

The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.

VOL. XIV.—No. 51.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 23, 1894.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

SPECIAL.

The New Year's number of the "Freethinker," which will be published on Thursday, January 3, and dated Sunday, January 6, will contain a fine Portrait of the late Charles Bradlaugh, with a long account of his Life written by his Daughter. It will also contain a Cartoon, and interesting special articles. Price, as usual, twopence.

WHO WAS THE FATHER OF JESUS?

"WHO was the father of Jesus?" asked a teacher in a London Board school, and a boy replied "Joseph." The lad's answer was heard by a friend of the Rev. J. Coxhead, one of the clerical members of the Board, and was conveyed to the reverend gentleman, who lost no time in bringing it to the attention of his colleagues. Mr. Coxhead considered it awful that such an answer should be given to such a question. Joseph the father of Jesus! Angels, and ministers of grace, defend us! It was flat blasphemy. The doctrine of the Incarnation was in deadly peril if children were to be taught in this fashion.

Mr. Coxhead imparted his alarm to the majority of his colleagues, who carried a resolution that "Christian" should qualify the "religion" taught in the Board schools, and issued a circular to the teachers enjoining them to instruct the children in the doctrine of the Trinity, with special emphasis on the deity of Jesus Christ.

The teachers revolted against this circular, Nonconformists sent deputations to the Board to protest against the priestly machinations of the Church party, and a fierce controversy was waged in the newspapers. The agitation lasted for eighteen months, and culminated in an election which was contested with as much zeal as though the fate of the empire were trembling in the balance. Every stage of the struggle was marked by acrimonious charges and passionate recrimination. London was plunged in what the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes ingeniously called "the horrors of theological controversy."

Thus great events from little causes spring. Eighteen months' agitation, an unparalleled School Board election, and, in fact, the convulsion of London, all flowed from a schoolboy's reply to the question, "Who was the father of Jesus?" And perhaps there will be another long and fierce battle over the same transcendent problem.

Despite all the wrangling and hubbub, that schoolboy's answer seems to us a very sensible one. It showed, at any rate, that the obscurities of the orthodox faith had fallen harmlessly upon his young intelligence. Probably he was not old enough to understand them. All the boys he knew had fathers, though perhaps some were missing. It seemed to him perfectly natural that Jesus also had a father, and he had read in the New Testament that this father was Joseph. How could he understand the "virgin mother," the "Holy Ghost," the "overshadowing," the "immaculate conception," and the "Incarnation"? All this had been written by some ancient gentlemen in Greek, and certainly it was Greek to him.

Since this question, however, is of such importance that a wrong, or even a questionable, answer is enough to con-

vulse the greatest city in the world, let us give it a full consideration.

Presumption is always in favor of the natural. It is rational to believe that any baby has two parents. This is taken for granted when a woman seeks an order for maintenance against the father of her illegitimate child. The magistrate never supposes a possible alternative. It never occurs to him that the child may be the offspring of a supernatural being. There is a father somewhere, and the father is a man.

Every natural presumption is universal. It applies without exception. The onus of proof lies upon those who assert the contrary. If a man has been buried, the presumption is that he will lie quietly. Those who say that he still walks about must prove the allegation. The certificates of the doctor and the cemetery are sufficient on the other side. Similarly, when a baby is produced in long clothes, the presumption is that it came into the world in the ordinary manner. A mother on earth and a father in heaven is unnatural. Every child of woman born has a father on this planet, and if he cannot be found it is not the fault of biology. It is simply a case for the police.

It is presumable, therefore, that Jesus Christ (if he ever lived) came into existence like every other little Jew of his generation. Those who say that his mother was a woman, but his father was not a man, must prove the statement. They should also explain why a mother was necessary if a father was dispensable. A half miracle is doubly suspicious. It is as easy to be born without one parent as without two. Why then did Jesus Christ avail himself of the assistance of Mary? Why did he not drop down ready-born from heaven? He is said to have returned there as a man, after burial. Could he not also have come from there as a baby, without birth? Why was the plain natural mixed with the uncertain supernatural, to the subsequent confusion of every honest and candid intelligence?

Until we have evidence to the contrary, we are justified in saying that the father of Jesus was a man, and probably a Jew. Celsus, in the second century, twitted the Christians with worshipping the bastard child of a Jewish maiden and a Roman soldier; and the same idea is found in the *Sepher Toldoth Jeshu*—the Jewish Life of Christ. But we shall not believe this aspersion on Mary without cogent evidence. Still, there is nothing in it of a supernatural character. It may be libellous, but it is not miraculous. Whether a soldier or a carpenter, the father of Jesus was a man.

There is plenty of proof of this in the New Testament, and proof that the man was Joseph. And this proof is all the more striking and convincing because it has clearly been left in the "sacred books" to the detriment of the Church doctrines.

Several passages show that the countrymen of Jesus, his neighbors, and even his brothers, believed him to be the son of Joseph. In "his own country"—that is, in Galilee—the people were offended at his pretensions, and exclaimed: "Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us?" (Matthew xiii. 55, 56.) Luke (iv. 22) represents them as saying: "Is not this Joseph's son?" John (vi. 42) gives their words: "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph?" Other passages might be cited, but these will suffice. They show that the people of his own countryside, the people in and about Nazareth, regarded him as the son of Joseph.

Philip, the fourth apostle, after being called to follow Jesus, meets Nathaniel, and says he has found the one written of by Moses and the prophets—"Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph" (John i. 45). Not one of the apostles, in person, ever utters a doubt upon this point. The brothers of Jesus (John vii. 5) did not believe in him, and on one occasion (Mark iii. 21, 31) they tried to put him under restraint as a lunatic; which is quite irreconcilable with any knowledge on their part of his supernatural character. Mary herself (Luke ii. 48) speaks to Jesus of Joseph as "thy father."

All these passages, with others which we omit, are very awkward for the orthodox. They prove conclusively—that is, if the Gospels are to be regarded as at all historical—that the neighbors of Jesus, his brothers, and even his mother, treated him as the son of Joseph. Nobody at that time appears to have known anything about the Holy Ghost.

It is a curious fact that in the newly-discovered Syriac Gospels, which the Rev. J. Rendel Harris regards as certainly "superior in antiquity to anything yet known," it is distinctly stated that "Joseph begat Jesus, who is called Christ." The farther we go back the more is the natural birth of Jesus a matter of common acceptance. Our third Gospel, which is generally supposed to be the oldest, opens with the public ministry of Jesus. There is not a word in it about his childhood, nothing about his having been born of a virgin mother. Paul's "authentic" epistles, which are older still, are just as silent about the supernatural birth of Christ. Neither is there a word about it in the fourth Gospel. Positive and negative evidence abounds that Jesus was the son of Joseph, as well as of Mary, and born precisely like other children. The story of his supernatural birth, with all its far-reaching doctrinal issues, depends upon the authority of Matthew and Luke; and what that is worth we will proceed to investigate.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be continued.)

A PAGAN FEAST.

THAT at this season Christians celebrate, with feasting and rejoicing, the birth of their Savior, the man of sorrows, who came to an unfortunate early death, is a fact which should suffice to suggest the mythical foundation of their religion. If there is one thing more certain than another about Christmas, it is that it has no connection with the nativity of Jesus Christ other than an ecclesiastical one. In the earliest periods of the Christian Church the celebration was by no means uniform. Some, we are told, kept it on the 1st of January, others on the 9th; some kept the Jewish Passover at the end of March, others the feast of Tabernacles at the end of September. Yet others kept a festival of the birth of the Christ child in April and May. In the fourth century Cyril, Bishop of Jerusalem, addressed a letter to Pope Julius I., asking him to fix a day for the celebration, and a council resolved on adopting December 25, undeterred by the legend which relates that shepherds were watching their flocks by night, which, in Palestine, is not done at this inclement season.

Not only is the birthday of Christ uncertain, the very year is involved in hopeless obscurity. According to Matthew, it was in the days of Herod, who died B.C. 4. According to Luke, it was at the time when all the world was taxed and Cyrenius was governor of Syria, which never happened, and in the case of Palestine could not have been before A.D., when Archilauus, the son of Herod, was deposed. According to Irenæus (ii. 22), on the authority of the gospel and all the elders in Asia who were conversant with John, Jesus lived to be nearly, if not quite, fifty years of age, and must have been born some twenty years before the Christian Era, while the Jewish life of Christ fixes him in the reign of King Janneus, or nearly a century previously.

Upon the actual character of the Christmas feast no better authority can be cited than that of Dr. G. B. Tylor. In his principal work he says:—

"The Roman winter-solstice festival, as celebrated on December 25 (viii. Kal. Jan.) in connection with the

worship of the sun-god Mithra, appears to have been instituted in this special form after the Eastern campaign of Aurelian, A.D. 273, and to this festival the day owes its apposite name of Birthday of the Unconquered Sun, *Dies Natalis invicti*. With full symbolic appropriateness, though not with historical justification, the day was adopted in the Western Church, where it appears to have been generally introduced by the fourth century, and when in time it passed to the Eastern Church, as the solemn anniversary of the birth of Christ, the Christian *Dies Natalis*—Christmas Day. Attempts have been made to ratify this date as matter of history, but no valid nor even consistent early Christian tradition vouches for it. The real solar origin of the festival is clear from the writings of the Fathers after its institution. In religious symbolism of the material and spiritual sun, Augustine and Gregory of Nyssa discourse on the glowing light and dwindling darkness that follow the Nativity; while Leo the Great, among whose people the earlier solar meaning of the festival evidently remained in strong remembrance, rebuked in a sermon the pestiferous persuasion, as he calls it, that this solemn day is to be honored, not for the birth of Christ, but for the rising, as they say, of the new sun" (*Primitive Culture*, vol. ii., pp. 297, 298).

To get right back to the origin of Christmas, I suspect we must put ourselves in the place of men who had no such clear conception of the uniformity of natural law as we have, and to whom, when winter with its long glowing nights came, killing off vegetation, the question of questions was, When would brighter seasons return? Evergreens which told of the vitality of nature would be honored, and the first assurance of the longer day hailed with acclamation. It was the birthday of the Savior.

Before Christians brought their superstitions to these islands the inhabitants celebrated the return of the year with a festival of rejoicing. The miseltoe is a Druidical emblem. The Yule log goes back to our Scandinavian Pagan forefathers. These show the solar character of Christmas, as did the bonfires lighted at Midsummer or St. John's Day. How appropriately does the genius of Midsummer, St. John, say of the genius of Christmas: "He must increase, but I must decrease," as the days begin to lengthen from December 25, and to shorten from June 24, till they reach the shortest, of which the genius saint is the unbelieving Thomas, standing in all the darkness of unbelief as to whether the Lord will rise again. In the Christmas service chant, "*Sol novus oritur*," we see the adaptation of ancient solar thought to Christian allegory.

When Christianity spread through the Roman Empire it found everywhere among the heathen a festival to the sun-god, or the general spirit of life and vegetation celebrated at the winter solstice. From December 21 till the end of the year the Romans held the Saturnalia, a season marked by the universal prevalence of licence and merry-making. Temporary freedom was given to slaves. Everyone feasted and rejoiced, work and business were for a season entirely suspended, the houses were decked with laurel and evergreen, visits and presents were exchanged between friends, and clients gave gifts to their patrons. The whole season was one of rejoicing and goodwill, and all kinds of amusements were indulged in by the people (see Chambers' *Book of Days*).

The evergreens, and particularly the miseltoe, used all over the Christian world at Christmas time, betray the purpose of the festival. Tertullian, or the monks writing in his name, affirms it to be rank idolatry to deck doors with garlands or flowers on festival days, according to the custom of the heathen. The evergreens, like the child-god, symbolise the renewal of nature's life, and in ancient times carols were sung to the ivy and the holly, as they still are to the Christ-child.

To the thoughtful Christian, looking back on the centuries which have passed since the supposed birth of the Savior, the reflection must be a somewhat gloomy one. The best kept customs are still Pagan. The long course of Christian history is hardly one to rejoice over. Has revelation brought righteousness? Has Christ Christianised the world?

