring into the facts of the alleged case. Conscious guilt prevented any reply. Mr. Foote and others demanded some particulars, but to no purpose. The case went by default, and Hughes was branded a deliberate liar.

Recently Mr. Holyoake has been led into a trap, and has published the report of what he calls an investigation into the facts, and has quite whitewashed Mr. Hughes's character. As usual, Mr. Holyoake is shabby in his treatment of his own party. He never was true to Mr. Bradlaugh; he seems resolved to be as untrue to Mr. Foote. He declares he has investigated the case of the converted shoemaker; but he continues the fictitious name Hughes gave; and he leaves the affair in as deep a mystery as ever. Mr. Hughes's man was very prominent amongst the London Secularists. But no Freethinker knows anything of him, or is able to trace him in any Society, etc. Mr. Holyoake does not clear up any of the mystery, nor does he explain how it was Mr. Hughes refused to answer Mr. Bradlaugh's inquiry. No, no explanation will be given of that. Nor will Mr. Hughes or his whitewasher explain how it was Mr. Foote's exposures were never answered; no, nor does Mr. Holyoake explain how it is that for years Hughes lay under the just charge of being a public liar, without taking any step to vindicate his character.

It seems to us that Mr. Holyoake has been chosen for this work because of his well-known gullibility. Why was Mr. Foote not selected, or Mr. Wheeler, Mr. Forder, or Mr. George Standing? Because they would have probed the matter to the bottom and found it fudge. Had Mr. Hughes had a really honest case, he would have invited several Freethought leaders to investigate it, furnishing them with all the means and clues in his power. But that straight and rational course would not do; and so Mr. Hughes resolved to bamboozle Mr. Holyoake, whose Christian leanings are so strong, whose Freethought leanings are so weak and uncertain. Mr. Hughes refused all information to those who demanded it, but years later he induces Mr. Holyoake to perform a farcical investigation, the report of which goes forth to a world full of prejudice and ill-will to the Freethinker, full of prejudice in favor of the parson.

Thus Mr. Holyoake again stabs his own (professed) cause. He must have known that Christians would make an unfair and most dishonest use of even the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, much more of this garbled and one-sided report of his. Our editor said, many years ago, "The sooner Mr. Holyoake goes bodily over to the Christians and leaves the Freethinkers altogether, the better." We have never receded from that opinion. We do not ask any of our men to lie for our cause or suppress truth for it—that would be to imitate the Christians; but we do think they should be loyal to whatever they adopt, and side with Christians only when they are unmistakably in the right. In this case it is not so.—*Liberator* (Melbourne, March 3).

Nephew Tom: "Look here, Uncle Hiram, if you must swear in New York society, why, swear like a gentleman. Say, 'By Jove.'" Uncle Hiram: "What, me! Me, a descendant of old Hallelujah Coffin and Anathema Joyce, swear by an immoral god like *him*!"

An enterprising parson has offered a prize of 200 dols. for the best essay on the subject, "Why Men Don't Go to Church." In the first place, the sitting-room lounge is more conducive to a comfortable sleep than the back of a pew, whatever the style of moulding. Some one must stay at home and take care of the baby. Church time comes on Sunday, and two sermons a day, after the usual "Saturday night out," are too strong a dose anyhow. He never has a new bonnet, and, if he had, the natural viciousness of his character would make him put it on hind part before, just to create a scandal. He doesn't like to see the collection plate passed around. He likes to give the parson a chance to have his salary raised. He is an irreligious brute altogether, and church time falls at the most favorable hour for a game. Any unoccupied Bohemian who chooses to work those suggestions into an essay will find us willing to divide the prize with him.

HOLY BELFAST!

DID I hear a smile? I hope not, for Belfast is really sanctified. It now possesses two statues erected to Presbyterian divines. Some people—even in Belfast—think this is overdoing the clerical business, but I think not. If a city is to honor its great men, it should honor those who are most representative of its spirit, and Drs. Cooke and Hanna typify the very essence of the intolerance, narrow theology, and pious bigotry of Belfast. They even represent the money-grubbing element, for I remember Dr. Hanna addressing the young men of his church on the advisability of cultivating good business tactics, and adding that the hope of one day becoming a millionaire was a laudable ideal. He did not say how a millionaire was going to get into heaven, or whether it was possible to amass such an amount of money with strict honesty. It does not pay for a clergyman addressing business men to be too particular.

The Christian religion is so full of fraternity that none of it seems to be left for Christians themselves. The other week the dirty linen of two churches was washed in public. In one case the canon and the curate were at daggers drawn, and in the other case it was the minister and one of the wealthiest members of the congregation. Bible wine was the cause of the last dispute. The layman objected to unfermented rubbish being used in the communion; the cleric insisted on the non-alcoholic beverage. An analysis of the temperance wine proved it to be boilings of raisins with sugar and some strong preservative. A professor in the Presbyterian College took some of it, and was nearly poisoned, and in a spirit of grim humor, after mentioning this fact, the alcoholic wine advocate recommends the clergyman to take a bottle of the stuff that nearly did for the professor. The idea that St. Paul recommended Timothy to drink raisin boilings is laughed to scorn.

A TRIP TO HEAVEN.

A Belfastman got a pass into heaven the other day. He went up last week and presented it at the gate.

Peter scrutinised it carefully, and admitted him, explaining that it was absolutely necessary to examine visitors' permits, as forgeries were very numerous and clever. Typewritten passes had been tried, but it was found that lawyers were all using typewriters, and heaven would have been full of them in a few months if typewritten passes had not been debarred.

Peter then put his little finger into his mouth and blew a loud whistle. A beautiful angel appeared, who took charge of the Belfastman, to show him the sights of the place.

He thought the angel was just a trifling bit rather *decoletté*, but he admits candidly that altogether he rather liked it.

She told him that Belfast people were very nice, at which he blushed, but that about St. Patrick's Day and the 12th of July they needed careful watching, otherwise a very serious riot might break out.

He blushed again for his fellow-citizens.

She conducted him along a delightful avenue, shaded with trees, and at the end of it a glade, in which were gathered a crowd of gloomy-looking people listening to a man preaching; at intervals the whole crowd broke boisterously into a hymn, at the end of which someone in the crowd commenced praying loudly, accompanied by groans and shouts of "Amen," etc.

"These," explained the angel, "are Methodists out enjoying themselves."

Farther on, well out of hearing of the Methodists, they came to a large square building, stone walls whitewashed, in a most uninteresting place. Inside were hard, square, unpainted seats, blank walls, and a large gathering of long-faced people, listening to a man describing hell in most lurid speech.

