

# The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.

VOL. XV.—No. 14.

SUNDAY, APRIL 7, 1895.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

## THE DISESTABLISHMENT OF THE CHURCH.

ACCORDING to the principles of the National Secular Society, Secularism seeks to disestablish religion—that is, to separate it from the State; and it urges the necessity of it being maintained (where the profession is thought desirable) from its own resources. Hence, one of our "Immediate Practical Objects" is, not only to secure the Disestablishment, but also the "Disendowment of the State Churches in England, Scotland, and Wales." This desirable work was really commenced by Mr. Gladstone at the time of the Disestablishment of the Irish Church; but the Bill of the present Government, in reference to the Church in Wales, is a more complete application of the principle, inasmuch as it provides that the funds which have hitherto been monopolised by the Church shall be used for useful secular purposes.

Personally, I am opposed to all Government interference with the advocacy of opinions, and also decidedly object to its giving any patronage to one form of speculative views in preference to others. Government should have no concern in any speculative scheme that refers to problematic issues which are apart from human life and human wants. Whether there be one or three Gods, or no God at all, mundane requirements should alone claim the attention of those who are appointed by the people to regulate national affairs. There ought to be no difficulty in learning from the history of the past that the government which is best calculated to administer to the welfare of the community is the one which devotes itself wholly to the affairs of this world.

In the struggle to obtain the separation of Church and State Secularists are not fighting alone, for many who profess Christianity are as much opposed to the union as we are. Still, the fact must not be overlooked that a large section of orthodox believers in this country hold the opinion that the Church of England should be protected by law. The reasons given for this desire are very fallacious. The defenders of Church and State must indeed have very peculiar notions of justice and equality. Supposing the National Secular Society claimed Government support in their propagandism, Churchmen would be horrified. But why? Is it because Secularists are in a minority? So are Churchmen; for it cannot, with any degree of truth, be alleged that the Establishment represents the opinions of the majority of the people. Is it because Secularists have not the means to do as much for the national good as the Church has at its command? If, however, there is any force in the plea for State aid, would not its support increase the means of the Secularists? Unfortunately, this Church has had the means, but it has failed to employ them usefully; hence, as a secular agency, it has proved a decided failure. Its power has been used not for, but against, the development of political and social reforms. It has, moreover, sadly neglected the education of the young, and the providing for the pauper population. Bishops and the clergy have had the control of funds that should have been devoted to the benefit of the poor and ignorant; but the poor have not been adequately provided for, and the ignorant have not been properly instructed by the representatives of our "National Religion." The consequence is that now these duties have to be performed by Poor Law Guardians and Board School teachers at the public expense, while the funds are going to the Church all the same.

In the face of these facts the Church Establishment is but  
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a sham and a delusion. It is a sound principle upon which to rely, that when the opinions of a nation change it is only in accordance with equity that laws and institutions should be altered and made to harmonise with the new conditions. Whatever our forefathers might have been contented with, the fact is evident that to-day religion can only be accepted as a question of individual opinion; it cannot be enforced as a national injustice. This is the only view that can consistently be said to accord with that religious freedom of which we hear so much and see so little among orthodox Christians at the present time. If all the inhabitants of this country shared the religious views taught by the Established Church, the case would be different; but where there are so many different and conflicting sects of religionists, and so many that have no religion at all, it is manifestly unfair to "nationalise" one section of the community to the exclusion of all others.

One of the reasons given for the union of Church and State is, that it serves as a solid breakwater to keep back the flood of Romanism, which our forefathers so justly feared. This, however, is not so, for modern clerical engineers have invented a sort of Forth Bridge, which connects High Churchism with Roman Catholicism. But there is not much danger of the Pope exercising any civil power in the United Kingdom, since he has become practically a prisoner in the Vatican. The barrier to the encroachments of Catholicism is not the theology of the Church of England, but rather the spirit of scepticism, which so extensively prevails within its domain. Moreover, the lack of unity in the Establishment prevents it, as a religious institution, from being a formidable foe to Romish aggression. For, while one portion of the English Church is tending towards Romanism, another portion is drifting towards Rationalism. If there ever was a time when the Church could be defended as the representative of one doctrine and one faith, and when it was the visible emblem of the "unity of faith in the bond of peace," that time has past. England is probably the home of more divergent sects of religionists than any other country at the present day, and this fact alone affords a powerful argument against a State Church. Allied with Freethought propagandism, religious dissent has broken the political power of the Church; so much so that even in our rural districts, at the present time, its political power is openly defied, and its religious authority is persistently ignored.

It may be asked, Has the State no concern with the various religious views promulgated throughout the land? The answer is, None whatever. But it has something to do with the individuals who promulgate those views. It appears to me that the function of the Government in regard to this matter is simply to maintain order, and to secure the right of free discussion for the advocates of all opinions of a speculative character, which have divided, and probably always will divide, mankind. There is no more justification for placing persons at a disadvantage on account of the opinions they entertain than there would be for blaming them for their stature or the color of their hair. Men can no more help thinking than they can avoid breathing; therefore, freedom should be secured whereby all should be allowed to think and to speak freely, without dread of social or penal disabilities being the result. The world is slow in learning the lesson of political and religious freedom. Protestant Churchmen and dissenters alike object to subscribe to the Roman Church, but they complain of the Secularist when he objects to subscribe to either section of the Protestant Church.

The aspect of this question in the early part of the present century was very different from what it is now. While at that period people did not openly advocate the rule of a religious minority because they held the true faith, the right of the majority to coerce the minority was questioned only by the few. To-day the opinion is rapidly extending that the State has no business to interfere with any but secular things. It is said that Christ neither established nor endowed any Church by the law of the land, and, therefore, such an institution is without the authority of the Founder of Christianity. Of course, if he had done so, the injustice would have been the same.

In reference to the cry of the bishops that the Disestablishment of the Church involves "the dethronement and robbery of God," it is only necessary to say that the right of kings and churches to rule is regarded in modern times in the same light as is the right of action conferred upon police constables, and that is the power given them by the law of the land, which is alterable and improvable at the pleasure of the electorate and Parliament. The right exists to elect or dismiss any branch of the Civil Service. To those clergymen who say they are not aided by the State the reply is: In that case they can suffer no loss from ceasing to be partners in a concern which yields them no profits.

CHARLES WATTS.

### MR. BALFOUR'S "FOUNDATIONS."—III.

(Concluded from page 194.)

*The Foundations of Belief.* Being Notes Introductory to the Study of Theology. By the Right Hon. Arthur James Balfour. (London: Longmans, Green, & Co.)

MR. BALFOUR devotes a whole chapter to a "summary and conclusion" of his attack on Naturalism. He says he is anxious not to overstate his case, but we are accustomed to these mock-modest protestations; and, indeed, this particular one looks very curious in the light of the following passage:—

"If naturalism be true, or, rather, if it be the whole truth, then is morality but a bare catalogue of utilitarian precepts; beauty but the chance occasion of a passing pleasure; reason but the dim passage from one set of unthinking habits to another. All that gives dignity to life, all that gives value to effort, shrinks and fades under the pitiless glare of a creed like this."

This may be forcible writing; it is just as certainly forcible folly. How on earth can morality, on the basis of naturalism or utilitarianism, or whatever other term you choose to substitute, be "a bare catalogue of precepts"? In the common language of mankind, have we not hearts as well as heads, however we came by them? Reason dictates the precepts of morality, but it can only do so under the impulsion of sympathy; and the genesis and development of that feeling is as clear as daylight on the principles of evolution. As for the second sentence in this passage, what is it but an absurd paradox? How can "reason" and "unthinking" be logically coupled together? And does it not strike Mr. Balfour, in his calmer moments, that the "dignity" of life can hardly depend upon the mass of wild, and often hideous, ideas men have entertained about the "supernatural"? This champion of the faith is not always consistent with himself. In addressing the Church Congress at Manchester, he said that Positivism—which is precisely what he now assails as Naturalism—might enable us to live with dignity, though it could not enable us to die with hope; but now the "dignity" is sacrificed in the interest of a fresh dialectic. With regard to the "value of effort," surely it depends upon its success; and we venture to tell Mr. Balfour that Naturalism, with the practical aid of science, has done more for what Bacon called "the relief of man's estate" in a single century than Supernaturalism has done from the beginning of history. Whether it has done as much for "the glory of God" is quite another matter, and one which, at present, we need not trouble to discuss. Finally, we must remark that Mr. Balfour is very unfortunate in his expression about the "pitiless glare" of a creed like Naturalism. It brings to our mind, at least, the Christian doctrine of Hell. How a man who believes (or does not repudiate belief) in such a terrible doctrine as

that, can talk about the "pitiless glare" of any other creed, is like the peace of God—it passes all understanding.