The nineteenth wave of the ages rolls,
Now deathward since thy death and birth.
Hast thou fed full men's starved-out souls?
Hast thou brought freedom upon earth?
Or are there less oppressions done
In the wild world under the sun?

Peace and goodwill are on men's lips, while despots are plotting the extinction of free speech, and men's ingenuity is bent as never before on the invention and improvement of the instruments of death and destruction. What improvements there are have been the result of attention to the concern of this world in preference to *post-mortem* felicity—of substituting conduct for creed, and the service of humanity for the vain worship of deity.

But Christmas is a time for putting away cares and starting afresh, like the New Year, with a child-like, hopeful spirit. To children, at least, happy associations are bound up with the return of the festal season. So hail to Father Christmas with his pantomimes and puddings. Let us eat, drink, and be merry, laugh, dance, sing, romp, and kiss beneath the pearly miseltoe.

J. M. WHEELER.

REV. ALFRED GARDNER ON SECULARISM.

THE Rev. Alfred Gardner is rather a popular minister in Scotland. He has recently delivered a lecture in Dundee upon "Secularism and the Secularists," and, judging from the report in the *Dundee Advertiser*, the rev. gentleman appeared to be superior to many of his colleagues in courtesy towards his opponents. He, however, suffered from that too frequent drawback of Christian exponents, a lack of adequate knowledge of those principles they seek to depreciate. In their condemnation of Secularism they rely too much upon hearsay and upon a superficial acquaintance with its philosophy, rather than upon a proper study of its teachings. Thus, not knowing what Secularism really is, many of its opponents, however well-intentioned they may be, fall into grave errors when they attempt to show that it has weaknesses, or to criticise its representatives.

This was the case with the Rev. Alfred Gardner in his lecture, on December 2, in the Congregational Church in Dundee. He showed himself thoroughly ill-informed as to the nature of Secularism. Even his introductory remarks were misleading. While admitting that our Secular organisation has only existed about fifty years, he asserts that the "ism" is "no new thing." It is here evident that the rev. gentleman was confounding Secularism as a philosophy with mere Freethought. He ought to have known that there is a marked distinction between the two; for, while the latter represents merely a mental condition, the former contains an ethical system with specified rules for the purpose of regulating human conduct in daily life. Of course the elements that constitute Secularism are not new, any more than were the materials out of which Christianity was formed. The organisation, which took place half a century ago, of principles based upon the known facts of existence, regardless of any necessary consideration of a future life, was the initiation of the philosophy of Secularism. Its marvellous development during the last fifty years is a striking instance of the power of thought when it is kept free from theological restrictions. Within this period mental liberty and a practical view of life have progressed more rapidly than either was permitted to do under centuries of Christian rule. This is not merely a matter of opinion, but a fact of history.

The value of the rev. gentleman's criticism may be estimated from some of his remarks, which are reported as follows: "The greater number of Secularists rejected the Christian creed out of pure ignorance; they were at the mercy of their papers and more violent leaders. In others Secularism seemed to spring from nothing but pure contrariness of disposition. . . . Any one who had witnessed platform debates—and these must be deplored—must remember many scenes of that kind. The man who became violent in defence of the truth was always the one who the least believed in it. When a man told them he believed there was no God and no future life, that pointed to his having received a twist which put him out of court for coming to any right judgment on the matter. If it was difficult to prove the being of God, it was not less difficult to disprove it; and which assumption seemed the more probable—that God existed or did not exist? So natural and rational a thing was it to believe in God and his beneficence that only by overwhelming evidence could any

belief to the contrary be maintained. . . . As religion was not, and could not be, established by logical reasoning, it could not be overthrown by logical reasoning. Secularists talked a good deal about the elevation of humanity, and were always taunting Christians about forgetting this present world in their care for the world to come. Where, he asked, were the Secularists' missions in the slums among the poor and degraded of mankind? They could offer no encouragement for the fallen spirit, no balm for the broken heart, and no healing for the wounded conscience."

We have given the Rev. A. Gardner's words at length, because we desire our readers to know exactly what he said. It is, indeed, news to us to be told that ignorance is the cause of Secularists rejecting Christianity. Our experience is that, as a rule, Secularists know more of the creeds and doctrines of the Christian faith than do the majority of its professors. It is in consequence of that knowledge that they are compelled to dissent from the orthodoxy of the Church. If the rev. gentleman doubts this fact, let him put it to the test by examining, say, twelve members of the Dundee Branch of the National Secular Society as to their acquaintance with the teachings of Christianity. Should he do this, we venture to affirm that he will discover that their ignorance upon the subject will be an unknown quantity. It is not true that Secularists blindly follow their leaders. Of all men they are the least disposed to follow any one where principles are concerned, without having first studied what those principles are. They are, as a class, pre-eminently independent thinkers. This certainly cannot be said of churchgoers, the great majority of whom put their thinking out to be done for them. They believe, but why they believe, apart from feeling, only the few could explain. As to the "leaders" in the Secular movement, they cannot be fairly charged with "ignorance" of Christian creeds, inasmuch as nearly all of them were brought up in the Church, which they left after a careful investigation of its fallacious pretensions.

We can quite understand why Mr. Gardner considers that "platform debates must be deplored." His system cannot stand the test of open and honest discussion. It is a faith to be accepted only upon trust. In fact, the rev. gentleman admits that religion "could not be established by logical reasoning." Of course it cannot, and, therefore, it has no claim upon us as a demonstrated truth. The violent defenders of what they regard as truth are the Revivalists, the Salvationists, and the great bulk of the orthodox expounders. According to the rev. gentleman, those are the people who least believe in it. This may be true, but it is not saying much for Christian sincerity.

We are told that a man who does not believe in a God and a future life has "received a twist which puts him out of court for coming to any right judgment upon the matter." This is orthodox dogmatism with a vengeance. Such a man has already come to what appears to him a right judgment; and he has arrived at his conclusion through a reasoning process, which the God-believer, who has not studied the *pros* and *cons*, has not done. Surely the person who relies upon logical reasoning is more likely to be right than the one who is satisfied with mere speculation. As to the difficulty of disproving the existence of God, that has no bearing on Secularism, for the reason that it does not require its adherents to try the experiment. That it is "natural and rational to believe in God and his beneficence" is another matter. We fail to see any proof of great beneficence in the misery, disorder, and injustice that so extensively prevail, any more than in the many earthquakes, volcanoes, etc., that are constantly devastating whole villages, and destroying the lives of thousands of men, women, and innocent children. This may be the "beneficence" of a God, but it would not be the work of a good man.

The whole mission of Secularism is to raise the "poor and degraded" from "the slums," and we should have succeeded in this work more fully than we have done but for the fact that Christians have robbed us again and again of money that has been left us to carry on our work. But we do more than try to raise those who have fallen; we seek to improve conditions so that there should be no "slums" for anyone to fall into. For two thousand years Christianity has been at work, and the existing "poor and degraded" of the "slums" are painful proofs of its utter failure as a remedial force. Talk of "balm for the broken heart," and "healing

for the wounded conscience"! Christianity offers compensation in another world for the wrongs endured in this, and the forgiveness of Christ for a career of wickedness and crime. Secularism says that the most lasting and dignified "balm" is to be found in right doing—that is, in practising truth, honor, sobriety, industry, and fidelity; these are the virtues that Secularism inculcates, and their practical use would "heal the broken heart" and the "wounded conscience" in this life, and would also prevent such miseries from blighting the happiness of existence.

The rev. gentleman asserts that Christianity has influenced Secularism; but the fact is that it is Secularism that has influenced Christianity, compelling it to entirely modify its character. It can no longer persecute with impunity as it once did, neither can it teach openly, as was done in former times, its barbarous doctrines of natural depravity and eternal torments. The Secular spirit of the age has forced it in this particular to "assume a virtue if it has it not." We are told that in an un-Christian country Secularism would produce a very different aspect to what it does in England. There is some truth in this, for it would then be enabled to manifest its legitimate power, free from orthodox bigotry and theological restrictions. If Christianity were tried for the first time in a country governed by Secular principles, it would not, we believe, last a single generation.

The limits allowed for this article have already been exhausted, therefore we will but add that, if the Rev. A. Gardner is ready to thoroughly discuss the question, we undertake to prove that Christianity is illogical in its teachings, that it has failed to regenerate society, and that Secularism contains the real elements of a progressive civilisation.

CHARLES WATTS.

A FREETHOUGHT MARTYR.

(An Address delivered before the American Secular Congress, at Madison Hall, Chicago, on Oct. 26, 1894.)

BY PROFESSOR LEON LEWIS, M.D.

(Continued from page 797.)

AND now that Bruno had fairly entered upon his career, he advanced rapidly to renown and honor. It would take me all night to relate what he did during the next ten years. With a letter from the King of France he went to England, where he made the acquaintance of Queen Elizabeth. In London he remained between two and three years, an honored guest in the home of the ambassador of France to the British court. Here he wrote and published his most important works. This residence in London covers the period between 1583 and 1585. In 1586 he was again in France, and the next two years he passed in Germany—always writing and debating, always attracting a great deal of notice. In 1588 he was in Prague, and from there he went to Frankfort-on-the-Main, where he published three books in 1590.

Frankfort, at that time, was one of the most flourishing cities in Europe, having a large industry and commerce. It was inhabited by Catholics, Protestants, Jews, and other types of religionists, and was visited by travellers of all classes and conditions, so that mutual tolerance had become the order of the day, and there was no place in Christendom where one could write, print, and teach with more freedom.

One of the features of Frankfort at that date was its semi-yearly fair, to which came merchants from all parts of Europe. At these fairs were to be found silks from Italy, spices and sugars from Holland, and so on with the rest of the nations. The greatest feature of the fair was its books, not only Latin and Greek classics, but those in modern languages. The quarter occupied by the booksellers was a city in itself. To these fairs, too, came learned men of every clime and tongue, who circulated in the midst of these displays of learning and literature, and held forth on every subject under heaven to crowds of attentive listeners.

The sojourn of Bruno in Frankfort enabled him, therefore, to converse with booksellers from all parts of Europe, and to receive information as to what was being done in this field in their respective countries. Among these visitors were two booksellers from Venice, named Ciotto

and Britanno, who lodged with the Carmelite friars, as did Bruno, and thus made his acquaintance. There was also at this time in Frankfort a young Venetian, named Mocenigo, who had encountered some of the works of Bruno, and desired very much to meet him personally. This Mocenigo, who later became the Judas Iscariot of Bruno, belonged to one of the leading families of Venice, and one that has given no less than four doges to her rulers. He had some ability, but little education, and was possessed of one of those dwarfed minds which are capable of any wickedness under the influence of malice and superstition. He found some attraction in books, but sought rather the curious and hidden side of things than positive erudition. In short, he was as unlike Bruno as possible, both in character and quality.

Hearing that the latter was in Frankfort, Mocenigo wrote to him, in the care of the bookseller Ciotto, asking him to come to Venice, and making all sorts of suggestions and promises as to what could be done there, and of the assistance that could be expected from him. This letter was followed by a second in the same sense, in which Mocenigo stated that he desired to receive instruction from Giordano, particularly on the art of memory, and would like him to make his house his home, declaring that he would be satisfied in every way with the treatment and consideration accorded him.

How pleasantly all this sounded to Bruno need not be stated. His thoughts had long been turned in the direction of Italy, and, after some delays and movements we need not dwell upon, he proceeded to Venice, arriving there, on this second visit, in August or September, 1591. He tarried a short time at an inn, but yielded to the pressing invitation of his new disciple, and took up his abode at the house of Mocenigo.

The two men had not been long together, however, when Mocenigo began to look askant at his guest, and to complain that he was not getting the instruction he had expected. Bruno, on the other hand, was equally disenchanted, although he had the consciousness of having acquitted himself of every obligation. It did not take long for the relations between them to become strained, to speak diplomatically; and, while the philosopher began to think of packing up his effects and taking his leave, the disciple, with the natural meanness and treachery of a superstitionist, began to consider the ways and means of satisfying his malice.