After listening a few moments, the Belfastman turned to his fair guide, and asked:

"Are these people enjoying themselves?"

"Assuredly," she responded.

"I should not have thought it," he said. "Let us move on."

In a delightful vale of undulating meadows, with bubbling little brooks making music beneath hazel and willow trees, were gathered in little groups many people, some sitting in charming nooks, chatting quietly, others walking leisurely along, while the sun shone in glorious radiance

above them and wild birds sang and chirruped in happy glee.

The Belfastman gazed down upon the scene for a long time, and then said slowly:

"Well, I call this heaven."

In answer to his inquiries, the angel told him the people in the valley were those who were not very particular on earth about what they believed; they had been what you would call decent people, good in their own quiet way, real friends to all who knew them, despising riches and snobbery, making no pious parade, and respecting their neighbors' opinions.

The visitor sighed, and made up his mind to have a try for this corner.

"Got any other curiosities?" he queried.

"Oh, yes, a long way down over the hill there; it is rather far to walk though, so just step on the tail of my—my garment," and she blushed delightfully as she spread out the white linen, on which he stepped reluctantly. She gently grasped his hands, and the next moment they were sailing along in the air over the hill, over the tops of trees, and finally settled down in front of a large erection without a window or other opening apparently.

The angel made an opening, however, and led the Belfastman inside, where a most awful din met their ears. Light only came from the roof, and a multitude of people were singing, praying, speaking, gesticulating, waving their arms about, and behaving themselves in a most extraordinary manner.

"What on earth are they doing?" asked the bewildered Belfastman, in a momentary lull.

"Oh, they are in heaven," said the angel, with a smile.

"I forgot for the moment, but what are they doing?"

"Testifying, singing, preaching, praying, and enjoying themselves as the spirit moves them."

"Poor fools. Who are they?"

"Plymouth Brethren and similar followers of hysterical forms of Christianity."

"Why are they barricaded up here by themselves?"

"They are never allowed out, nor even to look out, because they would not be perfectly happy if they thought that anyone else was in heaven as well as themselves."

The Belfastman here laughed so hard that he found himself on his parlor sofa, with his cigar out and a nasty pain in his back.

He says the only thing he regrets was not getting the young lady to give him one of her photographs.

He is a decent fellow, and I hope he will reach his happy valley and the scantily-clad, pretty angel.

W. M. KNOX.

"GOD OR NATURE?"

Dost thou behold the myriad spheres of space,
Revolving by imperial Nature's sway,
In magic orbits, swift and beautiful,
Like restless armies, robed in armour bright,
And panting for a vaster destiny,
Than all the dazzling, golden-vested suns,
Whose planetary systems, with their throngs
Of sister-satellites in ordered trains,
Move with a motion, mighty matter yields,
And so fulfil her giant purposes?
In Nature there is intellect and force.
God is not Nature, nor is Nature God,
For he who traces to her essence deep
All atoms that exist in boundless space,
On all the members of all systems known,
And those of which the starry poets dream,
Will smite to death the name of mystery,
And shake the starry battlements of heaven;
But naught of God in all the universe
His mind will ever know, but motions great,
The attributes of matter, and the cause
Of all that is, and all that is to be,
Will lead his mind to one eternal thought,
That motion is the Way, the Truth, and Life.

ARTHUR J. WILLETTTS.

"Ah, my dear brother," said the minister to his unregenerate parishioner, "I have talked to you many, many times, but to-day I come to ask you directly to be a Christian." "Um—er—er," replied the parishioner, "I'm very sorry, Mr. Textor, but you see, this is house-cleaning week, and really you are asking too much. Come around later."

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, April 22, Spinner's Hall, St. George's-road, Bolton : 11, "Christ and Democracy"; 3, "The Atheist Shoemaker and the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes"; 6.30, "A Search for the Soul."

April 29, Plymouth.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—April 22, Failsforth; 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, London. 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.W.

NEMO.—Capital! See paragraphs.

W. L.—The best cheap edition of Shelley is the one edited by W. M. Rossetti, and published by Routledge at 3s. 6d. This contains the verse of Shelley, but not his prose.

MEDALS (Manchester).—It is amusing to see Christians persecuting each other under a law which was intended against "infidels"; but if they like to harass or slay each other it is no business of ours. We believe it was the youth you mention—Percy Ward—who set the chief constable of Hull in motion against Mr. Foote; and we think he belongs to the party at Manchester which is now being threatened by the other party.

JOHN SAMUEL.—Thanks. See paragraph.

D. F. GLOAK.—Glad to hear of your success. See "Sugar Plums." Kindly write your Lecture Notice on a separate slip of paper, not in the midst of a letter.

F. S. PAUL.—Mr. Foote has issued no such challenge.

H. ROWDEN, secretary of the Lambeth Branch, has removed to 33 Carlton-road, Kentish Town, N.W.

W. G. UNKLES.—(1) Your orthodox friends are quite mistaken. Mr. Hughes and Mr. Lunn were jointly responsible for the attack on the missionaries, and it was carried on through Mr. Hughes's paper. Both were included in the Committee's condemnation. The official report is in print, and your friends can see for themselves. Of course it is true that Mr. Hughes relied upon Dr. Lunn, just as he relies upon Julia Gibson and Sister Lily in the Atheist Shoemaker affair. He also relied upon "competent authority" when he stated that Primitive Methodists had a thousand ministers in places where they were not wanted, though they have only about that number of ministers altogether. (2) The list is an absurdity. We referred to it years ago until we were tired of it, and probably our readers too.

E. S.—(1) Faith, like other words, is often used with different meanings. Religious faith is not the same thing as Secular faith. The latter is according to knowledge, the former is without knowledge, and sometimes against knowledge. We take your illustration, and ask how much "faith" is required for a sinking man to grasp at a rope or a life-buoy? Such "faith" is not the "faith" of theology, which consists in believing without evidence, or in spite of it, on grounds of what is called "authority." (2) You will find ample information on the subject in Mr. Foote's *Darwin on God*.

W. E. BLACKBURN.—Pleased to hear you "thoroughly enjoy" reading the *Freethinker*, and that you are delighted with Mr. Watts's recent articles on "Secularism and Social Problems." We advise you to join the N.S.S., for the present, through the central secretary.