Mr. Balfour first sets up a theory that certain feelings and opinions are inconsistent with Naturalism, and then argues that the triumph of Naturalism will banish all those feelings and opinions from the face of the earth. He is "wholly unable to understand" how Naturalism can do otherwise than "eat all nobility out of our conception of conduct, and all worth out of our conception of life." Mr. Balfour's ability to understand, however, is not the measure of natural possibility. This is particularly a case in which the investigator's "personal equation" throws the whole problem into disorder. With all his undeniable gifts, Mr. Balfour wants a little more imagination. He cannot place himself at his opponent's point of view. But even on grounds of common reason and general experience, he might see the futility of this diatribe against Naturalism. Christians have generally been unable to understand how nobility of conduct and worthiness of life could exist outside their own faith; yet both existed before Christianity was heard of, and they have always existed beyond its limits. Nor is this attitude confined to the Christian; it is common enough in all the faiths of the world. It is only the Naturalist who is really above this petty insularity. He feels the very beating of what Wordsworth called "the universal heart of man." There abides the eternal security for what Mr. Balfour fears will be lost. It cannot be destroyed, though it may be veiled, by the mists of superstition; and now and then it appears in its naked integrity, as Mont Blanc gleams serenely in sunshine and clear air.

Mr. Gladstone has declared that if he ever entertained the prejudice that unbelievers could not be men of high and noble character, it would have been banished by his experience of public life and his knowledge of public men. Mr. Balfour is also confronted with the fact that the devotees of Naturalism are not more wicked or grovelling than their neighbors. He protests that he does not desire to ignore or depreciate the "shining examples of virtue unsupported by religion." What he denies is that their virtue is any credit to their creed. What virtue you have, Mr. Balfour says to them, you derive from us: there are parasites in the physical world, and you are the parasites of the moral world.

"Their spiritual life is parasitic: it is sheltered by convictions which belong, not to them, but to the society of which they form a part; it is nourished by processes in which they take no share. And when those convictions decay, and those processes come to an end, the alien life which they have maintained can scarce be expected to outlast them."

We have heard this before—at street corners, in churches and chapels, and from religious platforms. We have also read it in books on apologetics. It is variously expressed; sometimes vulgarly, and sometimes with an air of good-breeding; but it is always the same thing at bottom. Religion fills the reservoir of virtue, and irreligious persons only draw off their convenient supply. But the curious thing is—and Mr. Balfour should note it—that the devotees of Naturalism assert the very opposite. They declare that Humanity fills the reservoir, at least by providing its contents; and that Religions are no more than chartered Water Companies, which call the water by their own names, arbitrarily regulate the supply, and always charge a heavy rate for their transcendent services.

Some defenders of "faith"—such, for instance, as Mr. Benjamin Kidd, the author of that extravagantly lauded book on *Social Evolution*—tell us that scepticism is declining; that Bradlaugh and Ingersoll are spent forces, and that Huxley's eloquence falls flat upon the public ear. Mr. Balfour, however, is not foolish enough to echo this premature pean of victory. He admits that the influence of Naturalism "has increased, is increasing, and as yet shows no signs of diminution." This admission has been ignored by the general body of reviewers, especially in the religious journals; but it should be noted in a journal like the *Freethinker*. Those who attended the funeral of scepticism forget that they walked behind an empty coffin. Mr. Balfour, at any rate, will not sign its death certificate.

Mr. Balfour agrees with Mr. Kidd, however, in snubbing Reason. She is useful in her way, but she is a mental intruder, and must not obtrude in the drawing-room. The leader

of the Tory party in the House of Commons naturally prefers Authority.

"It is Authority rather than Reason to which, in the main, we owe, not religion only, but ethics and politics; it is Authority which supplies us with essential elements in the premises of science; it is Authority rather than Reason which lays deep the foundations of social life; it is Authority rather than Reason which cements its superstructure."

There is a certain truth in this statement if Authority means our inherited wisdom from the past; but in any other sense of the word, the statement is a plea for prejudice and irrationality. Mr. Balfour must be joking when he pretends to imagine that the advocates of Reason regard nothing as practically settled. He may rely upon it that they will not allow their children to experiment on prussic acid in their pursuit of dietary knowledge. Mr. Balfour is a clever man, but his book will only comfort and console his own party; it will not disturb the mental serenity of a single disciple of Naturalism.

G. W. FOOTE.

### MADAME BLAVATSKY.

(Continued from p. 194.)

FROM 1858, when Daniel Dunglass Home, immortalised in Browning's "Sludge the Medium," was married in Russia to a sister of Count Koucheleff, one of the richest grandees in the country, Helena Petrovna Blavatsky had been a Spiritist medium. In that year Home met her in Paris, where she pretended to be a medium. It was, according to Olcott's account in his book entitled *People from the Other World*, at spirit séances at Chiltenden, Vermont, in October, 1874, that he first met H. P. B. Olcott (p. 453) calls her "one of the most remarkable mediums in the world," and gravely relates how numerous spirits came out of the cabinet. Dr. Elliott Cones, formerly president of the Washington Theosophical Society, says of Olcott's book:—

"It is one of the best ghost books extant; full of spectral pictures, not a word of truth in the text, and redolent with the flavor of gullibility. Yet it is a thoroughly dishonest book, for Olcott knew perfectly well, before it came out in book form, that every phenomenon he described was fraudulent; and when somebody proposed to show up the Eddy tricks in their true light, Olcott begged for God's sake not to have it done, because 'it would injure the sale of his work.'"

The manifestations mentioned by Olcott in his book booming Blavatsky having been attacked by Dr. G. M. Beard, H. P. Blavatsky wrote to the *New York Graphic*, October 27, 1874, in defence of Spiritism. She says: "People that know me know I am far from being credulous. Though a Spiritualist of many years' standing, I am more sceptical in receiving evidence from paid mediums than many unbelievers." Again (*New York Graphic*, November 13, 1874): "I deem it my duty as a Spiritualist to," etc. In a letter to *Light* ten years later (October 11, 1884) she said: "I say again, I never was a Spiritualist." Hundreds in America are aware of the contrary. The "familiar spirit" of the lady medium was "John King," buccaneer, who is notable as the original Mahatma. In a letter to Aksikoff (April 12, 1875) she says: "The spirit, John King, is very fond of me, and I am fonder of him than of anything on earth." Colonel Olcott relates that the defunct pirate obligingly offered to commit forgery on any bank desired. This "John King" was such a success that he was patronised by many of the "mejums." The only thing necessary was a hoarse voice and coarse talk. If materialised, a heavy black horse hair beard and a white sheet were the only accessories needed. No wonder John was popular. "At this time," says Dr. Cones, "several of her letters to friends, which I have read, are curiously scribbled in red and blue pencils, with sentences and signatures of 'John King' just as, later on, 'Koot Hoomi' used to miraculously precipitate himself upon her stationery in all sorts of colored crayons." W. E. Coleman, in his *Critical Historical Review of the Theosophical Society* (p. 3), says:—

"Early in 1875 Madame Blavatsky sent to General F. J. Lippitt a picture, which she said had been painted for the General by the spirit John King himself. In *Mind and Matter*, Philadelphia, November 27, 1880, was published conclusive evidence, found in Madame B.'s room in Philadelphia, that she had herself painted this picture, except certain flowers, etc., which were already on the satin when she procured it. Madame B. is known to have fair skill as a painter. Further, Mrs. Hannah M. Wolff, of Washington, D.C., in a published account of her experience with Madame Blavatsky in 1874, has stated that, Madame B. having claimed that certain pictures were painted by spiritual power direct, she was watched by three journalists residing in the same house, and they saw Madame B. get up in the night and paint them herself."