I cannot concede, however, that Bruno had any just realisation of the critical nature of his footing, for he continued to stay on and on, and it was not till May 21, 1592, that he shaped his plans definitely, and announced to his host that he would soon be going.

This latter, who had resolved to hand Bruno over to the Inquisition at all hazards, made a first attempt to retain him by fair means and promises, and then resorted to threats. The one and the other proving insufficient to cause his guest to change his mind about going, Mocenigo, on the night of Friday, May 22, entered the room where Bruno was sleeping, and announced that he had something to say to him. The intruder was accompanied by one of his servants and five or six gondoliers, who were in the habit of stationing their gondolas in front of the Mocenigo mansion. Conducting their prisoner to a *solaro*, a sort of strong room at the top of the house, they locked him in and mounted guard over him, Mocenigo at once sending word of his capture to the "Holy Office." Their victim being there secured, Mocenigo, continuing to act upon the orders of his father confessor, wrote a letter, in the Italian of that date, to the father inquisitor, under date of May 23, in which he denounced Bruno formally to the Inquisition. There is doubtless some truth in his statements, or, at least, considerable warrant for them, in both the language and history of Bruno; but the letter also contains a great deal of falsehood and vituperation.

"I have heard him say," he wrote, after claiming that he was taking this step to satisfy his conscience—"I have heard him say that he is an enemy of the mass; that no religion suits him; that Christ is a poor stick to lean upon, and that he was engaged in a miserable business in seducing the people, and could have easily foreseen that he would be crucified; that there are no three Gods in One, as any distinction of this sort would render God imperfect; that the world is eternal, and that there are other and similar worlds without number; that the miracles of Christ were merely apparent, and that Christ was a magician, as were

also the apostles; that Christ died very unwillingly, and put off dying as long as he could; that there is no punishment for sin; that it is impossible that a virgin should have given birth to a child; that our Catholic religion is full of every blasphemy against God; that the priests should be suppressed, as they are simply brutalising the world; that we Catholics are all donkeys, and that our opinions are the opinions of donkeys; that we have no proof of the acceptability of our faith to God; that not to do unto others what we do not want done unto ourselves is a sufficient rule of life; that he wonders how God can put up with so much nonsense from the Catholics; and so on, through a number of pages, with various repetitions, finishing with the announcement that he had the offender under lock and key, and awaiting orders.

This letter was followed, two days later, by another of like tenor from Mocenigo, and on the same day, May 25, both were laid before the "Holy Office" of Venice by the Father Inquisitor. A third letter arrived on May 29 from Mocenigo, who seems to have been rather more devilish and active in his zeal than the average Judas.

In the meantime Bruno had been transferred from the house of Mocenigo to one of the dungeons of the Inquisition—on the night of the 23rd, in fact—and the next step in the proceedings was to call before the "Holy Office" the two Venetian booksellers, Ciotto and Britanno, of whom I have already spoken, and who were mentioned as witnesses by Mocenigo in his first letter of denunciation. Their examination took place on the 26th, but nothing of any importance appeared in their testimony. The substance of Ciotto's evidence was that he had made inquiries about Bruno in Frankfort, at the instance of Mocenigo, and had been told that he was a man without religion. This is also the testimony of bookseller Britanno. The latter does, indeed, say, after mentioning many things in favor of the prisoner, that Bruno's readings in Zurich were to heretics; but he adds, in explanation of that fact, that there are nothing but heretics in that city.

Later in the day, on that same May 26, Bruno was brought before the inquisitors. I might here give the names and qualities of these ignoble reprobates, but it is no part of history to perpetuate the memory of the rats and reptiles which have infested humanity's temple. The alleged "sacred volume," you all know, was extended to Bruno that he might swear upon it to tell the whole truth. While they were exhorting him to this effect, and without waiting for them to finish, as also without waiting to be interrogated, he broke the silence, and proceeded to state through what causes and with what intentions he had come from Frankfort to Venice.

The hearing thus entered upon lasted many days, comprising the 30th of May, the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th of June, and the 30th of July. During this time bookseller Ciotto was heard again, with as little effect as before, and also a certain Morosini, who had received Bruno as a guest at his house, in the midst of a distinguished company, in which were several prelates, and who testified that he had never heard anything but the highest praise and appreciation of him.

The first desire of his inquisitors was to know whether he had held or taught anywhere, in public or private, anything contrary or repugnant to the Catholic faith, or hostile to the conclusions of the Holy Roman Church.

To this inquiry Bruno responded, with as much honesty as courage, that, while his philosophy might be indirectly repugnant to the faith, in the same sense that those of Aristotle and Plato might be repugnant to it, he had never taught or written anything that was directly opposed to it; and with this he proceeded to set forth the fundamental propositions of his philosophical system, without attempting to weaken its significance, or dissimulate its consequences.

He declared, without circumlocution, that he believed in a universe infinite in grandeur and infinite in the multitude of its worlds; that these worlds are similar to ours; that the universe is governed by a general and constant law that he calls Providence, in virtue of which everything lives, thrives, and has its being, and is maintained in its perfection; that the Divinity has three principal attributes, power, wisdom, and goodness, or spirit, intellect, and love—spirit to call everything into being, intellect to give order, and love to give symmetry. He confessed that he had had doubts, in the terms of natural reason, of the incarnation of the word; the Divine spirit, or third person

of the Trinity, appearing to him only as the soul of the universe.

His judges had little knowledge of what he had written, and it is doubtful if they even knew the titles of his books until he had furnished them a list written with his own hand. Their questions, therefore, related chiefly to the assertions in the letters of Mocenigo, of which I have already given the substance. To most of these assertions Giordano opposed an explicit denial.

Continuing his account of himself, he stated the facts in the case of the accusations which had been brought against him while he was a novice, and also after he had been promoted to the priesthood. He added that his writings would demonstrate just what he had said and done, and that his judges had only to examine them to discover that he had never been guilty of any disrespect to the Catholic religion.

His examination completed on July 30, as stated, he was taken back to his dungeon, and all the documents concerning him were forwarded to the headquarters of the Inquisition in Rome. An order was at once sent to the "Holy Office" of Venice for the forwarding of the prisoner to that city. Considerable delay and friction succeeded in the exchange of letters and documents between the two tribunals, and it was not till February 27, 1593, that Bruno reached that terrible dungeon of the Inquisition in Rome of which I have spoken.

The imprisonment of the Nolan in Rome lasted seven years, to within a few days. As a rule, all men who found themselves in the hands of these murderous devils were disposed of promptly, although the rule had exceptions. Aonio Paleario, an elegant writer, was incarcerated in 1566 at Faenza, and from there transferred to Rome, where, after an imprisonment of four years, his sentence was read to him, and he was taken out into a public square and burnt. This was the longest imprisonment on record until the case of Bruno.

To what cause was it owing, therefore, that the trial of the Nolan was spun out to seven years? What was taking place during this interval between the prisoner and his jailers?

To these very natural questions I will offer a few suggestions.

(To be concluded.)

JESUS A MYTH.

"I DO not care whether Jesus had a real existence. He was a perfect model for humanity, the most sublime ideal of an ethical teacher; an object worthy the love and veneration of us all," etc., is the kind of language we are frequently doomed to hear. I care whether or not Jesus was a real personage, because I care to know the truth concerning all things, and because there are thousands of our fellow-beings who shape their lives, or endeavor to make others shape their lives, upon the assumption that his existence was a fact. A common every-day saying becomes a divine truth when supposed to issue from his lips. A man is thought to live a better life than others if he professes to follow his example. Worse still, there are yet remaining many a misguided multitude who proclaim themselves to be adherents of the Christian religion in one or other of its various forms; and every one of those forms has been, and still is, a curse to the human race. They all claim to be founded upon the teachings of Jesus. Prove that Jesus never lived, the foundation of Christianity will be swept away, and the whole structure will fall into ruins. True, the priests and parsons will gather up some of the fragments, and, shouting in chorus that they never believed or preached Jesus as a real man, but only an ideal representation of human virtue, the Christ principle (already the expression has been coined in anticipation of the coming necessity for its use) will labor to erect another building. But the advanced thought of the age will compel them to put these materials together in better shape than formerly, and the structure will be much smaller, much less obtrusive to the view, and will stand a little on one side of the path of human progress, instead of blocking the entrance to that path, as did its predecessor. Superstition will be surely crushed in the ruins, and will be less successful in leading men to worship in the new temple,

than it was in seducing them to prostrate their intellects before the old. Men will bestow less thought upon the unsubstantial Christ principle than they once did upon the visible representation of a crucified man, and that will set them at liberty to bestow more thought upon the human principle that is swelling up within themselves, and only waiting its freedom from credal bonds to grow and thrive and bless mankind. Therefore, I care much whether or not Jesus lived. If he did, I demand the proofs.

I demand in vain. No proof is forthcoming. Only four gospels are placed in my hands, manifest forgeries, of a date long subsequent to that of his alleged life. Four gospels, each contradicting the other three in all essential particulars. Lying witnesses, condemned by the utterances of their own mouths. Not one sentence from a contemporary author leading to these remarkable events which is not an obvious interpolation. No, not one.

A star travelled from the east to Bethlehem, and wise men from a wise nation followed it. They were wise enough not to publish to the world a history of their journey. They went to visit a newly-born king of the Jews. He owed the right and title to his kingdom to his descent from David. Perhaps the wise men wisely investigated his claim, and, coming across the two genealogies given respectively by Matthew and Luke, their wisdom was so puzzled in the attempt to understand how the same infant could have descended from that old reprobate through the line of Solomon, and also through the line of Nathan, Solomon's elder brother, that, in returning to their own country another way, they missed their road, and never arrived home to tell the tale. Perhaps, in addition to this, not being well skilled in Christian mathematics, they had some difficulty in comprehending that twenty-eight and forty-three generations were one and the same. So much ignorance exists among people who have not been taught the sublime and saving truths of Christianity. There were astronomers then who had some knowledge of their science, and astrologers almost numberless who scanned the heavens nightly; but not one detected the journeying of this wandering star. Not one saw the darkness that covered the earth at the alleged crucifixion—a darkness which, happening at the time of the Jewish Passover, a festival occurring always at the full moon, could not have been caused by a solar eclipse. Not one has mentioned the rending of the rocks or the splitting of the veil in the temple, which, had they taken place, would, in an age addicted to the marvellous, surely have been recorded. Not one has alluded to the dead rising from their graves and being publicly seen by many. Not one line has come down to us concerning this prominent trial and execution for a supposed political offence. On the contrary, according to investigations recently made, no such trials ever took place in the night, and in the list of high priests of Judea during the governorship of Pontius Pilate the name of Caiaphas does not appear.

The name Jesus, the Latin form of the Hebrew Joshua, betrays its origin. This character was not conceived in the womb of a Hebrew maiden, but in the brain of a Roman ecclesiastic to whom the Latin was a familiar tongue. The stable he was born in was the very dirty one of a blood-spattered church, reeking with the foul odors of even their decaying superstitions. The ox and the ass who knelt at his appearance were of the same kind we often see in that position, but they drop upon two knees only, for the sole reason that Nature has provided them with no larger number. The bell is now tolling the hour when the dark night of Jesusolatry is drawing to a close. Men's eyes are directed towards the dawn of the coming day, when Jesus, with other myths, shall vanish before the rising sun of truth. In the noontide of that day none shall need an example that he may follow in his steps either "man like unto himself," or the effervescence of a vivid imagination, for each will be able to see clearly the way to develop the power for good which resides within himself.

E. J. BOWTELL.

—*Boston Investigator.*

A pompous clergyman once said to a chubby-faced lad who was passing without raising his hat, "Do you know who I am, sir, that you pass me in this unmannerly way? You are better fed than taught, I think." "Well, maybe it is soa, mistur," said the boy; "fur you teaches me, and I feeds myself."