C. BATTLE.—Thanks. See paragraph.

J. J. HAYES.—Thanks for the copy. We shall be glad to know if you receive an answer.

W. L. PROSSER.—Our compliments to the "nipper."

J. HARKIS.—Glad to learn you will be as active as ever.

S. RHUDSTEIN.—Better give such fellows a wide berth.

X.—(1) Freethinker is a term that came into use last century. It was used by the opponents of Christianity, and is so still. No man can be a Freethinker who believes he may be damned for thinking freely in any direction. (2) Grote's *Analysis* was written from Bentham's notes. Mr. Forder sells it at 1s. 6d. (3) Any member of the N.S.S., belonging to a Branch or otherwise, is free to speak and vote at the Conference. (4) We shall publish a long report of the proceedings. (5) Mr. Foote will shortly write on some other Christian books. (6) We do not offer volumes of the *Freethinker* for sale; but Mr. Forder may be able to supply you with any you want.

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—Der 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—Wiltshire Times—Glamorgan Free Press—Orusader—Manchester Guardian—Freedom—Sunderland Daily Echo—Cambria Daily Leader—Yorkshire Pioneer—Echo—Isle of Man Times—Morning Leader—Liverpool Mercury—Star—Reading Observer—Crescent.

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

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.

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EDITORIAL.

I REGRET to have to break some lecturing engagements this week, though my place has been filled, in one instance, by my friend and colleague, Mr. Charles Watts, and, in another instance, by Mr. Cohen. For some time I have been overworking myself, and when a bad cold falls upon one, in such circumstances, it is not so easily shaken off. As soon as possible I must get off to the seaside and take a good rest. Meanwhile I am lightening my burdens as far as possible. I have already transferred my printing to Mr. Charles Watts, who is now settled down in London. By-and-bye I shall try to deal in the same way with the mechanical arrangements of my book and pamphlet publishing. It is more than one man's work to edit the *Freethinker*, labor as a Secular lecturer, and act as President of the National Secular Society. Many people would be astonished to know in detail what I have had to do with my own hands during the last four or five years. That rate of work cannot be kept up for ever, and I must make the necessary adjustment.

G. W. FOOTE.

SUGAR PLUMS.

Mr. Charles Watts had a good and enthusiastic audience last Sunday evening at the Hall of Science, London. His announcement that he intended to run as a purely Secular candidate for the London School Board, in November next, was received with hearty applause, which was renewed again and again. To-day, Sunday, April 22, Mr. Watts lectures afternoon and evening at Failsforth.

At the Hall of Science next Sunday morning Mr. H. Snell, who is spoken of as a candidate for the School Board for Woolwich, will lecture on "Our School Board Program, and how it should be Carried." In the evening Mr. Heaford deals with "Theism and the Problem of Evil."

Next Wednesday the last Social Gathering of the season will be held at the Hall of Science. There will be vocal and instrumental music, Readings by Mr. G. W. Foote and others, and dancing. The tickets are only 6d., and may be obtained of Miss Vance or at the hall.

The Camberwell Branch, at its general meeting on Sunday, passed the following resolution:—"That we heartily congratulate the President of the N.S.S. on his complete and masterly overthrow of Mr. Hughes and his falsehoods, and at the same time regret that Mr. Holyoake should so easily have allowed himself to become the tool of an unscrupulous enemy."

Joseph Symes, writing after the date of the extract we give elsewhere from the *Liberator*, and having the *Freethinker* of Jan. 28 before him, rejoices that "Mr. Foote completely turns the tables upon Mr. Hughes, and shows him to be a most deliberate liar and shuffler." Joseph indulges in some very plain speech about Mr. Holyoake.

Mr. Symes seems to have a rather mixed lot out in Melbourne. He has married a second wife and become a father. On the other hand, he has been savagely assaulted by a man called Brown, one of the gang that jobbed him out of the fine Hall of Science which was built by his labors. The fellow appears to have come behind Mr. Symes and struck him heavily, twice, on the side of the head with the butt-end of a whip. "My sole fault," says Mr. Symes, "lies in the fact that I have devoted my life to the interests of the people, and have exposed sneaks, rogues, and villains of every species." Good! But it is a dangerous game, Joseph. We hope they won't make Melbourne too hot for you. If they do, come back to old England.

The Humanitarian League hold their third annual meeting on Tuesday, April 24, in the hall of the Ideal Club, 185 Tottenham Court-road, at three o'clock, the chair being taken by C. H. Hopwood, Q. C., M. P., the Recorder of Liverpool, who will deliver an address entitled "A Plea for Mercy to Offenders." The Third Annual Report mentions the *Freethinker* among the papers who have opened their columns for the advocacy of humane principles.

As the Parish Councils Act comes into force this year, the first meetings being fixed by the Act for Nov. 8, 1894, where not otherwise fixed by the Local Government Board, Freethinkers, and especially those in country districts, should do what they can to promote the public interests on the first Parish Councils. It is these that will have to settle—or the law for them—what are parish charities and what are church charities. And if the parsons are not watched they will get matters their own way. The adoption of Burial Acts, Baths and Washhouses Acts, Public Libraries Act, and the Public Improvement Act will come within the scope of the new Parish Councils, which must be called in every parish with a population of over 300. All parliamentary electors have the right to vote.

The Dundee Branch continues to make progress. It now numbers sixty members, and hopes to run up to a hundred during the winter. Mr. Watts delivers three Sunday lectures at Dundee on April 29, and on May 17 and 18 he holds a public debate there with the Rev. David Macrae.

Mr. John Harkis has ceased to be the secretary of the Aberdeen Branch. He will work for it, however, in other directions. His successor is Miss Bella Calder, 89 Gallowgate. We feel confident that she will make a zealous and efficient secretary. The Branch has suspended its Sunday evening meetings and gone in for Sunday evening rambles. Members are requested to foregather every Sunday evening about 6.30 at the Queen's statue, end of George-street.

Mr. St. John is announced to lecture on the Brighton Level at 3 next Sunday, and on the front opposite Lion Mansion at 7.30. It is requested that all local Freethinkers will attend, as certain rowdy and abusive Christians from London have recently been fomenting disturbance.

The *West Yorkshire Pioneer* gives a good report of the reply made by Mr. J. Routh at the Market-place, Hawes, to a recent abusive sermon on Atheism, by the Rev. E. J. Simons. Mr. Routh asked for opposition, but none was forthcoming.

In olden times St. George's Day, April 23, used to be kept as a holyday in England. In "Henry VI." Shakespeare says:—

Bonfires in France I am forthwith to make,
To keep our great St. George's feast withal.