V. S. Solovyoff, in his *Modern Priestess of Isis*, has explained from H. P. B.'s own letters to the Russian Spiritist, Aksakoff, how she was forced to find fresh fields and pastures new. D. D. Home had heard of her use of his name, and told the plain facts about her. She had previously dreaded that Aksakoff might reveal something. "To him," says Solovyoff (p. 236), "not foreseeing that she would soon need to play the part of the 'pure virgin,' she presented herself as the 'penitent Magdalen.'" When the blow came she wrote: "There is nothing left but to start for Australia, and change my name for ever." This was, however, not necessary for a woman of her resources, with Olcott to help her. First they started a Miracle Club, and then (Oct. 30, 1875) the Theosophical Society. The immediate cause was the alleged discoveries of a Mr. G. H. Felt, who was said to have found out the secret whereby the Egyptians evoked the spirits of the dead, and the geometric figures of the Egyptian Cabala. H. P. B., in her *Isis Unveiled* (p. 22), says: "He may one day be recognised as the greatest geometer of the age." Mr. H. J. Newton, the first treasurer of the Theosophical Society, tells how the geometer swindled him out of \$75, which Olcott recommended should be given to him for promised lectures. He adds: "I was out over \$200 before I got through with the society." As the testimony of the first treasurer is somewhat notable, and is referred to neither by Mr. Lillie nor by M. Solovyoff, I reprint some important statements from the *Progressive Thinker* of June 6, 1891:—

"In less than two years the society died a natural death. I resigned both my treasurership and membership towards the end of 1877. For months before my resignation, and up to the time Madame Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott went to Europe in 1878, not more than three members could be got together, so it was impossible to have any legal business meetings. The society was practically dead and abandoned when I resigned. Nevertheless, on the eve of their departure from America, an article appeared in the *Sun* stating that Blavatsky and Olcott had been commissioned by the society to go to India and preach Theosophy to the Hindus. This was not true, as there was no society then in existence, and no such action at any time appears on its records.' 'What was the object of publishing such a statement? queried the reporter. 'I believe it emanated from Colonel Olcott, and was designed simply to screen the real nature of their visit to India. The Russians were then advancing on the Afghan frontier, and it was of great importance that they should have knowledge of the English position and preparations to resist their movement. Madame Blavatsky had twice visited India before, and was an experienced traveller, a clever talker, and an accomplished linguist, speaking ten or twelve languages. Only a short time before they decided on going, she spent the whole evening talking with a member of the Russian Legation here in this house [Mr. H. J. Newton's own house, 128 West Forty-Third-street, New York]. Colonel Olcott was also well fitted for a political mission of this kind. His appointment as Colonel in the United States army was given him by President Lincoln in recognition of his services as Chief of the United States Secret Service during the war. He was also a linguist of rare ability, speaking six or seven languages. It looks as if the religious or philosophical movement, intended at first only as a cloak to their real mission in India, proved such a success that, when their services were no longer needed by the Russian Government, they kept up Theosophy in India, and afterwards started it in England."

Mrs. Emma Hardinge Britten, at whose house some of the early meetings of the society were held, in the *Two Worlds* (June 5, 1891) independently corroborated Mr. Newton's statement. She says:—

"Quite early in the movement one of the officers first appointed made a series of most damaging statements against the life, conduct, and character of the corresponding secretary, Madame Blavatsky; and as Madame Coulomb's tremendous exposures, Dr. Richard Hodgson's *Psychical Research* volume, and Professor Elliott Coues's *New York Sun* exposures were at that time things of the distant future, the chivalric feeling of the newly-formed society induced them to expel the too candid but offending member, swear fealty to the great Psychologist founder, and organise themselves into a secret society, with pass words, signs, and grips."

She notices that a library was formed, and remarks its utilisation in the composition of *Isis Unveiled*. This work, the plagiarisms of which, exposed by W. E. Coleman, are mentioned in the appendix to *The Modern Priestess of Isis*, was a composition founded on many works, and on MSS. left by the Baron de Palma, a gentleman who left also some property to the new society. Professor A. Wilder wrote the preface and supervised some part of the work. *Isis Unveiled* certainly shows talent of a peculiar kind, and some of its tall stories illustrate the imaginative power of its compiler.

Mr. Newton was, I believe, right in his surmise. The original idea in going to India was to rope in the leading native princes, rajahs, and maharajahs, prepare them in the esoteric section for the coming cataclysm, and, when all was ripe, have messages from the Mahatmas commanding revolt. Political designs in the East are usually worked in this way. The Indian Mutiny was by no means to be attributed solely to the use of greased cartridges, but to industriously-circulated prophecies that the rule of the English Feringees would come to an end in one hundred years from the date of the battle of Plassey, June, 1757. We shall see later on that Madame Blavatsky admitted having such a scheme.

J. M. WHEELER.

(To be continued).

## DOES RELIGION TEACH MORALITY?

NOT long ago, in conversation with one of my esteemed Christian friends, I asked him if a man could be moral without being religious? He at once replied that he could. Now, if that be true (it certainly is, and every Christian will say so), morality can form no part of religion, but must be an entirely separate and distinct quality in the character of men.

There can be only two answers to that question: they must either affirm or deny. If they affirm, the only conclusion is that morality is not a part of the Christian religion; if they deny, we must conclude that a man is religious to the extent that he is moral. Let them answer as they will, the case is equally against them. I have never met a Christian yet who was willing to admit either conclusion. They have a way of giving a common-sense answer to a simple question, and then denying every inference that can be had from it. When asked to explain their position, they resort to their ever available side-door subterfuge, and reply: "There are many things in religion we cannot understand."

Now, certainly, if the Christian religion be a thing that cannot be understood, it can be of no benefit to us in the end. It really does seem that Christians cannot explain their religion, for, after near nineteen centuries of almost frantic effort, even with the help of priests specially inspired for the purpose, they have made a most signal failure. But, while they have so faithfully been trying what they claim to be an impossibility—while they have endeavored to frame a definition of their religion as it is, and, at the same time, please their fancy as to what it should be, there has been a progressive element at work—a spirit of liberalism that has defined it for them. A jury has weighed the evidence of the case, both circumstantial and positive; its deliberate verdict is that the Christian religion is a delusion, a phantom, a fairy-like dream. The great judge, Human Reason, has passed the sentence of oblivion, and the great executive, Human Progress, is executing the decree. The Christian religion must finally take its proper rank in the category of mythology.

But back to the question: Can a man be moral without being religious? The affirmative answer is always given,

and I like it better, for it suits both parties, and can be sustained by reason. Christians will not admit that a man is religious unless he believes in their angry God and good-natured, pleasure-giving Devil. Liberals see no necessity for any such absurdities. That answer meets the approval of all. It resolves itself, then, into two distinct questions, What is religion? and What is morality?

Religion, robbed of the usually associated idea of morality, cannot mean more than the belief in, and worship of, a Supreme Being. If we seek to include morality in a definition of religion, we leave the principle of religion, and infringe upon one equally sovereign with it. Religion has nothing to do with morality; neither has morality anything to do with religion. Morality has to do with man's intercourse with his fellow man; religion has to do with man's conception or omnipotence of his God.

It is curious to note what a radical change this God has undergone. At one time men must see their object of worship; they must have some visible form to make their sacrifices to—some visible form into whose insensible ears they could pour the torrent of their wants. They feared an evil nature working against them, and prayed for an escape from all its harm; they prayed for "blessings both spiritual and temporal"; they resigned themselves to the care of the object of their worship, as Christians now do; they felt that calmness and serenity of mind that Christians now feel; they voiced the emotional energy of the moment, and were satisfied. What more do Christians now? But from that invariable law, that all things must change, not even God could escape! and lo, we find him to-day "a spirit without body, parts, or passions"—in other words, absolutely nothing. So far as we know, or can know, he is totally imaginary. No living person has ever seen him, and of those who have passed beyond the veil none have returned to testify.

Christians say that God is omnipresent; but reason cannot conceive of omnipresence without a material body. They attribute to him the faculty of thought; but rationality cannot conceive of thought without a brain, and a brain would certainly be a part. They say he is jealous (Exodus xx. 5), and jealousy is only a passion. I am forced to conclude that the attributes Christians claim for their God absolutely contradict his very existence.

What definition, what description then, can I give for the Christian religion? Simply that it is the belief in and worship of an imaginary and impossible God. It is the religion of absurdity and ridiculousness, of crime and cruelty, of power and despotism. It is the shield of the tyrant, the sword of the oppressor. It is the enemy of liberty and of every manly sentiment.

Morality has for many ages been associated with some religious creed, and many have come to look upon it as a necessary part of religion. Christians even assert that the Bible contains every moral sentiment of which the human mind can conceive. I must take issue with them on that point. I must assert that the Bible does not teach morality, for it limits a person to certain set rules of action, and his every act must conform to them, regardless of what he may think himself. It takes away his manhood, and leaves him an imitator, a machine. It allows him no liberty of thought, and where there is no liberty there can be no morality.

Morality is conscientious action from a principle that the actor considers right. We must consider it as affecting individuals, and not society. We must regard it from an individual basis, for society is composed of individuals, and they must be affected before society possibly can be. Every idea, every movement, every revolution that has affected society in the least, was originally a mere thought in the mind of an individual, and could not possibly affect society before affecting him. Then, if morality be an individual qualification, the question arises, How came an individual to be moral?