ACID DROPS.

RELIGION, said a great German, is the poetry of unpoetical minds. We need not be astonished, therefore, if the ordinary religionist indulges in some very questionable imagery. And when the ordinary religionist practises the gentle art of the reviewer, and has to write about such a book as Archdeacon Farrar's new effusion on Jesus Christ, we may look out for something superlative. In this respect we were not disappointed on glancing at last week's *Methodist Times*, which devoted its leading article to Dr. Farrar's production. We lighted upon many a metaphorical flower of strange hue and stranger perfume, but the finest was a reference to the "Living Christ in the manly prime of a radiant immortality." Probably the writer thought it remarkably fine, and the Methodist readers may have felt themselves in contact with a new Isaiah. Even our own first impulse was to throw up our hands in speechless admiration. But we presently asked, "What the devil does it mean?"—and then the trouble began. Why should "immortality" be "radiant"? Old Nick is immortal, and he is said to be gloomy. And what is the "prime" of a radiant, or any other sort of "immortality"? The word is only applicable to a mortal existence, which originates, grows, decays, and perishes. A man has his prime; a god has none; being immortal, he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. On the whole, after due reflection, we conclude that the imagery of the *Methodist Times* is on a par with its accuracy. It might, indeed, hopefully compete for Mrs. Malaprop's prize for "a nice derangement of epitaphs."

"During the hours of our Savior's mental suffering," says the Methodist scribe, "the sun hid his face, and nothing but priestly arrogance would ever have dared to dispel that reverent darkness." Verily, yea verily, the *Methodist Times* should publish a poetical glossary for the especial behoof of its own readers. Without such assistance we are utterly unable to understand a "reverent darkness." We understand the two words separately, but not together. Perhaps the darkness is meant to be an act of reverence on the part of the sun, who "hid his face" for the occasion. But the sun could not have hidden its own face. The sun is always shining. Darkness or eclipse is caused by the interposition of other bodies or substances. So that here again the Methodist scribe is in a frightful muddle.

Our own opinion is that the Methodist scribe is just as unable as the sun to hide his "face." At any rate, it would take a very extensive covering. A great deal of cheek is required, at this time of day, to treat the eclipse at the Crucifixion as an actual phenomenon. That it never occurred, outside the astronomy of religious imagination, is perfectly demonstrable. No such eclipse of the sun ever happened, and it was only believed because the Christian superstition caused a still greater eclipse of the human intelligence.

This ridiculous writing in the *Methodist Times* is worthy of its editor, the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes, who is enjoying a six months' holiday—possibly as a reward for his labors and sufferings in connexion with "The Atheist Shoemaker." Mr. Hughes has been visiting the great monastery of St. Benedict, and his readers are treated to a lot of small talk on the subject. The monks have not mastered the Methodist trick of making the best of both worlds. They mortify the flesh and fare coarsely. All they could offer Mr. Hughes for breakfast was "dry brown bread and black coffee," which gave him "a headache." He was delighted to reach "the railway-station and its humble refreshment-room." No doubt. But he does not say what he had there.

Dry brown bread and black coffee gave Mr. Hughes a headache. Well, the editor of the *Freethinker* had the dry brown bread without the black coffee for twelve months in Holloway Gaol, yet he was not troubled with headache. Perhaps his head is harder than that of Mr. Hughes.

Methodism was never modest. It likes to obtrude itself everywhere. Bradford has a Mayor belonging to that Church, and he is referred to in Mr. Hughes's paper as "Our Methodist Mayor." Secularists would never have the impudence to talk in this way. What on earth has Methodism, or any other ism, to do with the functions of a Mayor?

Sister Edith, of the West London Mission, is described as of "a retiring disposition." Sister Lily was also "retiring." She kept in the background, under the alias of Sister Beatrice, while Mr. Hughes, whose "retiring" disposition is quite phenomenal, palmed off upon the world a reeking mass of falsehood and absurdity.

Sister Edith's "retiring disposition" does not prevent her from standing as a candidate for the Board of Guardians.

It reminds us of the modest clergyman who was always publishing sermons "by request."

In reviewing Mrs. Bonner's history of her father, the London *Daily Chronicle* remarked that "the opinions held by the late Charles Bradlaugh only appealed to a minority, and are now visibly disappearing." A few days later (Dec. 13) the *Chronicle* announced that "to-morrow is being set apart as a day for humiliation and prayer on account of the spread of infidelity," etc. Evidently the reverend gentlemen, including the Rev. Newman Hall, who took part in this praying exhibition at St. Martin's Hall, do not share the *Chronicle's* opinion on this matter.

A leader on "A Modern View of Christmas," in the *Chronicle*, is devoted to showing that the festival is now rather a social than a religious one. It remarks that "religion is undergoing vast changes of opinion concerning many of the orthodox doctrines which are closely connected with the birth of the Founder of Christianity." This hardly looks as if the opinions of the late Charles Bradlaugh were visibly disappearing. It would be truer to say that they are gradually permeating all sections of society.

Even the Baptists in America are touched with the spirit of heterodoxy, and, at the Baptist Congress lately in session at Detroit, "The interpretation of the Old Testament, as affected by modern scholarship," came up for discussion. All the prominent professors announced that they could no longer hold the doctrine of the historical inerrancy of the Old Testament.

Let the same criticism be applied, and let their stipends not depend on their conclusions, and perhaps they may make a similar discovery respecting the New Testament. They are on the road. Once open the floodgates of criticism, and who can stay the waters? Concede there are errors in God's Word, and the position is, surrendered to the freethinker, who contends that the Bible must be judged like other books. Yet the views which even Baptist professors now have to admit are those for which Freethinkers fought and suffered in the past.

The *Freeman*, the English organ of the Baptists, sees this, and puts it in an exaggerated form. In an article on the Higher Criticism it says: "Wellhausen is Tom Paine translated into German. Very much of the reputed results of modern criticism may be found in Voltaire's famous dictionary. When I looked through that lately, I said: 'This man was before his time. Had he lived now, he would have been a Professor of Divinity at Oxford.'" The writer concludes by declaring that the infidelity of the past age is now current as "Higher Criticism," and asks: "What would our fathers say?"

There is sufficient truth in this to give it point; but it is by no means quite correct. Paine and Voltaire were far in advance of their day, and they put the results of criticism and scholarship in a manner unsurpassed. But it would be a gross mistake to suppose there has been no advance made since their day. They were gallant pioneers in clearing the way where a larger, if inferior, army can now advance.

Robert Louis Stevenson, who is reported to have recently died at Samoa, contributed, a few years back, "A Christmas Sermon" to *Scribner's Magazine*, of which a pious contemporary complained that from beginning to end there was not one word of the old Christmas story, not a ray from the Holy Virgin Mother and the Divine Child.

It was inevitable that Mr. Andrew Lang should write in the *Daily News* on the death of Robert Louis Stevenson. It was also inevitable that Mr. Andrew Lang should utter some pious inanities on the occasion. He informs the world, with amazing confidence, that the great writer we have lost has gone "into the presence of that Love and Justice which all his works acknowledge, and fondly, if awfully, admire and adore." Mr. Lang's composition in this sentence shares the confusion of his thought. "Fondly" and "awfully" are two unalliable adverbs. "Into the presence" is reminiscent of the Bible. Mr. Lang appears to believe in a Deity into whose presence we go at death, and in whose presence we are not, therefore, when living. Altogether it is a curious hodge-podge. But, then, religion doth make muddlers of us all.

Robert Louis Stevenson could not have had much religion, or Mr. Lang would never be tempted to write about it in this apologetic fashion. Our own impression is that he had no belief in personal immortality; and, as a matter of fact, that doctrine is the be-all and the end-all of theology.

The Church Missionary Society has been boasting of the Red Cross waving over Buddhist temples in Japan. This, however, is simply as a sign that the sick and wounded are attended there. The Japanese do not need to take simple

humanity from Christians, for they have it in their own faith; and the fact that they accept the flag used in European ambulances by no means implies any acceptance of the Christian faith.

At this season we hear a deal about Christian reunion and brotherly peace and goodwill. To unite the three hundred Christian sects in Britain would be a task similar to that of Samson, who, according to the veracious book of Judges, caught three hundred foxes and tied them tail to tail, and put a firebrand in the midst between their tails. The feat was difficult, and the result disastrous.

There are still stupid people about who believe in the virtues of prayer, in spite of the 2,000 killed in the recent earthquake in America, the 400 to 500 burnt in the fires in Minnesota and Wisconsin, and the wreck of the "Wairarapa." There the poor women were praying frantically in the middle of the deck when the Heavenly Father's waves came and swept them away. Still the clergy, for their own ends, will support the sham and the superstition of prayer quite as strenuously as the mediums back up the spooks. It is their trade, and the ghostly quacks are still the worst of all quacks.—*Liberator*.

At the late earthquakes in Sicily and Calabria the peasants believed that the end of the world had come. They prayed and flagellated themselves to appease the wrath of the old gentleman upstairs, and the uproar was only ended by the interference of the police. Further off the coast, on the foothills of the Apennines, some people even went mad. The women beat their breasts, and the men, on their knees, confessed their sins aloud. Buckle was ridiculed for assigning earthquakes among the causes of superstition; but in this, as in many other matters, the historian of civilisation was a more competent authority than his critics.

Religious mania was assigned as the cause of the death of a young woman named Humphreys, whose body was found in the castle-moat at Reigate. The jury's verdict of "Suicide during temporary insanity" was really a reflection on the creeds that had unhinged the poor girl's mind.

Max O'Rell suggests a novel idea, which we think it would pay "General" Booth to work. He wonders why the General doesn't invent a celestial mixture or Salvation pill, and he ventures to outline a sample of testimonials which might be inserted in the *War Cry*, as follows: "Dear General,—On Saturday night I took one of your marvellous—I should say miraculous—pills. I went to bed a hardened sinner. I woke up converted. A few more pills, and I shall be a saint. Everyone ought to have some of these pills in his bedroom. Send me a box of Salvation pills for my wife."

It is noteworthy that none of the Jewish feasts commemorate their heroes, like Abraham, Jacob, Moses, David, and Solomon, unless Purim may be supposed to celebrate Esther. But Purim, as its very name shows, is a feast of lots, and has no historical foundation. The Jewish feasts, as of Passover, Tabernacles, and Chanuka, represent nature-worship. Chanuka, or the Feast of Lights, is the Jewish analogue of Christmas; and some of the features of Christmas, such as the decorations of Christmas candles, may have been derived from the Jewish festival.

Paul Moevis, a German traveller, who claims to be the fifteenth European who has visited Thibet—the previous fourteen not including Madame Blavatsky—describes, in a lecture, the superstition of the country. He says the Dalai Lama has to eat from the skull of his predecessor to profit from his holiness. Herr Moevis exhibited a chain made from small bones of the skull, which pious Thibetans carry on their breasts, and a rosary made from the finger bone of a priest, which works wonders also. Also bells of begging for monks, bells and knives for defence from the Devil; chalices, knives, amulets, etc., beautifully worked in silver. Whoever possesses one of these things exerts a secret power, and can kill by looking at an object—not in a jiffy; but the victim loses all desire to live, refuses to take any nourishment, and dies within fifteen days. Herr Moevis made himself a Buddhist priest in order to secure a firm foothold in Lhassa.

It is amusing to find the Archbishop of York speaking of the Archbishop of Westminster as a member of an Italian mission in England. The spectacle of the two great rival hierarchies, each claiming for itself the title of the Holy Catholic—that is, Universal—Church, and each claiming to represent successorship from the apostles, is a funny one to those outside all the Churches. The Romanists have sought to avoid friction by setting up bishoprics in different sees to the Anglican bishops—at Salford, for instance, instead of Manchester; but at Liverpool there are two rival bishops of the one Church of Christ, each regarding the other as a heretic.