Few moderns would care to celebrate the bacon contractor of Cappadocia, famous as St. George, whose legend has got mixed up with that of Horus and the dragon. But April 23 happens to be the birthday of a better saint—a true English one—viz., Shakespeare himself; and but for the proximity of the old Pagan festivals of Easter and Whitsuntide, no more fitting day for an English holiday could be celebrated than the anniversary of the maker of our Saxon Bible.

The philosophical remains of the late G. Oroom Robertson, editor of *Mind*, edited with a memoir by his friend and collaborator, Professor Alex. Bain, of Aberdeen, will shortly be published by Messrs. Williams and Norgate. A feature of interest will be letters from J. S. Mill, chiefly on the movement for Woman Suffrage.

It is expected that the terra-cotta statue to Mr. Charles Bradlaugh, which his admirers propose to erect in one of the public squares of Northampton, will be unveiled on May 28. Mr. Morley, being asked to preside at the ceremony, replied:—"I am much obliged to your Committee for the honor they do me in sending me an invitation to unveil Mr. Bradlaugh's statue. He was a courageous, honorable, upright and patriotic citizen, and I would have done what you ask if other engagements had allowed. But I am so occupied with other matters which cannot be neglected that I am unable to comply with your request."

Liberty, which we are very pleased to see again after an interregnum, comes to us looking as if it was all in blank verse. Mr. Tucker, who has long been connected with the printing trade, has abolished what he calls "the silly and costly process of 'justification'"—the spacing out of each line to make all end equally. He claims that this would mean a daily addition to the world's productive power of the labor of two hundred thousand people. But it is a conservative world, and even printers who have given up sanctification may pause before discarding justification.

The *Monist* for April is full of interesting philosophical matter. Professor C. Lloyd Morgan opens with "Three Aspects of Monism." General M. Trumbull follows with a paper on "The Parliament of Religions," and cites many heretical utterances from the speakers of all faiths. For instance, Dr. Briggs allowed "We cannot defend the morals of the Old Testament at all points." While a Jewish Rabbi, Dr. Hirsch, said: "Character and conduct, not creed, will be the keynote of the gospel in the church universal." The editor writes on "Ethics and Cosmic Order," and discusses the Buddhist doctrines of Karma and Nirvana; while Mr. Lester F. Ward replied to Mr. Ferrero against "The Exemption of Women from Labor."

The *Truthseeker* of New York reprints Mr. Foote's article on "Mr. Gladstone's Religion" from our columns. Mr. Watts tells our American friends about the Atheist Shoemaker. Mr. Heston has taken a difficult subject for his cartoon, which represents man on the various planetary bodies awaiting the arrival of a Savior to crucify, and some afraid there is not enough only begotten Son to go round.

Colonel Ingersoll's recent trip through the South was a kind of triumphal tour. The heartiest of receptions greeted him everywhere, and in Memphis and Chattanooga the hotel-keepers even refused payment of their bills. He and his party did not owe them anything, they said; and he must come again.

We are sorry to learn that Mr. Viktor E. Lennstrand, who has gone through no fewer than five surgical operations, is still in precarious health. Mr. and Mrs. Wickell are, however, ably sustaining *Fritankaren*, and the cause of Freethought, now fairly started in Sweden, will not be allowed to decline.

Herr Otto Wichers von Gogh, a well-known German Freethinking author, has written a play entitled *Die Sociale Frage*—The Social Question, which will be produced in Grafton Hall, Tottenham Court-road, early this summer.

The clerical party in Hungary has received a severe check. The proposal for legalising civil marriages was first carried by a majority of nearly three to one, and now the Diet has accepted the proposal without revision.

The use of cassocks by a surpliced choir has been defended on scriptural grounds: "The Lord taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man" (Psalms cxlvii. 10).

Wife: "George, I wish you belonged to my Church. The new minister is a man you would like." Husband: "Not such a bigoted Methodist as the other, then, is he?" Wife: "No; he's very broad! He believes that Episcopalians, if they repent, can be saved."

A FREETHINKER AT LARGE.

No. XIX.—TWO BITES AT A CHERRY.

SEVERAL moons have waxed and waned since I went, in company with the editor of this journal, to hear Mr. E. A. Fletcher, of the *Daily Chronicle*, enlighten a sceptical generation as to the true inwardness of the Sermon on the Mount. The chairman on that occasion was Mr. Bruce Wallace, M.A.; for the M.P. who had undertaken to preside did not turn up—after the manner of his kind. Mr. Wallace's introductory speech was a model performance: it consisted, if I remember rightly, of fifteen words. Straightway I conceived an abiding affection for Bruce Wallace, and determined sooner or later to seek him out and learn more about him in his "Brotherhood Church," Southgate-road.

This long-cherished design I have at last been able to effect; and I went not only once, but twice in the same day, to hear the fraternal gospel; the first time from the lips of Bruce Wallace, and secondly from Miss C. E. D. Martyn, who is presumably a member of his congregation, for she was present at the morning service and joined in the hymn-singing with much vigor and effect. In the morning the service was of the ordinary Congregational description; in the afternoon Miss Martin spoke on "The Sociology of Jesus" at the weekly "Conference on Social Questions."

In my young days Southgate-road Chapel was a Congregational temple of the formal commonplace kind, and the building possesses no features to distinguish it from a thousand others of its class. Upon one of its interior walls stands a marble tablet to the memory of the Rev. James Spong, who was its pastor for many years. Bruce Wallace, the present minister, belongs to a modern school of religious thought; and he is making a resolute and chivalrous attempt to pour new wine into the old bottles of Congregationalism. He, like the other members, earns his living by work outside the church, and gives his services without salary. The small endowment to which he is entitled as pastor he devotes to the "Forward Movement" in connection with the chapel. There is a very formidable "List of Meetings" regularly held, comprising a great deal of ordinary church work, such as mothers' meetings, Bible classes, Sunday schools, and the like; but in addition to this Mr. Wallace is making a strenuous effort to promote secular salvation by his "Brotherhood Trust," the object of which is to "carry on business, not for the profit of capitalists, but for the benefit of purchasers and producers." A long account of this enterprise has recently appeared in the *Daily Chronicle*.

Morning service, as I learned from announcements in the weekly papers, commenced at 11 o'clock; and two minutes before the hour I entered the chapel, expecting to find a goodly gathering of the forward ones. Alack! the congregation consisted of a girl and two small children. Gradually we increased in numbers, but the new comers were of the common or garden kind—they were evidently not the "advanced" section. In front of me sat two well-groomed youths, with (of course) their two giggling maidens; and the quartette flirted so shamelessly during the service that I could feel my hair turning prematurely grey.