The experience of every person teaches him that the standard of morality changes; that no system is permanent; that there is a continual, silent, majestic progression of ideas. The greatest lesson taught by all experience, individual and general, is that man has constantly advanced him an ideal existence; and as he gradually advances towards that existence his ideal has advanced. Then, if we assume that the human family sprung from a single pair, or that it evolved from a lower to a higher order of intellect, we must conclude that there was a time when the moral standard was limited, either by inexperience or

a low degree of intellect. Morality is a kind of negative term—we recognise it only as we know immorality. Until we learn that a thing is immoral, either by our own experience or that of others, we can have no conception of that which is moral. Morality has its origin in the association of man with man; it implies a knowledge of the rights of others, and that can be had only by association with others. Unless we fully consider every probable consequence, and then act in a way that seems wisest to us, we cannot be said to be moral. The higher the appreciation of the needs and privileges of our fellow men we have, the higher may be our standard of morals. The more we allow to our fellow men those needs and privileges which experience has taught us are their right, the more moral we are. The more liberty we have, the more moral we can be. Absolute knowledge of the nature of men, and absolute liberty of conscience and of action, would permit men to be absolutely moral. That would be the highest ideal existence, the highest sphere of action in which man could move.

Has religion anything to do with this condition of things? Does Christianity teach morality? Does Christianity give to us one single progressive idea, one iota of tolerance? Does it teach, by precept or example, a single degree of conscience or action? Does it teach men to think for themselves, to judge for themselves, to act for themselves? Come, ye pioneers of science; ye thinkers of every age since Christendom was known; ye victims of the inquisition; ye peasants of France; ye poor, defenceless women and children, starved by the taxation of the Church, and left to die along the roads—come, all ye victims of Christian oppression, and array yourselves in solid phalanx before your persecutors, and be to all religious creeds a living accusation! Christians, followers of the Lamb, blessed of the Lord, witness. Listen! from Spain, from those dungeons of horror, comes the sound of clanking chains; hear the groans of anguish wrung from the victim by inconceivable torture; look on the haggard faces of women and children in the highways of France; hear their supplications as they beg for crumbs to fan again the spark of life! Look, and then answer: Does Christianity teach morality? Shame! Go break every tie that binds you to such a record; laugh at your system for its ridiculousness, spurn it for its intolerance and cruelty, bury your Bible under ten thousand curses, place yourself on the side of humanity, and henceforth be men. Let history raise a monument to Christianity that shall be a warning for all time to come, to every species of bigotry, intolerance, and oppression.

—Independent Pulpit.

A. H. BURKE.

## THE NEW WOMAN.

My only objection to the New Woman is that she is too usually old. If she chooses to wear a divided skirt or "knicks," what is that to me? She has as much right to kick or "bike" as I. After all she is a biped, not a monopod. The New Woman goes in for her "rights," but she accepts her responsibilities. She does not wish to be treated like a wax doll, wrapped in cotton wool and lavender. She does not expect always to have chicken breast and ice cream, nor desire me to ride outside, for her convenience, on a cold night. She is self-reliant and self-sufficing. I prefer even my dog to be my companion and friend rather than my slave. *Ni Dieu, ni maître* either for me or my companion, *s'il-vous-plait*.

America is the land of the New Woman. You may find her dashing over Europe, too, going everywhere in easy self-reliance, no more needing a *chaperone* than a glass-case. I have before me a specimen of the American New Woman in the *World's Advance Thought* and the *Universal Republic*, two monthly papers in one, edited, printed, and published by Lucy A. Mallory, at Portland, Oregon. Lucy writes most of the articles and bits, picks up the type, carries the formes to press, and prints them herself. And she does all this on biscuit, cheese, and raisins, devoting her surplus income to feeding and teaching other folk's children. Lucy is, I fear, a bit of a crank, judging by the "Soul Communion Time Table" she places at the beginning of her journal, and which gives the corresponding times in various latitudes for entering into communion on the 27th day of

each month "to invoke, through co-operation of thought and unity in spiritual aspiration, the blessings of universal peace and higher spiritual light." The time for London is from 8.11 to 8.41 p.m. But Lucy is a good sort, and her papers are full of bright bits, so at that time, if I don't forget, I'll drink your health Lucy—in orange-juice, of course, for tea and all intoxicants are tabooed by the *World's Advance Thought*.

The New Woman, for one thing, has got well away from St. Paul. That hot-headed old misogynist, it was said by the Ebionites, turned Christian because rejected by a Jewish rabbi's daughter. After that he wrote, "It is good for a man not to touch a woman." What did the crusty old bachelor know about it, anyway? He declared the man was not created for the woman, but the woman for the man, and said, "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection." The New Woman could have taught him a thing or two that might have modified his opinions. Anyway, having tasted the sweets of a freer gospel, she will never go back to the bondage of Scripture texts. In this respect the New Woman, and she only I fear, is fit to be a companion for a Freethinker.

"*Les races se féminisent*," said Buffon, the great naturalist, in the last century. The world is growing more feminine; woman is everywhere coming to the front. Happily so. It means the triumph of heart over stomach, nerve over muscle, of peace over war, of love and insight over brute strength and sheer stupidity. The poorest woman to-day is born to an inheritance her ancestors never dreamt of. Should she sigh for the fleshpots and bondage of Egypt, be a slave when she may be an equal, obey St. Paul rather than agree with Stuart Mill? Once deny Paul's dictum that she is to be subject in all things, and what shall you hinder her from doing and becoming? There is no logical *via media* between slavery and freedom. On this question the traditional position of the sexes has been reversed. The New Woman has all the logic, and the Old Man all the prejudice.

Of course, the New Woman will cause trouble. The transition from feudalism was a flea-bite compared to the emancipation of an entire sex. Of course she will often go wrong, and conclusively demonstrate that she is indeed no angel. But Nature and sex—Nature's fundamental fact—will take care of itself. If the New Woman fancies she can do what she cannot, she will soon find out by experiment. Let her try. She may not prove a worse duffer at engineering than a man would be at millinery or minding a baby.

One thing is certain: the New Woman has come to stay. Had we not better make her feel at home? Robert Lowe said, in accents of despair, at the passing of the Reform Bill: "We must now educate our masters." Let us quickly educate our girls not to be our masters, but our equals. Teach them physiology, and they will never think it womanly, or possible, to unsex themselves.

The New Woman is popularly supposed to be, if not a free lover, at least not without considerable sympathy with *The Woman Who Did*. This is her worst offence. The male Turk can forgive anything but this. Polygamy is permissible; polyandry abominable. But the New Woman is not a polyandrist, any more than Herminia Barton. She merely is not ashamed of her sex, and holds that the same code of morality should apply to man and to woman. What right, she asks, has man to demand a fidelity he is not prepared to give himself? Why are his sexual derelictions venial, and hers mortal? "Oh," you say, "she has to bear the consequences, which he escapes." But let me tell you, the New Woman has studied physiology. She has learnt that indulgence need not be followed by "consequences." She is a Neo-Malthusian, and knows how over child-bearing leads to the degradation of her sex. How now, Captain Turk? Can she only be innocent when ignorant? or may she not, having your knowledge, fairly say, "Let us be on the same level—not by woman's descent to man's promiscuity, but by man's ascent to woman's fidelity"? For my part, I see the best hopes for human elevation in the New Woman placing a high price upon herself, and insisting on it too.

My conclusion is that the old woman was good—my own particular old woman emphatically so; but the New Woman is better. My own particular old woman is a New Woman. As I have said before, my only objection to the New Woman is that she is too usually old.

UNCLE BENJAMIN.