It appears from the *Catholic Directory* for 1895 that there are 62 cardinals, eight vacant red hats being ready when the heads are found to fit. In England there are 15 dioceses with 17 bishops, two being coadjutors. Altogether in Great Britain there are 23 Roman Catholic bishops and archbishops, and 2,977 priests. There are 42 Catholic peers, 52 baronets, and 16 Privy Councillors, including one Lord Chief Justice.

The Paris *Figaro* says the Pope sees that England is slowly but surely returning to Roman Catholicism. Some of England is, but not all England. There will be enough left to fight the Romish Church in the name of Liberty and Humanity.

A decided case of "thought transference" occurred at Rubislaw Parish Church, where the Rev. James Hall, the new minister of Banchory, preached a sermon against Materialism and Atheism. The sermon, unfortunately for Mr. Hall, got reported, as sermons on such subjects are apt to, and somebody not only compared it with No. 20 of the "Present Day Tracts," but published extracts from both in parallel columns. Mr. Hall was brought before the Kincardine O'Neil Presbytery, and was formally admonished and warned to be more cautious in future.

Mr. Hall might have pleaded that new arguments against Atheism are not so easy to find. Moreover, he did make some embellishments to the tract. For instance, the Present Day Tract writer remarked: "The sky is always overhead." This Mr. Hall, with more caution than we should have given him credit for, guardedly improved into the statement, "The sky is almost always overhead." Alas, in these days plagiarists are almost always found out.

The vicar of Kingston, who is a bachelor, boasts that he sews on his own buttons, and Archdeacon Burney confesses he has done the same. This does not say much for the devotion of the ladies; but, anyway, the clerical repairers need never be in want of buttons—there is always the offertory.

According to statistics collected by Mr. Francis Galton, the offspring of lawyers gave rise to six times as many eminent men as the offspring of the clergy. The clergy gave origin to six times as many idiots and feeble-minded persons as the lawyers.

Pious Emperor William wants all his "subjects" to "fear God and honor the King." Of course he is dreadfully annoyed when the Socialist deputies in Parliament will not join the "loyal" deputies in cheering his name. Accordingly, his new Chancellor applied for leave to prosecute them for sitting still and saying nothing; but the application was refused, and pious Emperor William is biting his thumb. Emperors are like God Almighty. They are dissatisfied if you leave them alone. They are only happy when mankind are singing their praise and glory.

At a parish election in Merinothshire the rector proposed to open the proceedings by reading a portion of Scripture. The chairman drily remarked that he did not see it on the agenda, and the word of God was left for another occasion.

A Wesleyan Chapel at Rhyl was recently sold by auction at a public-house—which was very appropriate. Both establishments deal in spirit. Perhaps it was the influence of this article, rather than the persuasive eloquence of the auctioneer, that ran the bidding up to £205 for a gospel-shop that cost £190 twenty years ago.

A "South Country Vicar" advertises his desire to correspond with "a lady of means," apparently with a view to matrimony. He announces that sealed replies will be treated with secrecy. No doubt. But what will the "lady" be treated with if he gets hold of her "means"? These men of God are generally on the look out for the plums of this life, and find "means" an excellent comfort in this miserable vale of tears.

The *Church Review* is much riled at the success of Nonconformist Pleasant Sunday Afternoons and similar entertainments, and devotes an article, entitled "Sanctification by Comic Songs," to ventilating its indignation at what the worship of God is coming to. The *C. R.* is a Ritualist organ, and perhaps the Nonconformists may retort that sanctification by comic songs is just as good as sanctification by candlegrease.

In this matter all the churches and chapels are in the same boat. The more rotten the timbers, the more paint and varnish must be laid on. Religion is becoming an entertainment, and the bare walls, long prayers, and longer sermons of the good old believing days would no longer be endured.

"The Bible is the children's charter," says the Rev. B. Watson, who, perhaps, approves of patriarchal discipline and the sayings of Solomon about not sparing the rod. "The Bible is the tyrant's charter," would be a good deal nearer the truth. Of course, Mr. Watson upholds the Bible, because its authority upholds the cloth.

If mortal man in modern times
Dared to convey in prose or rhymes
Such lusty filth to English ears
As in the Word of God appears,
The wretch would quickly go to gaol,
And "serve him right," the dirty snail.

That some of the parsons do not relish the subordinate position to which they may find themselves relegated by the Parish Councils Act is seen by the conduct of the rector of Welney. A Mr. Baxter, the schoolmaster, was elected chairman of the parish meeting; the rector wished to speak, and the chairman ruled him out of order. On the following day Mr. Baxter received his dismissal as schoolmaster, on the ground that he had ruled the rector out of order, though the chairman had acted with the authority of the parish meeting. Such incidents only show that it is high time power was taken out of the hands of these village almighties.

Owing to the decision of the Warwick School Board to teach the Apostles' Creed in the schools under their control, they have received over 250 notices of the intention of parents to withdraw their children from religious instruction. This action on the part of the parents has placed the Board in a dilemma, as the Education Act requires that the children withdrawn must be provided with a separate room while the religious instruction is proceeding. A resolution to rescind the decision of the Board including the Apostles' Creed under the head of religious instruction will be moved at the Board's next meeting.

The Glasgow U.P. Presbytery has prohibited all ministers of its body from inviting the Rev. David Macrae, of Dundee, to their pulpits. Mr. Macrae's offence is his failure to believe that God will fry his children for ever in hell fire.

A fortnight ago we referred to the Rev. T. A. Carritt, of Ipswich, who, at a local tea-fight, spoke of Mr. Foote as "a poor idiot" for having lectured in Ipswich on the question, "Did Jesus Christ Ever Live?" Mr. Lansdell, the secretary of the N.S.S. Branch, wrote on its behalf to the reverend gentleman, inviting him to discuss the subject with Mr. Foote in public. Mr. Carritt declined—naturally. But he felt it necessary to offer some explanation of the "poor idiot" expression. It appears that he made use of it on what he regarded as a "private" occasion, not knowing that his words would be reported. This is exactly what we surmised. Mr. Carritt, like a good many other men of God, has a double standard of language.

The Archbishop of Canterbury has had some holly stolen. Instead of giving the thieves some miseltoe, he has had them prosecuted at Croydon. Probably he agrees with the late Archbishop Magee that the Sermon on the Mount was never meant to work.

The controversy on the new Syriac Gospel still continues in the *Academy*. Mr. Willoughby C. Allen points out that the alleged Ebionite interpolation of "Joseph begat Jesus" is not thought of in the case of Luke ii. 33, which speaks of "his father and mother"; ii. 41, "His parents"; and ii. 48, "Thy father and I." Mr. Allen holds that the Syriac reading is homogeneous and consistent. It says that Joseph begat Jesus, that Joseph is the husband of Mary, that Mary is the wife of Joseph and bears a son to Joseph, and that Joseph exercises paternal rights in giving the child his name. As to the citation of Isaiah vii. 14 about a virgin conceiving, everybody knows that in the Hebrew the word only meant a young woman.

The *Kettering Leader* repeats that silly observation that Charles Bradlaugh was lost to the Christian Church through "religious intolerance and bigotry." "Under wise and sympathetic guidance," it says, "his religious doubts and difficulties might have been solved." Perhaps the "guidance" might have come from a Baptist minister, like the one who edits the *Kettering Leader*. It is astonishing what a number of Christians there are who think they could have "guided" the powerful mind of Charles Bradlaugh.

The Nonconformist Council has been taking a religious census at Beverley, which possesses two magnificent churches, besides Catholic, Wesleyan, Congregationalist, Baptist, and other places of worship. Out of a population of 13,000 only 3,000, or less than 25 per cent., attended the "house of God." Evidently it is time for Jesus Christ to come again, and he might start at Beverley.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

January 6 and 13, Hall of Science, London.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

- MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—December 23 and 30, Hall of Science, London.—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.
- E. C. RAMSEY.—Thanks. See paragraph.
- DERBY AND PLYMOUTH BRANCHES.—Lecture Notices must reach us by Tuesday morning to be inserted. Your notices arrived too late last week. We did not receive them till Wednesday.
- IN consequence of the Christmas holidays, all Lecture Notices should reach us on Saturday morning (Dec. 22).
- G. L. MACKENZIE.—Thanks. You may be pleased to note that the New York *Truthseeker* reprints some of your capital verses.
- ISLAM.—The *Islamic World* and the *Crescent* are published at 32 Elizabeth-street, Liverpool.
- C. WRIGHT.—The earliest printed text of the Hebrew Bible was published at Soncino in 1488, and the second at Venice in 1524. None of the Hebrew MSS. are earlier than the ninth century of our era.
- H. T.—Any blackguard or ruffian can say "I hereby challenge" the President of the National Secular Society, who is under no sort of obligation—moral or rational—to take the slightest notice of such bombast. When the Hall of Science libel case is heard and determined, as it will be early in the new year, we shall know how to deal with the person you refer to.
- J. PATERSON.—You will find the passage in Coleridge's *Table Talk* (Bohn's edition), p. 313. It runs thus: "Not one man in ten thousand has either strength of mind or goodness of heart to be an Atheist." Coleridge was far too subtle and penetrating to be deluded by the common sophistry that Atheism springs from folly or wickedness. Besides, he was too conversant with the history of speculation.
- D. F. GLOAK.—Thanks for papers. Glad to hear your Sunday concerts at Dundee are "going splendidly." We hope you will be able to circulate Mr. Watts's article this week among the godly.
- W. MARLOW.—Obliged for your good wishes. See paragraphs.
- J. KEAST.—Glad to hear you are again working with the Bristol Branch. We must all pull together if possible. Mr. Foote will gladly visit Bristol at an early date if a hall is now available.
- A. B. MOSS.—We congratulate you on your success at Camberwell, and do not need your assurance that you will not be any less zealous in serving Secularism. We have always regarded you as one of the most earnest workers in the movement.
- J. PORTAGE.—We dealt with the *Truth* extract two or three weeks ago.
- N.S.S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss E. M. Vance acknowledges:—Mr. George Anderson, £3 3s.
- J. HARKIS.—You did not state time or place. See paragraph.
- T. WISE.—(1) Glad you were so pleased with our last cartoon. Another will appear in our New Year's number, after which there will be an illustration every fortnight, or even more frequently. (2) Certainly there should be an active N.S.S. Branch in Paddington or Marylebone. Early in the new year it is our intention to organise a vigorous propaganda throughout the metropolis.
- R. GROVE.—Pleased to know that you think the *Almanack* a fine sixpennyworth.
- MR. FOOTE'S FIGHTING FUND.—E. Calvert, 1s.; F. J. Rayner (per Mr. Pullen), 3s. 6d.; Southsea Friend, 3s.
- WATTS ELECTION FUND.—Mr. G. Ward, treasurer, acknowledges: West London Branch, 10s.; W. H. S., 5s.
- X.—If the libellous *Life of Charles Bradlaugh* is in the institute you mention for public use, we advise you to communicate at once with Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner, who has had several copies destroyed. Mr. Bradlaugh proceeded against the persons responsible for the book, and obtained an order for the destruction of all copies of it, besides compelling the culprits to pay the costs of the action and a sum of money to a charitable institution.
- C. J. THOMPSON.—Inserted.
- E. H.—The Christian who told you that Mr. Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant lived together as man and wife is a blackguard and a liar. George Henry Lewes's wife eloped and left him with the children, and he could not get a divorce without a special Act of Parliament. George Eliot became his wife and the mother of his motherless children. They could not be married legally, and their obedience to the "higher law" has been praised by an honest Christian clergyman. The Quakers acted in this way for generations. Marriages could only be performed in churches, and they would not go through the ceremony. Bad laws are never broken down until they are defied.
- J. HAYES.—Mr. Forder's explanation is that an undertaker misinformed him. He was at the cemetery, and indeed caught a very bad cold there. Of course the mistake is very regrettable. Mr. Forder, like the rest of us, had a great respect for Mr. Hollowine.
- H. R. GANXON (Melbourne).—Mrs. Besant did debate on Buddhism and Theosophy with Mrs. Macdonald at St. James's Hall, but

it is not true that the latter lady left the platform in ill-temper. Which disputant demolished the other is a matter of opinion. Mrs. Besant has never discussed Theosophy with any of her old Secular colleagues, and probably never will.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Dundee Advertiser—Progressive Thinker—Isle of Man Times—Clarion—Parnellite—Western Figaro—Two Worlds—Scottish Guardian—Boston Investigator—Truthseeker—Open Court—Twentieth Century—Liberator—Light of Truth—Salford Reporter—Echo—Glasgow Weekly Herald—Liberty—Freidenker—Der Arme Teufel—Chatham and Rochester News—Aberdeen Evening Gazette—Dundee Courier—Dundee Evening Telegraph—Brisbane Telegraph.