About a quarter past eleven Bruce Wallace appeared and took his place at the reading-desk. He is a man comparatively young, well on the right side of forty. He does not strike one as a "strong" man; but there is that in his face which betokens deep earnestness and great tenacity of purpose. If circumstances prove favorable, he may go very far; but it is doubtful if he will ever be able to influence, to any great extent, the conditions which surround him.

Certainly he failed to impress the ordinary Congregational service with any "forward" stamp. Instead of bending the old futile forms to his will, he was simply smothered by them. Prayers, hymn-singing, Bible-readings and sermon: here was the dull round of ancient days repeated, despite Bruce Wallace and his aspirations after better things. The congregation appeared as listless and indifferent as in

any Evangelical church. For example, the flirting four in front of me sang unmelodiously this verse:

"O love of God, how deep and great!
Far deeper than man's deepest hate!
Self-fed, self-kindled, like the light,
Changeless, eternal, infinite!"

But little *they* cared about the deepness and greatness of God's self-fed, self-kindled love! The young mashers were far more concerned as to the whiteness of their cuffs and collars, and the girls evidently thought more of the fit of their new gloves than of the "changeless, eternal infinite."

So far as I could gather, the service differed very slightly from others of its class. In reading a chapter from an epistle to the Philippians, Mr. Wallace departed from custom by occasionally interpolating comments and expository notes of his own. The effect was not happy. There was a sad want of harmony between the interjected sentences and the grand old English of the translators. Every moment I expected to see the ghost of St. Paul appear above the speaker's head and indignantly exclaim: "Them's not my sentiments."

Throughout the weary grind of prayers and hymns and gospel-reading I cherished the hope that the sermon would afford Mr. Wallace an opportunity of getting out of the old rut. But here disappointment awaited me. It was all about salvation by grace, and God's abiding disposition to save us if only we would receive the rich gift which he holds out to us. He is ever waiting and offering: all that we have to do is to unconditionally accept. That is faith; and so on and so forth. The only passage of special human interest in the sermon was a reference to the misery and degradation which exist in London, as in all great cities. "When we reflect," the preacher added, "that with all our church and chapel-going there is an enormous mass of life outside Christian hopes and aspirations, one's heart saddens and one feels hopeless. God's gift of salvation is open to all these, and is exactly what is wanted, individually and socially. If God's offer could only be accepted by the millions to-day, there would be a mighty revolution—not a bloody one, but a moral one." Most lame and impotent conclusion!

As I left the chapel I could not help feeling some measure of regret that an earnest reformer like Bruce Wallace should continue to hamper his limbs with the grave-clothes of superstition, and waste his time in singing hymns and prating of the salvation of God while the salvation of man by man himself is the one thing needful. But I hoped at least to be rid of this theological incubus at the "Conference on Social Questions" in the afternoon.

Three hours later I again found myself in the Brotherhood Church. This time the congregation was much larger, and in character it differed widely from its predecessor. The mashers and maidens were doubtless giggling elsewhere, and the proportion of "respectable" people was comparatively small. There was some *life* amongst the audience, and I noted several working-men in their toil-stained garments. At three o'clock Bruce Wallace again stood at the reading-desk, and by his side sat Miss C. E. D. Martyn, a tall, pleasant-featured young woman whose face is familiar upon Socialist platforms. Twenty valuable minutes were wasted in the singing of two hymns and the weaving of a prayer by Mr. Wallace. Then Miss Martyn addressed us upon "The Sociology of Jesus." The real subject, of course, was the sociology of Miss Martyn, with occasional references to Christ. I am bound to admit, however, that the lady was much more ingenuous and honest than average Christians of the new school in her efforts to reconcile the Sermon on the Mount with the teachings of common-sense and experience. The ordinary course is to put Christ's words on the rack, and twist them here, and pull them out there, and contract them elsewhere, until some feeble sort of correspondence is supposed to be effected between the ancient teaching and the modern practice. But Miss Martyn, to her credit be it said, did not stoop to such conjuring tricks. She took rather the line of Tolstoi, and blessed Christ altogether, while damning nineteenth-century civilisation with no uncertain sound. Jesus, for example, said: "Take no thought

for the morrow." How, asked Miss Martyn, can a state of society be right in which it is impossible to carry out Christ's teaching? In a Socialist community the State would look after everybody, and then there would be no necessity for the individual to take thought for the morrow. Again, she could conceive no possible circumstances under which a Christian would ever be justified in going to law with a brother Christian. With all this contempt for existing facts of life and human nature Miss Martyn combined a cheerful disregard for the facts of history. She claimed that the world was gradually becoming imbued with certain Christian ideas—such as liberty, fraternity, etc.—which are now detached from Christianity and set up as independent ethical principles. Miss Martyn is evidently under the impression that men never dreamed of freedom or died for it, never aspired to brotherly relations with their fellow-creatures, until the young Jew gave his open-air lecture on the hill-side. Happily she is still young, and has time to learn.

Of the discussion it is unnecessary to say much. Five minutes was the limit fixed for each speaker, and no man deserved more. We had jerky contributions to the "debate" from Anarchists, Socialists, and followers of Tolstoi. One Secularist essayed a criticism of some very vulnerable points; but he was clearly not accustomed to public work, and floundered painfully to a speedy ending. Far more confident and expert were the Trafalgar-square orators who supported the Anarchist and Socialist view; but their observations were in the main irrelevant to the subject.

The one thing that struck me as significant during the "conference" was the ready and general applause that followed several of Miss Martyn's references to Christianity as the hope of the workers. When she declared that a "detestation of slavery is the result of a gradual realisation of Christian morals," the audience cheered and clapped their hands with delight. This surprised and startled me. Can it be that the worker of to-day fails to detect the sharp hook of priestly domination which is hidden beneath the bait of a popular Christ? Are the people, after feeling upon their pallid cheek the first gust of free air, to be led again into captivity under the banner of a democratic Jesus?

As I left the chapel this dismal foreboding weighed heavily upon me. It may be that my apprehensions were groundless, the phantom offspring of a liver disordered by two attendances at church in one day. But the conviction forces itself upon me that the danger is not wholly imaginary; and the friends of intellectual liberty will do well to take it into account.

GEORGE STANDRING.

SCIENCE AND THE MILLENNIUM.