## OUR AMERICAN VISITOR.

MR. S. P. PUTNAM, the President of the American Secular Union, and the most popular speaker (after Colonel Ingersoll) on the trans-Atlantic platform, will soon be visiting England; and I am sure our party will give him a good old English welcome. Mr. Putnam will stay in the old country about three months, and during that time he ought to speak in most of our big towns. Branches of the N.S.S. who desire—and all *should* desire—to arrange for a visit from our distinguished visitor should lose no time in communicating with Mr. Charles Watts, who has undertaken to arrange his old friend's lecture-tours. Mr. Putnam has just written to me, and although his letter is not exactly intended for publication, I take the liberty of printing it here for the benefit of my readers:—

"MY DEAR MR. FOOTE,—I shall set sail for England April 24, in the 'City of Berlin.' It is with great pleasure that I anticipate this visit to England. It has been the dream of my life; and I feel sure that I shall receive a cordial welcome from English friends. It will be a delight to know personally those whom I have read so much about, and whose labors I have watched so closely, and who have carried on the fight so bravely, in which all American Liberals are deeply interested. You know I shall write up my experiences in England for the *Truthseeker* and *Investigator*, so that my friends who stay at home may see somewhat with my eyes the great work and progress in your land. I do think this better acquaintance will help us both. We in America need the knowledge of your methods and results. We need to be inspired by your success, which in many things is superior to ours. There are a thousand reasons why I should come to England, the land of my ancestry, with such a wonderful history, and such a wealth of literary and poetic memory, and such marvellous beauty of scenery; but I assure you, after all, the best of reasons with me is to greet the Freethought army, and to mingle with its ranks, to enjoy its comradeship around the camp-fires. I want to see you with all my heart, who have suffered in our cause, and the light of whose struggle has illuminated our battle-fields here. I am sure we shall strike hands with cordial goodwill; and I shall be proud to make known to my countrymen the soldiers of English liberty. Whatever you can do for me as a representative of American Freethinkers will be gladly welcomed, and I hope to serve you to the best of my ability. With kindest regards,—Yours truly,

"SAMUEL P. PUTNAM."

Mr. Watts and I intend to meet Mr. Putnam at Southampton. We mean to board the "City of Berlin" and welcome him to the shores of old England. It is also my intention to arrange for Mr. Putnam's occupying the Hall of Science platform on the first Sunday in May, and to take the chair myself on that occasion. The President of the American Secular Union must have the welcome which the National Secular Society would like to see extended to its own President if he visited the New World.

G. W. FOOTE.

## TO CHRIST.

Thou bad'st let children come to thee;  
What children now but curses come?  
What manhood in that God can be  
Who sees their worship, and is dumb?  
No soul that lived, loved, wrought, and died,  
Is this their carrion crucified.

Nay, if their God and thou be one,  
If thou and this thing be the same,  
Thou shouldst not look upon the sun;  
The sun grows haggard at thy name.  
Come down, be done with, cease, give o'er;  
Hide thyself, strive not, be no more.

—A. C. Swinburne, "Before a Crucifix."

When men are destitute of the critical spirit, when the notion of uniform law is yet unborn, and when their imaginations are still incapable of rising to abstract ideas, histories of miracles are always formed and always believed; and they continue to flourish and to multiply until these conditions are altered. Miracles cease when men cease to believe and expect them.—W. E. H. Lecky.

## ACID DROPS.

WHAT a horrible story is that "witch-burning" at Clonmel! We commend it to the attention of Mr. Benjamin Kidd, Mr. A. J. Balfour, and other gentlemen who tell us that human conduct must be based upon "ultra-rational sanctions." There is something peculiarly sickening in all those men seizing hold of one poor woman and subjecting her to such tortures. Her own husband—nay, her own father—helped to hold her over the fire, in order to make her say whether she was a witch or not. "Are you," he asked, "the daughter of Patrick Boland, wife of Michael Cleary?" "I am, dada," the poor creature replied, as the room filled with the stench of her burning flesh. That father, tormenting his "own flesh and blood," called upon her to tell the truth "in the name of God."

When Judge North sentenced Mr. Foote to twelve months' imprisonment, there was a great row in the gallery, and one enraged Freethinker cried out "Damn religion!" What other exclamation is appropriate over this Irish witch case?

"Oh men," cried poor Mrs. Cleary as they took her to the fire, "give me a chance." That is what men have never done. The worst stress of superstition has always fallen upon the weak. A thousand women were burnt for every man during the acute stage of the witch-mania.

The Rev. Z. B. Woffendale is dreadfully annoyed at our "attacks" on the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes. Very likely. There are certain characteristics which these two "reverends" have in common; and was it not Shakespeare who said, "A fellow feeling makes us wondrous kind?"

Mr. Woffendale presumes to give us a "friendly hint." He is a hypocrite to use such an adjective. He states that Mr. Holyoake called Mr. Foote "a secular ruffian." He is a liar to say so. After denying us "a single gleam of wit," he perpetrates the miraculous joke that "Secularism is unfortunate in its foot." Mr. Woffendale is unfortunate in his head.

Jehovah is not half as sharp as Old Nick. When the severe earthquakes occurred some years ago in the South of Europe, several churches were destroyed or badly injured, and in some cases the worshippers were killed by the falling of the "sacred" edifices; but no damage whatever was done at Monte Carlo. During the recent hurricane in our own country an advertisement hoarding beside a Primitive Methodist Chapel at Swindon was blown down. It fell upon several people, one of whom was killed. He was a young man named Farr, a Wesleyan local preacher, who was on his way to conduct a Sunday service, six or seven miles distant, for another local preacher who had been taken ill. A boy of thirteen, who was severely injured, was also on his way to a Methodist Chapel at Gorse Hill. Providence acted on this occasion with its usual blindness.

In *The Faith*, a Christadelphian organ, E. N. Sheffield writes against the Advanced School. How much E. N. Sheffield knows about it may be judged by the statement: "Though Bradlaugh and Ingersoll without doubt attracted crowds, they were men who, in an unusual way, could make the worse appear the better reason, always an irresistible fascination to the vulgar mind; neither did they ever charge for being heard—a test perhaps that might have proved more crucial than they would have liked."

The *Presbyterian Observer* says: "The Sultan of Turkey is sending out Mohammedan missionaries to Africa, at his own expense, to check the Christian advance in that continent." The Christian advance, so far as the natives are concerned, has been chiefly an advance backwards. Islam has made ten times more converts among North Africans than has Christianity.

The Rev. C. Ferguson, an Episcopal clergyman of Cohasset, Massachusetts, has taken his stand against the American Bishop's Pastoral Letter. While not venturing to deny the virgin birth of the baby said to have been born in Palestine nearly 1,900 years ago, he declares he cannot teach it as an absolute essential of the Christian faith.

The Rev. C. Ferguson adds: "Nor is it possible for me to say that the Holy Scriptures are inspired of God in a peculiar and miraculous manner, distinguishing them from all other writings. The doctrine that the Bible alone is inspired is, I think, full of dishonor to the power of the Holy Spirit, and full of discouragement to the spirits of living men. And the teaching that it is miraculously and infallibly inspired has been, as an historical fact, the spring of endless sectarian discord and the source of the most deadly kind of intellectual pride—the pride which, exulting in its superior

insight, masks under the guise of humble obedience to the Word." Mr. Ferguson will probably be called over the coals and asked either to recant or resign.

Lord Kelvin and Professor Perry differ slightly in regard to the age of the earth. His Lordship thinks it is 100,000,000 years old, while the Professor is of opinion that it is 400,000,000. Though it be as old as either says, it will probably last our time with a little repair.

The *Koelnisch Zeitung* says that Count Hoensbroech, who forsook the Jesuits and was converted to Protestantism, will enter the Prussian diplomatic service under the Emperor's special patronage. This will be a bitter pill for the clericals, to whom Hoensbroech is a constant thorn in the side.

The Rev. M. L. Gates, of Grace M. E. Church, in Jersey City, recently prayed to the Lord to give "the sense and intelligence needed in public affairs to the incoming Congress." In view of our recent experiences, the Rev. Mr. Gates would seem to be crowding the mourners somewhat.

Professor E. Johnson has made a convert of citizen George Francis Train. In the *Ironclad Age* (March 16), after citing the contradictory accounts of the death of Judas in Matthew and Acts, he says: "Each chapter calls next Liar! Thief! Boodler! Fact is, the Bible is not six centuries old! Born with invention of printing!"

A German statistician looked up the question whether Friday was really unlucky. He found that fewest accidents were recorded on Friday, and most on Monday. Monday's bad record probably follows from Sunday's superstitious sacredness and enforced idleness.

When the French Catholics find any of their old privileges in danger, they begin to call out "persecution." The religious communities have hitherto had their property exempt from taxation, and now that it is proposed that, like other bodies, they shall contribute their share to the support of the State, there is a great outcry. The spectacle of the most intolerant Church in the world declaiming against intolerance is a noteworthy one.

The *New York Sun* (March 17) has an amusing account of a clock invented by Mr. Vokey Chamberlain, a colored Bible student, to guide the owner to salvation. The clock has 72 minutes to the hour, "for the sufficient reason that twice 72 is 144, and that was the number of the cubits in the measure of the wall, the measure of a man which is an angel (Rev. xxi.)." It says: "The inventor's charts are even more symbolistic. Some of the decorations are of familiar scenes, as one which shows Wall-street, with Trinity Church in the distance. When asked the meaning of this, the inventor replied: 'If the Bridegroom should go into Wall-street, and I should appear before that minute, he might declare me to be an infidel; but my duty would be to love him none the less.' Any one tired of Ibsen and Maeterlinck, and having ten years to spare, might go further into this subject with interest, if not profit."