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

LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 28 Stonecutter-street, London, E.C.

The *Freethinker* will be forwarded, direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One Year, 10s. 6d.; Half Year, 5s. 3d.; Three Months, 2s. 8d.

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.

ORDERS for literature should be sent to Mr. R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter-street, E.C.

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

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.

SUGAR PLUMS.

MR. FOOTE had a fine audience at the London Hall of Science on Sunday evening, when he lectured on "Who was the Father of Jesus?" Mr. Guest, who presided, was a most efficient chairman, and we hope to see him again in that capacity. The lecture, which was a long one, was followed with deep attention, and very warmly applauded, especially at the end, when the cheering was quite phenomenal. Many ladies were present, and as the meeting was not "for men only," the lecturer had to treat the question with his utmost skill and delicacy, instead of blurring out raw speech like Matthew and Luke. When question time came a gentleman in the audience asked how it was that none of the papers reported the "highly interesting Sunday evening lectures" he had heard at the Hall of Science. Another gentleman thought the best of such lectures should be printed, and widely circulated like Spurgeon's sermons, and he undertook to pay ten shillings a month towards the cost of their production. Mr. Foote replied that the suggestion should be fully considered, and as early as possible.

Mr. Ward reports a big sale of literature at the Hall of Science bookstall on Sunday. Colonel Ingersoll's new lecture on *The Holy Bible* and the *Secular Almanack* were in great demand. It is admitted, on all sides, that the 1895 *Almanack* is a marked improvement on its predecessors. As soon as this fact is generally known the demand will increase, and we hope the whole of the extra large edition printed will be cleared off in a few weeks. The N.S.S. bank account will be fortified by the profit on this publication.

We are glad to learn that Mr. Charles Watts had good audiences and a hearty reception at Plymouth last Sunday. His old friends mustered in force from all the surrounding districts. Several new members were secured to the Branch in response to Mr. Watts's appeal, and there was a good sale of literature. All the *Secular Almanacks* on hand for 1895 were disposed of before the evening lecture. Mr. Watts was in excellent form, and the unanimous wish was that he should again visit Plymouth at an early date. A brief report of the three meetings appeared in the *Western Daily Mercury* of the following day.

This evening, Sunday December 23, Mr. Watts lectures at the Hall of Science, London, taking for his subject "Christ and Christmas."

The West London Branch, which a few years ago was laboring against many difficulties, is now in a really prosperous condition, thanks in some measure to the zeal of Mr. F. Todd, the new secretary. Its last half-year's balance-sheet shows an income of £61 odd, and an expenditure of £48 odd, leaving a balance of nearly £16 to the good. A special vote of thanks was accorded to Mr. Munton for his services in selling literature for the Branch, to which he has paid over a profit of £6 in six months. It is to be wished that all Branches would push the sale of literature in this fashion.

The Glasgow Branch sends us its annual report for 1893-4, with a balance-sheet showing a balance of £37 odd in hand. According to the report, the Branch "has rarely been more fortunate in the possession of a large and devoted staff of willing and generous helpers." It is pleasant to read this, and we hope some good will result from the eloquent appeal to outsiders, who sympathise with Freethought, to come inside and take a share in the work.

Christians who have been chuckling over the non-success of the Secular candidates in the late London School Board elections have now reason to laugh on the other side of their mouths. A large number of our men have gained seats on the new Vestries. Mr. A. B. Moss is in for No. 1 Ward, Camberwell, and, having a good knowledge of municipal business, he will make a very useful member. Mr. Dobson, who did not win a seat on the School Board, is also successful. Mr. W. Cooper, one of the Hall of Science directors, has been successful in Islington; Mr. G. J. Warren, a member of the N.S.S. Executive, has gained a seat in East London; and Mr. Killick, a seat in Greenwich. There are several more, and we should like to give a full list of them next week. Perhaps our friends all over London will assist us in this matter by sending us full information.

The Battersea Branch holds its quarterly tea and soiree next Sunday, December 30. Tickets are only sixpence each, and can be had at the hall. During the evening the Marlowe Dramatic Company will play a sketch, and there will be special attractions on this festive occasion.

The Aberdeen Branch holds its annual social gathering next Sunday (Dec. 30). There will be a light tea, followed by music, conversation, and readings. No doubt it will be an occasion for a general rally of the local Freethinkers.

The Bristol Branch will have a tea and concert on New Year's Day at the Shepherds' Hall, Old Market-street. Tickets for both 1s., for concert only 6d. All the local "saints" should attend and spend an enjoyable evening together.

We have received the first number of the *Parnellite*, a new weekly published at Dublin. It is well got up, it has a good portrait of Mr. J. E. Redmond, M.P., and is really an excellent pennyworth. One of the editorial paragraphs denounces the priestcraft of Bishop Nulty, and another ridicules the Rev. John Robertson, of Glasgow, who has been preaching a jeremiad against theatres, and telling the people of Glasgow that three-fourths of them are going headlong to hell.

Mr. Joseph Symes is not going to drop the *Liberator* after all—at least, not yet. His friends have rallied to his assistance, and his flag will be kept flying. The last number to hand (Nov. 9) contains a letter from Mr. G. J. Holyoake, who says that, in the "Atheist Shoemaker" business, he only opposed "unfounded imputations" against Mr. Hughes. Mr. Symes replies that, if Mr. Holyoake had shown as much concern and consideration for Mr. Foote, he would have left Mr. Hughes to vindicate himself. "In plain English," Mr. Symes says, Mr. Hughes "deliberately lied," and "refused the most courteous invitations to give particulars." Joseph adds, in his straightforward way, that "the exposure Mr. Foote gave him must have damned him for life."

Mr. Sam Standing delivered three lectures at Hull on Sunday to large audiences, and met with an enthusiastic reception. Two new members were enrolled.

A few more subscriptions to the Watts Election Fund are acknowledged in another column. There is still a deficit of over £10, that amount being due to the printer. Of course we cannot allow a tradesman to suffer, nor can we expect Mr. Watts to fight the battle and pay the bill. If the deficit is not made up, we shall have to pay it ourselves, which we can ill afford to do. Anyhow, we must see it is paid. Surely one or two of our wealthier friends, who have not yet subscribed, can easily relieve us from anxiety in this matter.

London Freethinkers will remember the annual dinner at the Holborn Restaurant on Monday, January 7. The tickets (4s.) are now in circulation. Mr. G. W. Foote is to preside, and will be supported by Mr. C. Watts and other leading Secularists.

The publishers of Mrs. Bonner's and Mr. Robertson's *Life of Charles Bradlaugh* have rectified their oversight and sent us a copy of the book. It will be reviewed at length in our New Year's number, which will also contain a fine portrait of our "lost leader." Our New Year's number will be a special one, and in all respects of exceptional interest. It will be the usual weekly issue for January 6, and published at the usual price.

The Dundee *Evening Telegraph* concludes an article on Charles Bradlaugh, in which it carefully forbears from wounding religious prejudice, by saying: "Now, when Voltaire and Paine are being relegated to new places in the historical Valhalla, Charles Bradlaugh may fairly be awarded due, if not conspicuous, place."

The Manchester Crematorium (Limited) has just issued its annual report, from which we see that forty-seven cremations have taken place since December 1, 1893—a considerable increase upon the number for the previous year. The Directors draw special attention to the fact that they only charge a fee of two guineas for a cremation in the case of the poorer classes. It is encouraging to read that "the annual income is already sufficient to cover the annual working expenditure." The deficit in the balance-sheet would soon be wiped out if the whole of the shares were taken up, or if some wealthy friend of the movement would come forward with a substantial donation. The registered office of the Company is at 15 Princess-street, Albert-square, Manchester.

The President of the N.S.S. has instructed the Secretary to call a special meeting of the Executive for Friday evening (December 21). Every member should endeavor to attend.

SIR F. LOCKWOOD ON GALE JONES.

THE whirligig of time brings its revenges. The despised and misrepresented heroes who have toiled for their fellows—men and women scorning the ordinary comforts of life, wearing their hearts out in the service of man, and undergoing imprisonment and sometimes death in the work of emancipating the ignorant and poor from superstition and oppression, are often soon forgotten. The Freethought movement has a muster-roll of worthies during the century about to close, who have not only fought in all the Progressive movements of that period, but in all cases have had the honor of initiating the reforms now accomplished—reforms which, when first projected, were met with almost universal hostility and scorn from all the Churches.

One of these men, hardly known to the "Progressives" of to-day, has had his work and worth fully recognised by no less a personage than the Solicitor-General of Her Majesty's Government. Speaking at Birmingham on Friday evening, Sir Frank Lockwood took for his subject "Freedom of Speech," and instanced the pains and penalties inflicted in England on those who, in the early years of the century, won the liberty that Tom this, Ben that, and Will the other enjoy to-day. And who was the man that Sir F. Lockwood fixed on for a hero in that terrible struggle for a free platform?

No other than a brave, sturdy, and eloquent Freethinker, John Gale Jones. The infamous Act of 1793 required that every meeting at which debating took place should be licensed by two magistrates, and that during the debates a justice of the peace should be present for the purpose of stopping it if he deemed anything said to be seditious; and Sir Frank might have added "blasphemous," for that Act was purposely designed to prevent lectures against the Christian religion. The Solicitor-General described a caricature of Woodward—should this not be Wooller?—who underwent imprisonment for press offences, and who "depicted a trembling orator standing upon a tub; while a bully with a bludgeon stood over him, and the following legend ran underneath: 'Go on; speak your mind freely; but if you don't stop when I tell you, I will knock you down.'" Against this Act, and the subsequent "six Acts" of 1819, Gale Jones and other Freethinkers unceasingly warred; some, like Richard Carlile, spending years in jails to win liberty of speech and press, whilst the whole of the Churches were entirely silent.

Mr. J. M. Wheeler has pithily summarised Gale Jones's work in his *Dictionary of Freethinkers*; but perhaps, now that one of the law officers of the Crown has thought him deserving of remembrance, another phase of his career may be of interest to living Freethinkers.

In 1831 Jones was sixty years of age, but still had all the fire and earnestness of his earlier fighting years. Parliament was still unreformed; bread was heavily taxed; the great mass of the people were uneducated; the paper duty and the stamp tax were prohibitive of cheap newspapers. One divine of the period said that the only books the people wanted were the Bible and *The Pilgrim's Progress*; while a Bishop (Horsley) said in the House of Lords, a few years before, that "all the people had to do with the laws was to obey them." The Freethinkers, even in those stirring days, had a little weekly paper, demy octavo in size (sixteen pages), sold at threepence. It was called the *Prompter*, and was edited by Richard Carlile. They also had a lecture-hall, "The Rotunda," at 3 Blackfriars-road, just across the Bridge, from which the first number was issued.