M. BERTHELOT delivered a remarkable speech at the banquet of the Syndical Chamber of chemical product manufacturers on Friday, April 6. M. Berthelot's subject was "The World in the Year 2000." After saying that he looked to chemistry for deliverance from present-day social evils, and for the possibility of realising the Socialists' dreams, that is, if a spiritual chemistry could be discovered to change human nature as deeply as chemical science could modify the globe, he continued: "This change will be greatly due to chemistry utilising the heat of the sun and the central heat of the globe. The latter can be obtained by shafts 3,000 or 4,000 metres in depth. Modern engineers are equal to the task of sinking. Then the water down so deep would be hot and able to keep all possible machinery going. By natural distillation it would furnish fluid free from microbes, and would be an unlimited source of chemical and electrical energy. This could be everywhere developed, and thousands of years might pass without any noticeable diminution. With such a source of heat all chemical transformation will be easy. The production of alimentary matters will be a consequence. This production is in principle resolved, and has been for forty years, by the syntheses of grease and oils. That of hydrates of carbon is going on, and that of nitrogenous substances is not far off. When energy can be cheaply obtained food can be made from carbon taken from carbonic acid, hydrogen taken from water, and nitrogen taken from the air. What work the vegetables have so far done science will soon be able to do better, and with far greater profusion, and independently of seasons or evil microbes or insects. There will be then no passion to own land, beasts need not be bred

for slaughter, man will be milder and more moral, and barren regions may be preferable to fertile as habitable places, because they will not be pestiferous from ages of manuring. The reign of chemistry will beautify the planet. There will under it be no need to disfigure it with the geometrical works of the agriculturalist, or with the grime of factories and chimneys. It will recover its verdure and flora. The earth will be a vast pleasure garden, and the human race will live in peace and plenty. But it will not be idle, for idleness is not happiness, and work is the source of all virtue. In the earth, renewed by chemistry, people will work more than ever, but according to their special tastes and faculties and from high and noble motives. The great object will be then to develop more and more the æsthetic and the intellectual faculties." M. Berthelot ended by drinking "To work, to justice, and to the happiness of humanity." "May we all see your dream realised," was the answer. "The year 2000 is so near, and yet it is so far off, since none of us can hope to see it dawn."—*Daily News*.

BOOK CHAT.

Carmen Sylva, the Queen of Roumania, has shown herself a bit of a Freethinker in her poems. In her recently published volume of *Pensees*, she says: "It is better to have a physician for a confessor than a priest. You tell the priest that you detest mankind; he answers, 'You are not a Christian.' The physician gives you a dose of rhubarb, and you love your fellow being. You tell the priest that you are tired of living. He answers, 'Suicide is a crime.' The physician gives you a stimulant, and immediately you feel life supportable."

A curious little volume reaches us from America. It is published by the Truthseeker Company, New York; and the author, or rather the compiler, is Baron Harden Hickey. The title is "Euthanasia: the Ethics of Suicide," but it might as well, or even better, be called "The Suicide's Handbook," on account of its illustrations showing you how to shuffle off this mortal coil when you feel disposed for the experiment. The first shows a gentleman sitting on a bed, and glaring at the nozzle of a revolver, which is presented to his right temple. Next comes a drowning person, holding up a pair of wooden hands. Then a melancholy-looking gentleman, who looks like a twenty-years' victim of bad liver, hanging in a noose which seems to press his windpipe very gently, and to give him ample opportunity for appropriate reflections. Charcoal fumes, poison, and throat-cutting have each a picture. Anyone who is tired of life, and wishes to give a job to the coroner, must be difficult to please if he cannot find something suitable in this budget of *felo de se* prescriptions.

"Suicide," says Baron Hickey, "has become such a common occurrence in our time—the average being one every three minutes—that it merits to attract more attention than the morbid curiosity of the readers of the daily papers." Accordingly he has compiled four hundred paragraphs, containing "the pith of what has been written upon the subject by the greatest thinkers the world has produced." "May it"—he piously ejaculates—"nerve the faltering arm of the poor wretch to whom life is loathsome, but death full of terrors."

We very much doubt whether it will produce that effect. It would probably drive a world-weary reader into a fit of reaction, ending in a wild debauch. Baron Hickey's gruesome little book is, after all, not likely to eclipse the gaiety of nations.

The paragraphs have, of course, a certain value, being taken from Zeno, Epictetus, Diogenes, Seneca, Cicero, Marcus Aurelius, Montaigne, Rousseau, Donne, Hume, Gibbon, Montesquieu, etc. They are calculated to take the self-conceit out of persons who think themselves of infinite importance in the universe. In some of them a deep thought is well, and now and then finely, expressed. Sensible people may find profit in the text of "Euthanasia," and feel no desire to try "the great Perhaps." On fools it will make no impression, good, bad, or indifferent.

Thumbscrew and Rack is another Truthseeker Company pamphlet by George E. Macdonald. This witty writer gives an account of an exhibition of instruments of torture he inspected in New York. His humor rests upon a solid ground of seriousness, and the pamphlet is one with a purpose. The letterpress descriptions are helped by gruesome woodcuts, and the reader who turns over these twenty-four pages will get a good idea of how Christianity was promoted in "the brave days of old." George Macdonald's pamphlet should have a wide circulation.

A CHAT WITH COLONEL "BOB" INGERSOLL.

OBITER DICTA ON ORATORS AND ORATORY.

It was at his own law office in New York City that I had my talk with that very notable American, Colonel Robert G. Ingersoll.

"Bob" Ingersoll Americans call him affectionately; in a company of friends it is "The Colonel."

A more interesting personality it would be hard to find, and those who know even a little of him will tell you that a bigger-hearted man probably does not live. Suppose a well-knit frame, grown stouter than it once was, and a fine, strong face, with a vivid gleam in the eyes, a deep, uncommonly musical voice, clear cut, decisive, and a manner entirely delightful, yet tinged with a certain reserve. Introduce a smoking cigar, the smoke rising in little curls and billows, then imagine a rugged sort of picturesqueness in dress, and you get, not by any means the man, but still some notion of "Bob" Ingersoll.

As Chauncey Depew and Horace Porter are the admitted masters of American after-dinner speaking, so, probably, Colonel Ingersoll stands at the front of American orators. The natural thing, therefore, was that I should ask him—a master in the art—about oratory. What he said I shall give in his own words precisely as I took them down from his lips, for in the case of such a good commander of the old English tongue that is of some importance. But the wonderful limpidness, the charming pellucidness of Ingersoll can only be adequately understood when you also have the finishing touch of his febrile voice.

"I should be glad," I put it, after some trifling chat, "if you would tell me what you think the differences are between English and American oratory."