Mr. J. Keir Hardie, member of Parliament and Christian Socialist, has been holding forth in a Congregational church at Fulham on a far greater Scotsman—Robert Burns. It pleased Mr. Hardie to say that Burns was extremely religious. We know the writings of Robert Burns as well as Keir Hardie does, and perhaps better; but it never struck us that religion was his speciality. Keir Hardie admits that Burns laughed at "what passed for religion in those days," but contends that "he never scoffed at Christianity as taught in the New Testament." Didn't he though? Isn't hell fire taught in the New Testament? Isn't salvation by faith? Isn't predestination? Isn't free grace? And didn't Robert Burns laugh at these delicacies of the Christian menu? Why, his hearty laughter shook the religion of Scotland to its very foundations; and it was something like laughter to do that.

Mr. Keir Hardie went on, in his illogical, sentimental way, to talk of Freethinkers as the best Christians. "The men who were living nearest to the ideal life to-day," he observed, "were the men who spurned the very names of Church and Christianity; men who called themselves Atheists to repudiate their connection with professing Christians who were mere hypocrites." Mr. Hardie is really catching the twang of the "advanced" Nonconformist tabernacle. It doesn't occur to him that men do not merely call themselves Atheists, but *are* Atheists. This is a horrid thought to a man like Keir Hardie. When the Socialist millennium arrives, we shall all have plenty of leisure, perhaps two Sundays a week; and oh! what opportunities we shall enjoy of sitting for whole hours and listening to the addle-headed Christianity of the millennial preachers, of whom Keir Hardie will assuredly be Archbishop, unless

Hugh Price Hughes—or even Tom Mann or Ben Tillet—cuts him out in the general election for that holy office.

Lady Herbert, of Lea, having done "Six Weeks in Russia," is, of course, competent to write on the subject in the *Catholic Dublin Review*. She finds Russia very religious, and thinks nothing of political prisoners in Siberia or the persecution of the Jews. "Certainly," she says, "our Lord reigns in Moscow, receiving there the homage due to his Divine majesty as in no other city in the world." "In no country in the world is there greater devotion to the Blessed Virgin than in Russia." "Our Lord reigns in Moscow," reminds us of Czar Nicolas's "Peace reigns in Warsaw," after ruthlessly suppressing an insurrection.

Lady Herbert, of Lea, finds that "every thinking man and woman in Russia desires a renewal of union with the Holy See." Perhaps, if she had stayed a little longer, she might have learnt a little better. She is disgusted with the fact that the ecclesiastical ruler of Russia, the Procurator, is a layman, but reflects with joy that even he is not immortal, and hopes that a change may soon come. She adds in a note the curious hope that the enormous number of requiem masses and prayers offered for the late Czar may "convince our Protestant country men and women of the necessity of such sacrifice for their beloved dead."

Amelia Payne, an elderly Clapham lady, is a fervent pietist, and indulges in loud interjections of "Amen" in the responses at St. Savior's, Cedars-road, Clapham. She is also alleged to sing louder than the rest of the congregation, and to have been the cause of its diminishing. She was brought up before the South-Western Police Court, and though she pleaded that she went to church to pray to God, and not to please men, she was fined forty shillings and costs for brawling.

The *School Board Chronicle* mentions a decree of the Catholic Bishop of Nottingham to the effect that a parent guilty of sending his children to a Board school imperilled the welfare of his soul in the life to come, and quotes Dr. Sparrow, of Liverpool, who says that to send children to a non-Catholic school is as great a sin as to send them to steal in the streets.

Francis Clark, the chief of the "Christian Endeavor" movement, writes to the *American Review of Reviews* that respect for America and Americans has sadly waned in Europe. Moreover, and worst of all, American Stock has gone down in European markets. Of course his remedy is "Christian Endeavor." We fancy the cause lies in the corrupt plutocracy of America, which can atone for anything by building churches and subscribing to religious societies. It is this kind of Christian endeavor that has helped to bring America into disrepute.

The Rev. H. R. Haweis, who gets a good living by subscribing to doctrines he does not preach, writes in the *North American Review* on "The New Pulpit." According to him, the new pulpiter will preach anything and everything except the old book. He says: "If only the preacher knew it, the whole world belongs to him. The time is past when he need knot his discourse with texts. If he leaves a few out, no one will miss them, any more than Bible readers notice the entire omission of the word 'God' in the book of Esther."

The Ritualists complain much of the anti-Ritualists invoking the law against them; but it appears from *The History of the English Church Union*, by the Rev. G. Bayfield Roberts, that this High Church Union offered £500 to the Archbishop of York towards the expenses of the prosecution of the Rev. C. Voysey for heresy. They only object to law when invoked against themselves.

"Nunquam" of the *Clarion*, as we expected, pokes great fun at Price Hughes's important discovery that he has been "captured" by the High Church party. Mr. Blatchford says that he did dine with four parsons, and that he will be just as happy to dine with four Dissenting ministers, if they will give him a slice of good beef and listen to his talk about Socialism. It appears to "Nunquam" that the *Methodist Times* men are "amongst the funniest dogs that ever wagged a tail" (Ah, "Nunquam," they do worse than that!). Finally, the *Clarion* editor promises an early chapter on "Mare's Nests."

The *British Weekly* laments that since the *Saturday Review* has changed hands it is no longer a Christian paper. Under Mr. Beresford Hope it was sacerdotal. Now it has reverted to Freethought, which, to some extent, pervaded it when John Morley and Sir Fitzjames Stephen were contributors. The *B. W.* mentions with reprobation an article on Death, which concluded thusly: "Mortal man and the immortal protozoa have the same barren immortality;

the individuals perish, living on only in their descendants, creatures of their body, separated pieces of their undying protoplasm; the type alone persists." This is flat Materialism.

St. Mary's Church, Port Elizabeth, South Africa, has been rendered a complete wreck by fire. The Lord took no care of his house, but his servants had it heavily insured.

Pierre Loti has been giving an account of a recent visit to Jerusalem in *La Nouvelle Revue*. He was mostly struck by the modernness and European hotel atmosphere of the holy city. He finds specially odious the hawkers who flooded the hotels with cheap "objects of piety" and so-called souvenirs of the holy places. The souvenirs are, after all, probably more genuine than the holy places themselves.

Rev. Dr. H. S. Lunn finds arranging for religious pilgrimages, picnics, and reunions more profitable than preaching the Word. He announces a lot of tours this summer, and is going to bring over to London a pilgrimage from the Women's Christian Temperance Union of America, an organisation which looks over Jesus turning water into wine at Cana, and seeks to bring God into the American constitution.

Secularism is triumphing all along the line. The Churches are infected with its spirit, and so are the religious newspapers. We take up the *Christian World*, for instance, and scan its front page. It contains eight leading articles, and every one of them is on a social or political topic. Religion is relegated to the inside of the paper, which doesn't meet the public eyes as it rests upon the counter or is displayed in the window.

The triumph of Secularism is shown in many other ways. We have always denounced the doctrine of hell-fire and everlasting burnings. Well, the clergy themselves are beginning to follow suit. A famous Nonconformist, the Rev. Silas Hocking, has been preaching at Southport from the text, "They limited the Holy One of Israel," and in the course of his sermon he said that "some people" talked as though Christ had been a failure, as though the world had been wrecked and the Lifeboat had just managed to save a few, and as though heaven was nearly empty and hell crowded. Mr. Hocking believes that God will gather his children home, and that the great majority will not be faggoted for the flames. So far, so good; but heaven and hell, except as they exist on earth, are only fancies after all.

Daniel Hall Western, a Croydon wine and spirit merchant, who suffered from religious mania, committed suicide by hanging himself in his loft. He left a letter in which he said, "Oh, God! why was I born? The Lord hath formed all things for himself, even the wicked for the day of evil." A text like this is well calculated to upset the mind of anyone who really believes it.

The power of the parson is breaking, and Dissenting ministers have to mind their p's and q's. Formerly they used to preach against sinners wholesale and retail; now they have to drop the retail department. Down at Southsea a publican named Pitts has recovered £75 damages against the Rev. Charles Joseph, a Baptist minister, for slander. Alas! how are the mighty fallen! Pity the sorrows of a poor man of God who can no longer mount the pulpit and give his free, unbiassed opinion of every man's character in the parish.