In this first number Gale Jones is thus described, and, as the article is unsigned, it is probably from the pen of Carlile: "Mr. Gale Jones, whose taper, though near its end, still burns brilliantly, is an orator, well informed on the side of human improvement, sound in principle, and stern in integrity. He never speaks without delighting and instructing his audience." This description occurs in announcing the lecturers that are to appear there, which embrace also the names of the Rev. Robert Taylor, William Lovett, Hetherington, Watson, Savage, and Cleave, all of whom saw the insides of prisons in fighting for liberty of press and platform. Carlile had then been over seven years in prison for publishing Paine's *Age of Reason* and similar books. As he had been unconditionally released a few years before by the then Tory Government of the day, he did not expect further molestation. But in the third number of the *Prompter* he gave a few words of advice to the "Agricultural Laborers." In the counties of Berks, Dorset, Devon, and Hampshire these wretched men and women were absolutely starving, and many were hung for rick-burning and other offences. Carlile, who had been immured in Dorchester Jail nearly six years, has recorded many pathetic incidents in relation to the miserable and uneducated laborers whom he so often met in that place. This address is very moderate in its advice, and might be said, and is said, to-day with impunity. A predecessor of the office now filled by Sir F. Lockwood filed an indictment against Carlile. He was convicted at the Old Bailey, and received the following harsh sentence: "That he pay a fine of £200 to the King; that he be imprisoned in the compter of the City for the term of two years; and that, at the expiration of that term, he find securities for his good behavior for ten years to come—himself in the sum of £500, and two sureties of £250 each, to be further imprisoned till the fine be paid and the sureties found."

Carlile says that the prosecution, though nominally for sedition, was really because of the Freethought lectures of himself and others at the Rotunda. Gale Jones, though getting old, yet once again stepped into the breach of duty and of danger, and we find him week after week addressing meetings from the Rotunda platform. Soon after Carlile's conviction a census was taken, and the paper he filled up proved his undaunted pluck and restless energy for Freethought. It appears on page 495 of the *Prompter*: "Republican and infidel author, employed in writing, printing, publishing, and bookselling, to overthrow Church and State, assured that this or any other people would be better and happier without a Church, and may make for themselves a better State; a profession requiring great skill and much labor—the reward, at present, a prison; by and by, a palace."

A few weeks after Robert Taylor was indicted for "blasphemy," and he, too, received two years' imprisonment in Horse-monger-lane Goal; but his story must be reserved for another occasion. Our thanks are due to Sir F. Lockwood for his meed of praise to a noble, high-minded Freethinker, who fought and suffered for those great principles of truth and justice which our party still has emblazoned on its banners, and which it has ever and will ever defend until tyranny is abolished and superstition destroyed.

ROBERT FORDER.

Doings of the D.D.'s.

Rev. (colored) Thomas Williams, of Henrietta, Ky., is in durance vile, charged with assault upon a tinted Aspasian less than fifteen years old.

Rev. J. C. Hooks, of the Methodist line to the gold-paved city, located at Paris, Tenn., has been expelled for gross immorality; but the intelligent and consistent reporter makes no mention of the "sistering" who were "in it."

Rev. Larrabee Campbell brought suit against banker Johnson, of Omaha, Neb., for \$50,000, for alienating his wife's affections! Verdict for the defendant. Just think of a worldly banker as a rival for the affections of a God-protected D.D.

Rev. Andrew P. Hoffer, D.D., double D.D., recently ceased this life at Wooster, O., leaving behind him an estate of \$70,000, besides \$17,000 life insurance. This D.D. was for fifty years a missionary to China, and bequeathes the bulk of his ill-gotten gains for the establishment of a Christian college in China. This wealth was accumulated from the penny and nickel contributions of Sunday-school children in America, and the pleadings of fossil Christians to convert the heathen who still worship their idols, and to-day are fighting their enemy, the Japs, with *stink-pots*!—*Ironclad Age*.

MIRABEAU said of a certain Bishop of Autun, monstrously corpulent, that he had been created and placed upon this earth merely to show to what extent the human skin might be stretched.

THE FESTIVAL OF THE ASS.

MR. JAMES A. RICHARDSON, in his able article on "The Ass in Religion," in which he has well outlined the sketch of a very large subject, mentions the Feast of the Ass which used to be celebrated at Beauvais. Du Cange preserves the holy hymn sung on the occasion. Mr. Richardson gives two stanzas of this lovely cathedral chant. A full version is found in *Essays*, by J. N. Bailey; and Mr. Samuel Edgar, in his *Variations of Popery*, gives four stanzas of this sacred ode, which I subjoin:—

The ass did come from Eastern climes,
Heigho, my assy;
He's fair and fit for the pack at all times:
Sing, father ass, and you shall get grass,
And hay and straw too in plenty.

The ass is slow and lazy too,
Heigh-ho, my assy;
But the whip and the spur will make him go:
Sing, father ass, and you shall have grass,
And hay and straw too in plenty.

The ass was born and bred with long ears,
Heigh-ho, my assy;
And yet he the lord of asses appears:
Grin, father ass, and you shall get grass,
And hay and straw too in plenty.

The ass excels the hind at a leap,
Heigh-ho, my assy;
And faster than hound or hare can trot:
Bray, father ass, and you shall get grass,
And hay and straw too in plenty.
Amen, amen. So be it.

Mr. Edgar says: "The worship concluded with a braying match between the clergy and laity, in honor of the ass. The officiating priest turned to the people, and in a fine treble voice, and with great devotion, brayed three times like an ass, whose fair representative he was; while the people, imitating his example in thanking God, brayed three times in concert." St. Augustine relates that he was personally acquainted with an old lady who possessed the power of turning men into asses. Perhaps he had himself been subjected, like so many saints, to her influence. But I suspect the old lady was Mother Church. It is she who has ever contrived to ride in state into her Jerusalem on the shoulders of her faithful servitors. Let us bray!

CELSUS.

Obituary.

EDWARD TRENCHARD COOPER, youngest son of a well-known old Freethinker, Robert Aspland Cooper, died of typhoid fever on December 13, at Thorpe, Norwich. He was twenty-nine years of age. Mr. Cooper will have general sympathy in this sad bereavement.

THE Islington branch has lost a member by the death of Mr. W. L. Prosser, a man whose life had not yet reached its meridian. The primary cause of his disease was a cancerous affection in the right side, which took away the use of the arm. When in health, two or three years ago, Mr. Prosser did some lecturing for Freethought, and since his disablement he learned to write with his left hand, and used his pen for the cause. He was most cheerful and amiable to the end—remarkably so—and his patient bearing under such a dreadful disease might be advantageously emulated by many invalid Christians, who profess to be buoyed by the "consolations of religion."—A. GUEST.

A VETERAN reformer has passed away in the person of Edward Thomas Craig, who died at his residence, Ralahine Cottage, Hammersmith, on Saturday, December 15, at the advanced age of ninety-one. Mr. Craig was born at Manchester on August 4, 1804. He was present at the Peterloo massacre in 1819; became a follower of Owen, and helped to form the Salford Social Institute. He was a pioneer of co-operation, editing the *Lancashire Co-operator*. In 1831 he was selected to conduct the management of a co-operative farm at Ralahine, County Clare. His interesting account of the experiment is a standard work on profit-sharing. Mr. Craig edited several journals, and contributed largely to Radical and co-operative literature. He attributed his long life to attention to ventilation, baths, and massage, which he advocated in a *brochure* on *The Science of Prolonging Life*. Of a serene and kindly disposition, he will be missed by many who regarded his life-long services for the welfare of humanity with admiration and respect.

Renan says: "In all ancient Christian literature there is not one word that tells the slave to revolt, or that tells the master to liberate the slave, or even that touches the problem of public right which arises out of slavery."

BOOK CHAT.

How I Came to be Boycotted, by P. H. Echlin, Social Reformer, is a curious brochure published by A. Hemingway, 25 Higher Chatham-street, Manchester. Mr. Echlin is a man of originality of mind and character, and consequently (perhaps) he has incurred the disfavor of the mediocrities in his profession. We hope he will outlive the persecution to which he has been subjected.

* * *

The Complete Concordance to the words, phrases, and passages in the dramatic works of Shakespeare, by John Bartlett, A.M., of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (Macmillan & Co.), is certainly the fullest and best index to the words of our greatest poet. With a supplemental concordance to the poems, the work contains altogether 1,910 pages, printed in double columns. It is satisfactory to know that Shakespeare has now a Concordance fully equal to any compiled from the Bible.

* * *

From Moses Hull, an American Spiritist lecturer, 29 Chicago-terrace, Chicago, we receive four lively brochures, all dealing with the Bible and Spiritism. They are entitled *The Question Settled*, a careful comparison of Biblical and modern Spiritualism; *The Contrast: Evangelicalism and Spiritualism*; *Jesus and the Mediums*; and *All About Devils*. They are written in a popular style, and the fact that the first named is in its ninth edition shows Mr. Hull has the power of influencing the public. He is a non-Christian Spiritist, who effectively uses the Bible beliefs to support his own. The Bible, as Cardinal Newman remarked, is full of angelology and visitations from another world. At the same time, there is not a tithe of evidence for the truth of its narratives that there is for similar wonders in our own day.

* * *

The strong part of Mr. Hull's work seems to us his exposure of the superstitions of the Bible, about which he uses his reason freely. Far weaker are the evidences he adduces of modern Spiritualism, which mainly resolve themselves into narratives upon which we have no sufficient opportunity of testing the trustworthiness and the ability of the narrators. Indeed, his works confirm the view that Spiritism is strong because orthodoxy is effete. It offers a more rational conception of a future life than that of an eternal hell, or a heaven gained by belief in the efficacy of someone's blood shed over eighteen hundred years ago. We have said more rational, but we can hardly say more consolatory. Spiritism, as we think Huxley has said, may add to the terrors of death, at any rate, with those unable to endure being summoned by students of spirit rapping, or made to talk such nonsense as usually passes for the inspiration of trance orators. It suggests the expediency of advertising that one will not hold himself responsible for what he may do or say after he is dead.

* * *

One of the most effective of Mr. Hull's little books is that entitled *All About Devils*, in which he replies to the common charge from the orthodox and from Catholics like Father Clarke, that modern Spiritism is from the Devil. Once admit there is a Devil, with power to transform himself into an angel of light and deceive the very elect, and you can, of course, credit such a being with anything. Mr. Hull retorts: "If he is a miracle-worker, then miracles do not prove the Bible true; for he, being a worker of miracles, may, for aught we can know to the contrary, have wrought the very miracles by which the Bible is proved to be of divine origin. He is sharp enough to do that, and it would be exactly like one of his devilish tricks." Mr. Hull fairly claims that Spiritism should be judged, like other systems, by its results, and with this we are content. Altogether, his works confirm our view that Spiritism, if itself one of the most deep-seated of superstitions, is in America a very active force in breaking up orthodox Christianity.

* * *

Those interested in Professor Edwin Johnson's views as to the origin of ecclesiastical literature should look up the articles of "J. M. C." in the *Scottish Guardian*, Dec. 7 and 14. This writer gives much evidence that the epistle ascribed to Clement of Rome and its recently-discovered Latin version are both forged—the writer evidently thinks in about the early part of the sixteenth century. Yet the epistle is found in one of the oldest MSS. of the Gospels.

* * *

In noticing *Isis Very Much Unveiled*, the *Weekly Times and Echo* says: "The exposure of the duplicity and stupidity of the teachers and students of 'Theosophy,' as expounded by that old humbug, Madame Blavatsky, and her interesting successors, is simply humiliating, in so far as it is a testimony to the limits human credulity may reach. When a woman of Mrs. Besant's mental calibre succumbs to a wretched system of trickery like this, one understands how

devotees of spotless life and undoubted piety pledged their veracity in the old times to the cock-and-bull miracles of priests and charlatans."

GOD AND GRUB.

A METRICAL MINCE-PIE.

AWAKE ye fowls at break of morn !
Arouse the world with clarion horn !
The Pigeon's bouncing boy was born
On Christmas-day in the morning.

A few short hours are yours, at most ;
Your roost you soon must leave to roast ;
So keep the birth of the Son of the Ghost
On Christmas-day in the morning.

The fattened poultry will not miss
A future state of woe or bliss,
For they'll get their "necks twirled" in this
On Christmas-day in the morning.

The shepherds watched their flocks by night ;
But, if the learned tell us right,
Their sheep might all be frozen quite
On Christmas-day in the morning.