"There is no difference," he said, "between the real English and the real American orator. Oratory is the same the world over. The man who thinks on his feet, who has the pose of passion, the face that thought illumines, a voice in harmony with the ideals expressed, who has logic like a column and poetry like a vine, who transfigures the common, dresses the ideals of the people in purple and fine linen, who has the art of finding the best and noblest in his hearers, and who in a thousand ways creates the climate in which the best grows and flourishes, and bursts into blossom—that man is an orator, no matter of what time or what country."

"If you were, sir, to compare individual English and American orators—recent or living orators in particular—what would you say?"

"I never have heard any of the great English speakers, and consequently can pass no judgment as to their merits, except such as depends on reading. I think, however, the finest paragraph ever uttered in Great Britain was by Curran in his defence of Rowan. I have never read one of Mr. Gladstone's speeches, only fragments. I think he lacks logic. Bright was a great speaker, but he lacked imagination and the creative faculty. Disraeli spoke for the clubs, and his speeches were artificial. We have had several fine speakers in America. I think that Thomas Corwin stands at the top of the natural orators. Serjeant S. Prentiss, the lawyer, was a very great talker. Henry Ward Beecher was the greatest orator that the pulpit has produced. Theodore Parker was a great orator. In this country, however, probably Daniel Webster occupies the highest place in general esteem."

"Which would you say are the better orators, speaking generally—the American people or the English people?"

"I think Americans are, on the average, better talkers than the English. I think England has produced the greatest literature of the world; but I do not think England has produced the greatest orators of the world. I know of no English orator equal to Webster or Corwin or Beecher."

Here Colonel Ingersoll stopped and looked at the red end of his cigar. I thought he was to qualify his last sentence, but he said nothing.

"Coming to yourself," I remarked, "would you mind telling me how it was you came to be a public speaker, a lecturer, an orator?"

"We call this America of ours free, and yet I found it was very far from free. Our writers and our speakers declared that here in America Church and State were divorced. I found this to be untrue. I found that the Church was supported by the State in many ways, that people who failed to believe certain portions of the creeds were not allowed to testify in courts or to hold office. It occurred to me that someone ought to do something towards making this country intellectually free, and after a while I thought that I might as well endeavor to do this as wait for another. That is the way in which I came to make speeches; it was an action in favor of liberty. I have said things because I wanted to say them, and because I thought they ought to be said."

"Perhaps you will tell me your methods as a speaker, for I am sure it would be interesting to know them?"

"Sometimes, and frequently, I deliver a lecture several times before it is written. I have it taken by a shorthand writer, and afterwards written out. At other times I have dictated a lecture, and delivered it from manuscript. The course pursued depends on how I happen to feel at the time.

Sometimes I read a lecture, and sometimes I deliver lectures without any notes—this again depending much on how I happen to feel. So far as methods are concerned, everything should depend on feeling. Attitude, gesture, voice, emphasis, should all be in accord with and spring from feeling, from the inside."

"Is there any possibility of your coming to England, and, I need hardly add, of your coming to speak?"

"I have thought of going over to England, and I may do so. There is an England in England for which I have the highest possible admiration—the England of culture, of art, and of principle."

J. M. (*The Sketch*).

CHAMFORT, THE FRIEND OF MIRABEAU.

A HUNDRED years ago (April 13, 1794) there expired at Paris a Freethinking wit of the first order, Sebastian Roch Nicholas Chamfort. Born in Auvergne, 1741, he knew no parent save his mother, a peasant girl, who was "companion to a lady." When the lady saw another companion was coming, Chamfort's mother was turned out of doors. Her son, however, consoled her with his love, and in after life he often denied himself necessities to supply her wants. He was placed at the College des Grassins. Here he studied hard, though he said, "What I learned I have forgotten, and the little I know was guesswork." Yet he carried off all the prizes. Some fellow-students proposed to travel over the world. He remarked: "Before making the tour of the world, suppose we were to make the tour of ourselves." For his attainments he had the offer of an abbey, but he said: "I will never become a priest for three reasons—I like honor and not honors; philosophy, not hair-cloth; the fair sex, not money." He sought, often in vain, for literary employment, and at first found nothing better than writing sermons. In time, however, he gained a prize at the Academy for an *éloge* on Molière, and, coming under the patronage of M^{de}. Helvetius, attained a seat at the Academy himself. Offered a secretaryship by the Prince of Condé, lack of money forced him to accept, though he spent his time in devising means of leaving without giving offence. "My life is a tissue of striking contrasts with my principles. I do not like princes, and yet I am attached to a prince; my republican maxims are known, and yet I live among courtiers; I like poverty, and all my friends are among the rich; I fly from men, but men come after me; literature is my only consolation, and yet I am never with men of letters; I wished to be a member of the Academy, and now I never go there; I think that illusions are necessary to my existence, and yet I live without illusions." One friend he found at court, the Titanic Mirabeau; and, curiously enough, the man of action treated the man of thought as his master. In a letter to Chamfort, whom he called *une tête électrique*, Mirabeau says: "I left off my swaddling clothes too late. The conventions of mankind have fettered me too long; and when my bonds were somewhat loosened (for broken they never were) I still found myself bedecked with the liveries of opinion. But I was too passionate, and had sacrificed too much to fortune ever to become a man of nature. It is not in the midst of dangers that one can follow a regular route. Oh, if I had but known you ten years ago, what precipices and ravines might I not have avoided! Never a day passes, and never does anything serious occur, without my saying to myself, 'No, Chamfort would frown; let me not do so, let me not write that;' or, 'Chamfort will be pleased; for Chamfort's mind and soul are tempered in the same water as my own.'"

Chamfort embraced the revolution with ardor. His sympathies had always been with the poor, whom he calls "the negroes of Europe." Rivarol said there would be no patronage of men of letters in a republic. "So," replied Chamfort, "you are one of those who forgive all the harm the priests have done, on reflecting that, but for the priest, we should not have had the comedy of 'Tartufo.'" Rivarol reminded Chamfort that he was formerly one of those who pleaded the cause of nobility. "It was, you said, an intermediary between the king and the people." "Yes," replied Chamfort, "but I added something else: true, an intermediary, but as the hound is an intermediary between the huntsman and the hare."