The Free Church Congress has been confabulating at Birmingham, and amongst the subjects discussed was "Modern Biblical Scholarship in its Bearing on Christian Thought and Faith." Dr. Agar Beet read a paper on this topic, in which he said that the Bible was not a revelation, but the record of a revelation. This is very much like a conundrum, and we give it up. We understand Dr. Beet better when he admits that the Bible contains mistakes. There he touches solid ground, and we can follow him with intelligence—and pleasure.

One of the Free Church Congress speakers, the Rev. H. T. Andrews (Swansea), boasted that Biblical research had "spiked the guns of the enemy," by having rendered obsolete and useless the old infidel attacks upon the Bible. This is a pretty way of putting it, but metaphors are proverbially dangerous. We should put it in this way: the infidels have battered down the fort of Bible infallibility, and the Christians have abandoned a ruined position. We have other batteries, quite up to date, for attacking other forts. Our guns are playing away merrily, and as we destroy fort after fort the Christian defenders, who retreat towards their citadel of "God," are entirely welcome to the comfort of boasting that we can't batter them there any more.

Count Tolstoi, the Russian novelist who has turned prophet, is in high favor with the "advanced" Christians in this country. Even the *Christian World* says that "between the Christianity of the Russian prophet and that of Rome and Canterbury lies the great fight of the future." We don't think so, but let us see what the statement implies. Count Tolstoi's latest work is upon the Four Gospels, which he "harmonises," like a good many previous writers, though the worst of it is that there is no harmony amongst the "harmonies." But the remarkable thing is that Tolstoi gives up all the miracles, including the Incarnation. He simply clings to the teaching of Jesus. What he has now to consider is that all Jesus taught was taught before he was born.

It is evident that the churches are getting shaky about the deity of Jesus Christ, and that Messrs. Diggle and Riley were correct in their suspicions of those who objected to the London School Board circular on religious education. Over in the United States the Bishops of the Episcopal Church had put forth a Pastoral Letter on the Incarnation and the Inerrancy of Scripture, in which the birth of J. C. from a virgin is insisted upon as of overwhelming importance to the human race. Whereupon our English *Christian World* points out that St. Paul never heard of the immaculate conception, and that if two chapters in Matthew and Luke were lost we should never have learnt anything about the immaculate conception from all the rest of the New Testament.

The *Open Court*, of Chicago (March 21), says: "The latest statistics of India show that among the inhabitants of the country there is one convicted criminal to every 274 European Christians, to every 509 Euro-Asiatics (the children of European fathers and native mothers), to every 709 native Christians, to every 1,361 Hindu Brahmans, and to every 3,787 Buddhists. Accordingly, as a matter of fact, European Christians furnish comparatively the greatest amount of criminals, and Buddhists the fewest.

Margaret Shiell, aged twenty-one, a machinist, of 83 Great Cambridge-street, Hackney-road, drowned herself in the Eagle Pond at Snaresbrook. The poor girl left a letter for her father, stating that she had been accused of unchastity with "three fellows." Her brain, she said, was on fire, and she hoped God would forgive her. At the coroner's inquest Dr. Collins, divisional surgeon of police, testified that the deceased could not have been guilty of unchastity. "My daughter," said her father, "has been attending the mission-room attached to the church, where a lot of backbiting, bickering old women attend." The jury returned a verdict of "Suicide whilst insane," but the verdict should have been "Killed by Christian charity."

The organ of the Hall of Science libellers complains that the cruel Atheists put in an execution to recover the damages (with costs) awarded in the Court of Queen's Bench. Surely the whining of these fellows is most pitiable. The damages could have been recovered the next day after trial, and the costs as soon as taxed; yet they were allowed a month's grace, and the execution was only put in when their solicitors gave no answer to the Atheists' solicitors' application for a settlement. The execution cost the libellers about £12 in addition to the £145 of taxed costs and damages. All this is very sad. But those who publish atrocious libels, and glory in them, and express not a word of regret even when they are branded by a jury in a court of justice, are simply dastards to cry out for "mercy."

Let us take a few samples of these men's tender consideration for others. Their organ prints as its own a part of the verbatim report of the trial taken from the *Freethinker*. It gives all the filthy insinuations against the Secularists in Mr. Murphy's cross-examination, and then says that "the nature of the evidence" forbids it to give the rest. Next it hints that Mr. Smith committed perjury in the witness-box, and finally it informs the public—or rather its public, which is a more limited affair—that Mr. Foote receives "a big commission on the sale of atheistic felt hats." It is impossible to fathom the baseness or the folly of these Nazarenes. Nor do we intend to notice them any further unless they give us another opportunity of dragging them before the bar of justice.

Before leaving them on this occasion we may repeat that the fellow Powell, who first uttered that stinking libel on the Hall of Science, left the editor, printer, and publisher in the lurch, and the two cronies are now lying (or perhaps telling the truth) about each other in the most amusing fashion. The contemptible bearer of the great name of Bradlaugh actually states that the fellow Powell is a member of the National Secular Society. This is silly enough for anything, even for the libellers' own organ. We light a cigarette at this point, just to drown the smell.

**Mr. Foote's Engagements.**

Sunday, April 7, Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, London :—  
 "The Death of God and the Life of Humanity."  
 April 14, Hall of Science, London ; 17 and 18, debate at New  
 Brompton with the Rev. A. J. Waldron (C.E.S.) ; 21, Glasgow ;  
 28, Sunderland.  
 May 8 and 9, debate at Derby with Mr. Lee (C.E.S.).

**TO CORRESPONDENTS.**

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—April 7, Sheffield ; 14,  
 Liverpool ; 21, Hall of Science, London ; 28, Hall of Science,  
 London. May 5, Glasgow ; 12, Dundee ; 19, Manchester.—  
 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.

L. LEVINE (Charleston).—Many thanks for your papers. See  
 paragraphs.

C. AARSTAD.—Papers always welcome.

C. B.—Luke xxiii. 56 indicates that the apostles, after Christ's  
 death, kept the Jewish Sabbath. See, too, Acts xiii. 44, xvii. 2,  
 xviii. 4.

E. W. BRACEY.—We lost the Spencer legacy of £500 that was left  
 to Charles Bradlaugh and George Payne for the Manchester  
 Secularists. Some years previously we lost some property at  
 Bolton. Owing to the state of the law, which renders legacies  
 for Freethought propaganda invalid, men of means are often  
 afraid to make uncertain bequests ; the result is that we lose  
 thousands of pounds, which would otherwise be promoting  
 Secularism. Mr. Manfield, Member for Northampton, introduced  
 a Bill to remedy this state of things, but it never reached the  
 second reading. Mr. Bradlaugh introduced a Bill to abolish the  
 Blasphemy Laws altogether, but it was only supported by forty-  
 five members in the House of Commons. While opinions are  
 held to be criminal, the judges are bound to treat legacies to  
 promote them as invalid. If the end is illegal, the means are  
 also illegal.

A. BRYCESON.—General satisfaction is felt at the disappearance of  
 the Club at the Hall of Science. We had anticipated your  
 suggestion, and shall guard against the danger.

E. G. WATSON.—Thanks for cutting.

W. H. HOLLOCK.—Thanks. See paragraph. Mr. Foote is in first-  
 rate health.

G. GEE.—Your verses are too pessimistic, and death is a  
 hackneyed theme in versification. Try something a little more  
 inspiring.

N.S.S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss E. M. Vance acknowledges :—  
 Balance Children's Party, £2 1s. 9d. ; Sale of Literature, per  
 Mr. O. Dawson, 7s. 10d. ; Nottingham Branch, 5s. ; T. Carne, 6s.

E. D. H. DALY.—Cuttings always welcome.

J. STACEY.—Freethought institutions, as such, cannot be endowed,  
 because the law holds their objects to be illegal. This follows  
 from the Statute of William III. and the Common Law of  
 Blasphemy. The *Buddhist Ray* was published at Colombo,  
 Ceylon. We have not seen it for some time.

W. SCHEIVENER.—Does it really matter whether he speaks every  
 Sunday or not ?

JAS. NEATE.—See paragraph. The policy of reconstruction will be  
 very carefully considered.

A. G. LEVETT.—Thanks for cuttings.

J. W. KENNEDY.—We may treat the subject at greater length  
 by-and-by.

T. BALLAM.—The Clonmel witch case is a good illustration of  
 what would happen if the Bible were as influential as it was  
 once.