A travelling star *en route* soon got,
And then stood still to show the spot
Above a particular chimney-pot,
On Christmas-day in the morning.

To see the God that donkeys made
Within the manger helpless laid ;
There's some excuse if the donkey brayed
On Christmas-day in the morning.

And if anigh a belfry tower
You shelter seek from a wintry shower,
You'll hear one bray with ten-ass power
On Christmas-day in the morning.

In church the Christian's thoughts break loose
From the Lamb of God and his saving juice,
And wander away to a savory goose,
On Christmas-day in the morning.

If Christians now would take as true
The word of a girl what a ghost can do,
Of gods they'd have a tidy few
By Christmas-day in the morning.

Soon Puss will strut and Jack will climb,
As they have done full many a time ;
But funnier far is the pantomime,
On Christmas-day in the morning.

With Jesus Christ the Balmy Coon,
And rare Old Nick the "slop" buffoon,
And clerical clown and pantaloons,
On Christmas-day in the morning.

The faithful cannot see the fun ;
But, after all is said and done,
Their Trinity is an earthly one,
On Christmas-day in the morning.

It's not the God whom God forsook—
The Holy Ghost and the senior spook,
But the Poulterer, Butcher, and Pastry-cook,
On Christmas-day in the morning.

Then hurrah for the wine so highly priced,
Hurrah for the pies so nicely spiced,
For the pudding, the goose (and Jesus Christ),
On Christmas-day in the morning.

E. H. B. STEPHENSON.

Rome Christ's Birthplace.

The actual birthplace of the carnalised Christ was neither Bethlehem nor Nazareth, but Rome. It was there that the cult of Equinoctial Christolatriy was continued by conversion. Rome was the re-foundry of the ancient religion. And, according to astronomical prophecy, Rome was another of the localities in which the Messiah was expected to appear. That is, Rome on earth, Rome of the seven hills, represented a Rome in heaven, just as Jerusalem below was the replica of Jerusalem above, or Bethlehem had been named from the celestial House of Bread-Corn.—*Gerald Massey, "The Natural Genesis," vol. ii., p. 395.*

SOME WHACKERS.

"AND the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept; and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; and the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man" (Genesis ii. 21, 22).

Had Adam thirteen ribs as a start, and why is not man now lopsided?

"But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt" (Genesis xix. 26).

Remember Lot's wife!

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Take thy rod, and stretch out thine hand upon the waters of Egypt, upon their streams, upon their rivers, and upon their ponds, and upon all their pools of water, that they may become blood; and that there may be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in vessels of wood, and in vessels of stone. And Moses and Aaron did so, as the Lord commanded; and he lifted up the rod, and smote the waters that were in the river, in the sight of Pharaoh, and in the sight of his servants; and all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood. And the fish that was in the river died; and the river stank, and the Egyptians could not drink of the water of the river; and there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt. And the magicians of Egypt did so with their enchantments: and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, neither did he hearken unto them; as the Lord had said" (Exodus vii. 19-22).

After all the water had been turned into blood, the Egyptians did the same trick. And the Egyptians lived on as tranquilly as ever. Too thin!

"And there went forth a wind from the Lord, and brought quails from the sea, and let fall them by the camp, as it were a day's journey on this side, and as it were a day's journey on the other side, round about the camp, and as it were two cubits high upon the face of the earth" (Numbers xi. 31).

The pile of quails must have been from thirty-six to forty-four inches high, over sixty-six square miles. Too thick!

"And Samson went and caught three hundred foxes, and took firebrands, and turned tail to tail, and put a firebrand in the midst between two tails" (Judges xv. 4).

Samson was a mighty fox-hunter before the Lord.

"And he found a new jawbone of an ass, and put forth his hand, and took it, and slew a thousand men therewith" (Judges xv. 15).

They must have stood up to be killed!

"And Abijah and his people slew them with a great slaughter: so there fell down slain of Israel five hundred thousand chosen men" (2 Chron. xiii. 17).

In the petty wars in Palestine there was greater slaughter than at Waterloo, Sadowa, and Sedan put together!

UNCLE BENJAMIN.

Christ in the Manger.

The manger at Bethlehem had been the birthplace of the divine babe in a far earlier cult. Hieronymus describes the Syrian Adonia, extant in his time (A.D. 331-420), and says that, in the place where the Redeemer cried in the manger, the lament of the woman mourning for Adonis had been heard even in later times, as it assuredly had been in the pre-Christian period. According to the chronicle of Alexandria, the Egyptians not only consecrated the nativity of the babe born of the virgin mother: they likewise had the symbolical custom of exposing a child in a crib to the adoration of the people. When King Ptolemy asked why this was done, he was told that it was an ancient mystery. The crib or apt being identical with the manger, this was the same babe in the manger that was born in the apt above. "The loss of the manger of Bethlehem," says Dean Stanley, "is a witness to the universal significance of the incarnation." On the contrary, we claim that the discovery of the manger (apt) in the solar birthplace is a testimony to its never having been other than celestial or mythical, and, therefore, it is universal.—Gerald Massey, "The Natural Genesis," vol. ii., pp. 397, 398.

DOWN BELOW.

[A SONG.]

SUMMER, in her verdant glory,
Sweetly smiled o'er hill and lea,
When a pale-faced little urchin
Whispered sadly unto me:
"Father, there's a dusky region
Where no balmy zephyrs blow,
In which they say we'll roast for ever,
And 'tis down, down, down below.

Chorus—Down below, down below,
Free from frost and free from snow,
All among the fire and brimstone,
By and bye we'll roast below.

"There is surely enough anguish,
Enough sorrow, toil, and pain,
In this world for us to suffer,
Without being broiled where devils reign;
But, father, there's this consolation—
That we die before we go
To swell the ranks of sooty angels
In the region down below.

Chorus—Down below, down below, etc.

"You have, indeed, chastised me, father,
When you found me doing wrong;
And, oh, how I've squealed and squealed, dear
father,
As your blows came fast and strong.
But the parsons tell us, father—
Everywhere we chance to go—
That such squealing 'won't be in it'
With the squealing down below.

Chorus—Down below, down below, etc.

"'Tis not because some men are 'bad uns,'
Nor because some rob or thieve;
But because they cannot make out
What parsons say we must believe
About a God of love who loves us.
But what a funny way to show
His love, by making fires to roast us
For all eternity, down below.

Chorus—Down below, down below,
Where no pleasant streamlets flow,
All among the fire and brimstone,
By and bye we'll roast below."

NEIL CORBETT.

PROFANE JOKES

At a Sunday-school a boy was asked: "What was made the first day?" He answered: "Light." "And what the second?" "Darkness."

Teacher—"What are the names of the several days of the week?" Boy—"Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday." Teacher—"When does your mother go to church?" Boy—"When pa buys her a new hat."

Scene in a Sunday-school room near Sligo.—Teacher (to big girl of class)—"And David slept with his fathers. And can you tell me, Norah, what is meant by these words?" Norah—"Sure, and I don't know, but it was mighty indacent of him."

"Do you realise, sir," said the Bishop, "that there is one who sees and hears all we do, who can solve our inmost thoughts, and before whom we are but crushed and bruised worms?" "Give us your hand, stranger," replied the other; "I know just how you feel. I'm married myself."

At a church in Essex the clerk, feeling unwell, asked his friend the railway porter to take his place for the next Sunday. He did so, but, being worn out with night work, he fell asleep. When the hymn was announced, a neighbor gave him a nudge, upon which he started up, rubbing his eyes, and calling out, "Change here for Elmswell, Thurston, and Bury."

A parson was sitting in his tent door, like Abraham, smoking in the cool of the day, when not an angel, but a tramp approached, and the following dialogue ensued: Tramp—"A little help for a poor man, yer rev'ence, out of work," etc. His Rev.—"Why have you not been to the Hall and asked the Squire for help; he is richer than I, a poor priest with many calls?" etc. Tramp—"Please, yer rev'ence, I have just come from the Hall. I saw the Squire, and he told me to go to the Devil, so I thought I'd come to you."

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

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

LONDON.

HALL OF SCIENCE (142 Old-street, E.C.) : 11.30, E. B. Bishop (Fabian) "What the London Vestries Can Do." (Free.) 6.30, musical selections; 7, Charles Watts, "Christ and Christmas." (Admission free; reserved seats, 3d. and 6d.)

BATTERSEA SECULAR HALL (back of Battersea Park Station) : 7.45, musical and dramatic entertainment. (Free.) Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, at 8, social gatherings for N.S.S. members and friends.

WOOD GREEN (Star Coffee House, High-street) : 7, W. J. Ramsey, "Bible Fairy Tales."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

BATTERSEA PARK GATES : 11.30, F. Haslam, "The Bethlehem Baby Boy."

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch) : 11.30, a lecture.

WOOD GREEN (Jolly Butchers' Hill) : 11.30, debate between W. J. Ramsey and James Boyce (C.E.S.), "Is Jesus Christ an Historic Character, and are His Teachings of the Highest Morality?"

COUNTRY.

ABERDEEN (Crooked-lane Hall) : 7, discussion, followed by short entertainment.

BELFAST (Crown Chambers' Hall, 64 Royal-avenue) : 3.30, music and readings.

BIRMINGHAM (Coffee House, corner of Broad-street) : Thursdays, at 8, papers, discussions, etc.

BRISTOL (Shepherds' Hall, Old Market-street) : 3, readings.

CHATHAM SECULAR HALL (Queen's-road, New Brompton) : 11, C. James, "What Think Ye of Christ?" 2.45, Sunday-school; 7, C. James, "Faith : A Reply to Canon Scott-Holland."

DUNDEE (City Assembly Rooms) : 11, A. Paul, "Good God"; 12, elocution class; 12.30, choir practice; 1, shorthand class; 2.30, A. Paul, "The Birthday of Jesus"; 6.30, secular concert.

GLASGOW (Ex-Mission Hall, 110 Brunswick-street) : 11.30, W. Heaford, "The Consolations of Religion"; 2.30, "Christianity Judged by the Ten Commandments"; 6.30, "The Bible or Secularism—Which?"

Huddersfield (Friendly and Trades' Club, No. 5 Room) : Christmas Day, at 7, social, dance, supper, and entertainment.

HULL (St. George's Hall, Storey-street) : 7, Mr. Monro, "Secularism and Infidelity."

LEICESTER (Secular Hall, Humberstone-gate) : 6.30, Dr. Stanton Coit, "The Effect of Woman's Social Status upon her Character."

LIVERPOOL (Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street) : 7, C. Doeg, "Socrates." Friday, Dec. 21, at 8, Tontine divide.

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints) : 6.30, Mr. Cooke, "The House of Lords."

NEWCASTLE (Irish Literary Institute, Clayton-street East) : 7, James Bowie, "Secularism Defined and Defended."

PLYMOUTH (Democratic Club, Whimble-street) : 6.45, Mr. Darton, "Did Jesus Ever Live?"

PORTSMOUTH (Wellington Hall, Wellington-street, Southsea) : 7, lantern slides, "Christmas Carol." Wednesday, at 8, dancing.

ROCHDALE (Working Men's College, 4 Acker-street) : 2.30, Sunday-school; 6.30, "Did Ally Sloper Ever Live?" (illustrated).

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street) : 3, M. D. O'Brien, "The Ethic of Individualism"; 7, "Socialism an Imposture." Wednesday, at 8, members' and friends' dance.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Thornton's Variety Hall, Union-lane) : 11, C. Cohen, "Crime and Criminals"; 6, "What is Left of Christianity?"

SUNDERLAND (Lecture Room, Bridge End Vaults, opposite *Echo* office) : 7, R. Weightman, "The Birth of Christ."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE (Quayside—weather permitting) : 11, R. Mitchell, "The Making of God."

ROCHDALE (Town Hall Square—weather permitting) : 11, Sam Standing, "The Birth of Jesus"; 3, "Why I Don't Believe in God."

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