Chamfort took part in the leading events of the Revolution, and became secretary of the famous Jacobin Club. He disliked windy speeches. Once he rose and said that he would speak on despotism and democracy. The following is his entire speech. "I everything; the rest nothing: there is despotism. I another; another I: there is democracy." To those who advocated slight reforms, he said, "You would have the Augean stables cleaned with a feather broom! Society must be refounded, as Bacon said the understanding must." Chamfort said that priests and kings proscribed suicide in order to rivet servitude. When thrown into prison by Robespierre, he found it intolerable. "It is neither life nor death; for me there is no middle course—I must either open my eyes on the blue expanse of heaven, or close them in the tomb." He regained his liberty, but had scarcely had time to breathe the free air, still watched by a

gendarmerie, when his prison doors again opened to receive him. He swore that he would elude his pursuers; and, on their coming to seize him, placed a pistol against his forehead and fired: the ball shattered his nose and destroyed one of his eyes. Astonished at still finding himself alive, he took up a razor and tried to cut his throat; but death rejected him. It was in vain that, maddened by pain, he slashed at his breast and cut himself in every part of his body. His blood flowed from his wounds in streams, and he fell down exhausted, but still living. He dictated to those who came to drag him to prison: "I, Sebastian Roch Nicholas Chamfort, declare that I wished to die a free man, rather than be led like a slave to prison." He signed this thoroughly Roman declaration with a steady hand and a flourish traced in blood. Strange to say, he still lived on for many days, and when at length he succumbed he said: "I am at last about to quit this world, where the heart must break if it be not brazened." A number of the wise and witty sayings of Chamfort, translated by Mr. Foote, appeared in the *Freethinker* for Jan. 4, 1893. J. M. W.

OBITUARY.

MRS. LUCY ROSSETTI, wife of the author and critic, William Michael Rossetti, and eldest daughter of the late distinguished painter, Mr. Ford Madox Brown, died at San Remo on April 12. She was herself an artist of some merit, and will be much missed in the circle to which she belonged.

N.S.S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss E. M. Vance acknowledges:—Barnsley Branch, 5s. 9d.; East London Branch, 2s. 6d.; West Auckland Branch, 2s. 6d.; Hanley Branch, 5s. 1d.; F. Jones, 2s. 6d.; Chatham Branch, 9s. 10½d.; North West London (Milton Hall), 2s. 6d.; parcel from Mr. and Mrs. Samson.

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.] Secretaries may, to save postage, send their monthly lecture lists.

LONDON.

Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, E.C.: 11.15, H. Snell, "Our School Board Program, and How it Should be Carried" (free); 8.30, musical selections; 7, W. Heaford, "God and the Enigma of Evil" (admission free; reserved seats 3d. and 6d.). Wednesday at 8, last Social Gathering of the season (tickets 6d.).

Battersea Secular Hall (back of Battersea Park Station): 7.45, C. Cohen, "God and God-Makers" (free). Tuesday at 8, social gathering (free). Wednesday at 8, dramatic club.

Camberwell—81 New Church-road, S.E.: 7.30, Touzeau Parris, "The Evolution of the Religious Ideal."

Hammersmith Club, 1 The Grove, Broadway: Thursday, a lecture.

Walthamstow—Workmen's Hall, High-street: Wednesday at 8, Geo. Standing, "The Church and the People."

Wimbledon—Liberty Hall, Curtis's Coffee House (Broadway entrance): 7, a lecture (free).

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Battersea Park-gates: 11.30, W. Heaford, "Science and the Bible."

Camberwell (Station-road): 11.30, a lecture.

Finsbury Park (near the band-stand): 11, George Standing, "Working out our own Salvation"; 3, R. Rossetti, "The Progress of Science and Freethought."

Hammersmith Bridge (Middlesex side): 8, H. Snell, a lecture. Hyde Park (near Marble-arch): 11.30, Stanley Jones, "Was Christ the Son of God?"; 3.30, "The Christian Religion." Wednesday at 8, St. John, a lecture.

Islington—Prebend-street, Packerington-street, Essex-road: 11.30, A. Guest, "Lights and Shades of Christ's Teachings." 1, members' meeting at Milner Lodge.

Mill End Waste: 11.30, F. Haslam, "What is our Religion?"

Old Pimlico Pier: 11.30, C. J. Hunt, "Conflict between Science and Religion."

Regent's Park (near Gloucester-gate): 11.30, James Rowney, "Christ's Teaching Defective"—part ii.

Victoria Park (near the Fountain): 11.15 and 3.15, O. Cohen will lecture.

Wood Green—Jolly Butchers'-hill: 11.30, A. B. Moss, "The Trial of Christianity"; 7, Sam Standing, "The Converted Atheist Shoemaker and other Kindred Lies."

COUNTRY.

Bolton—Spinner's Hall, St. George's-road: 11, G. W. Foote, "Christ and Democracy"; 3, "The Atheist Shoemaker and the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes"; 6.30, "A Search for the Soul." (3d., 6d., and 1s.).

Derby—Friar Gate Coffee Tavern: Tuesday evening, Mr. Henson, "Disestablishment."

Dundee—Cutlers' Hall, Murraygate: 11.30, mutual improvement class—debate on "Anarchism versus Socialism"; 2.30, concert; 6.30, "Gleanings from Freethought Works"—discussion thereon.

Glasgow—Ex-Mission Hall, 110 Brunswick-street: 12 (class), R. McKeown, "A Few Words about the Nineteenth Century"; 6.30, J. P. Gilmour, "The Science and Superstition of Hypnotism."

Hull—St. George's Hall, 8 Albion-street: 7, W. Fryer, "On Miracles."

Liverpool—Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street: 11.30, Tontine Society; 7, J. W. Baylis, B.A., "The Sovereignty of the People" Manchester—Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints': 11, Mrs. Besant, "How Indians Search for the Soul"; 3, "Religion and Science"; 6.30, "The Necessity for Ideals"

Newcastle-on-Tyne—Good Templar Hall, 2 Clayton-street, East: 7, R. Mitchell, "The Pagan Origin of Christianity" (free).

Portsmouth—Wellington Hall, Wellington-street, Southsea: 7, Mr. Hore will open discussion on "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray." Wednesday at 7.30, first meeting of Social Club.

Sheffield—Hall of Science, Rockingham-street: 7, W. Dyson, "Christian Veracity, Ancient and Modern"

South Shields—Capt. Duncan's Navigation School, King-street: 8.30, ethical class; 7.30, R. Chapman, "Property in Land."

Sunderland—Bridge End Vaults (long room above), Bridge-street: 7, the Secretary, "Christianity and Persecution."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

Brighton: St. John on the Level at 3, and on the Front at 7.30

LECTURERS' ENGAGEMENTS.

O. COHEN, 12 Merchant-street, Bow-road, E.—April 22, m. and a., Victoria Park; e., Battersea.

O. J. HUNT, 48 Fordingley-road, St. Peter's Park, London, W.—April 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 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 22, Camberwell; 29, Hall of Science. May 6, South Shields.

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