W. M. KNOX.—It is scarcely in the way of our special public.  
 Is it ?

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Cape Argus—Eastern Province Herald—Port  
 Elizabeth Gazette—Echo—Looker On—Clarion—Non-Sectarian  
 Illustrated American—Review of Reviews—New York Sun—  
 Liberator—Calcutta Statesman—Two Worlds—Truthseeker—  
 Crescent—Liberty—Open Court—Boston Investigator—Forum  
 Library—Freidenker—Der Arme Teufel—Independent Pulpit—  
 Birmingham Daily Post—Torch—Freethinkers' Magazine—  
 Church Reformer.

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

LECTURE NOTICES must reach 28 Stonecutter-street by first post  
 Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

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

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 Stone-  
 cutter-street, E.C.

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

SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS.—Thirty words, 1s. 6d. ; every suc-  
 ceeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements* :—One inch,  
 4s. 6d. ; half column, £1 2s. 6d. ; column, £2 5s. Special terms  
 for repetitions.

**THE HALL OF SCIENCE.**

MR. R. O. SMITH has at length sent me a definite answer,  
 which will be considered by the Board of Directors at its  
 next meeting, a few hours after this issue of the *Freethinker*  
 goes to press. My anticipation is that the Directors will  
 accept Mr. Smith's offer, which is identical with the one he  
 made early in January and afterwards withdrew. I shall  
 be in a position on Sunday evening to make a definite  
 announcement at the Hall of Science, and I invite all who  
 are interested in the maintenance of our headquarters to be  
 present on that occasion.

Mr. Smith complained at the last meeting of the Board  
 that my statement about the negotiations with him was  
 incomplete and inaccurate. I should be very sorry to do  
 him an injustice, but he did not convince us that his  
 complaint was well-founded, and as he has not put it  
 formally in writing I do not see that I can give him any  
 satisfaction.

G. W. FOOTE.

**SUGAR PLUMS.**

THERE was a large and enthusiastic audience at the London  
 Hall of Science on Sunday evening, when Mr. Foote lectured  
 on "New Light on the Old Book." Owing to the delay in  
 the negotiations with Mr. Smith, Mr. Foote was unable to  
 make a complete announcement as to the future of the  
 institution, but he will certainly do so this evening (April 7)  
 before or after his lecture on "The Death of God and the  
 Life of Humanity."

Mr. Charles Watts had a most successful day last Sunday  
 in Newcastle-on-Tyne. He had a particularly fine audience  
 in the afternoon to listen to his debate with Mr. Lynn, the  
 vice-president of the local Christian Evidence Society. Mr.  
 Watts speaks very highly of the gentlemanly manner in  
 which his opponent conducted his share of the debate. The  
 audience warmly applauded both disputants. A lengthy  
 discussion also followed the lectures in the morning and  
 evening.

To-day, Sunday, April 7, Mr. Watts lectures three times in  
 Sheffield, when he will be glad to see friends from the  
 surrounding districts.

At the last meeting of the National Secular Society's  
 Executive, on Thursday, March 28, the place for holding  
 the Annual Conference on Whit-Sunday was under dis-  
 cussion. Nottingham and Bristol had the largest number  
 of votes, the former being one ahead of the latter ; but, as  
 Nottingham had not stated that it could positively secure a  
 suitable hall for the evening meeting, the Executive unani-  
 mously decided that the Conference should be held at  
 Bristol. The West of England has had but one Conference,  
 that held at Plymouth in 1884, and such an important part  
 of the country ought not to be neglected. In the circum-  
 stances, we hope the Nottingham friends will not be im-  
 patient. They had set their hearts on having this year's  
 Conference in their city, but they will, in all probability,  
 only have to wait until next year to have a great fore-  
 gathering of the "saints" under their auspices.

The West of England has produced its share of front-rank  
 men in the Freethought party. Richard Carlile, who  
 suffered more than nine years' imprisonment, was a native  
 of Devonshire ; G. W. Foote was born and bred in the  
 same county ; and Charles Watts was born and bred at  
 Bristol.

We earnestly appeal to the Secularists all over the king-  
 dom to make the Whit-Sunday Conference a great success.  
 Branches of the N.S.S. should begin immediately to arrange  
 for their being represented by *bona fide* delegates. Bristol  
 is a fine, busy city, and there is some splendid scenery in its  
 neighborhood.

Freethinkers will all be glad to hear that Mr. Daniel  
 Baker, of Birmingham, the oldest next to Mr. Truelove of  
 our N.S.S. vice-presidents, is recovering from his recent  
 severe attack of influenza. Mrs. Baker, who is still older  
 than her husband, was down at the same time with this fell  
 disorder, but she also is now on the road to recovery. We  
 saw Mr. Baker in bed at his residence, as soon as he had  
 taken a favorable turn, and we told him that we had booked  
 him for the Annual Conference. All the delegates will be  
 delighted to see him there.

The Nottingham Branch sends us its report and balance-sheet for 1894-5. The committee seem full of zeal, and earnestly invite the support of all local Freethinkers. Reference is made to the courses of lectures by Messrs. Foote and Watts, and to the return of Mr. Snell to Nottingham. We have great hopes of Mr. Snell, and we shall be glad to hear that he is taking a leading part in the work of the Nottingham Branch.

In spite of repeated evictions, the Derby Branch of the N.S.S. has succeeded in securing another room for meetings, this time at Pollicott's (late Boosey's) Dining Rooms, Market-place, where meetings will be held on the first Sunday in each month. The last meeting was a decided success, and, several strangers being present, it was felt to be a great encouragement to the members. A few more friends, a little heartier support, and Derby could be counted as a Secularist stronghold.

Mr. C. Cohen begins his month's mission at Newcastle to-day (April 7). His inaugural meeting is an open-air one on the Quayside at 11 in the forenoon. We strongly appeal to the local Secularists to rally round him on this occasion. They should protect him by their presence from the disorder that may be attempted by the baser sort of Christians.

The Bethnal Green Branch, at a special meeting last Sunday, congratulated Mr. Foote on the success of the Hall of Science libel action, which "must have a great effect on our propaganda." It also resolved to call upon all members of the Branch to do their utmost in spreading the report of the trial. Further, it expressed satisfaction at the closing of the late Hall of Science Club.

The Isle of Dogs is a very unromantic locality. But a Progressive Club is doing good work there, and it has invited the N.S.S. to send some Freethought lecturers down on Sunday mornings. Mr. Robert Forder opens the ball this morning (April 7) at 11.30, his subject being "Why I am Not a Christian." The Progressive Club is situated in Stebondale-road, Cubitt Town.

The Manchester Branch held its Annual Meeting on Sunday last, and it was satisfactory to find that the Branch is in a better condition, financially, than it was this time last year. This is mainly to be attributed to the hard and harmonious way in which the Committee, as a body, has worked. The outlook for the coming season is brighter, and shows every sign of being one of increased activity. Mr. Ring, the treasurer, has been very unwell for a considerable time now, but he was persuaded to again accept office, as were also all the other officials.

The seventh Annual Soiree and Ball of the Hull Branch was entirely successful, so far as the enjoyment of the company was concerned. About one hundred persons joined in the proceedings.

Freethinkers who wish to spend a jolly evening on Good Friday should visit the Battersea Secular Hall. There will be a musical and dramatic entertainment, and plenty of dancing. Tickets (3d. each) can be had at the hall. The services of vocalists or instrumentalists will be gladly accepted.

Mrs. Emily Adams, writing in *Secular Thought* (March 16) on "Equal Suffrage for Men and Women," points out that it was in the dark ages, when Christianity was triumphant, that woman's lot was worst, and that her emancipation has largely been achieved by Freethinkers. She mentions Frances Wright, Lucretia Mott, Ernestine L. Rose, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Matilda Joslin Gage, Susan B. Anthony, Harriet Martineau, John Stuart Mill, and others, as deserving of honor for their work in the movement.

The same number of *Secular Thought* reprints the poem, "Down with the Barriers," by Mr. E. B. H. Stephenson, from our columns.

### CHILDREN'S PARTY.

The following additional sums have been collected and paid to the Treasurer:—S. B., 3s.; per J. Fagan, 10s.; per Mr. Clifton, 3s.; B. Waterhouse, 5s. The balance-sheet, which has been audited and passed by the Committee, showed receipts £23 18s. 8½d., and after paying all expenses there remained £4 3s. 6d. This surplus has been divided between the Benevolent Fund and the London Secular Federation.

R. FORDER (*Treasurer*).

### SOME OF THE DEVIL'S PROPERTY.

FAR back in the history of our island, when life in the country districts was lonesome and monstrous and there existed but scanty communication with the outside world, when education was unknown and science unheard of, and at a time when every manifestation of Nature other than ordinary was ascribed to supernatural power, there were created what are now known as legends, traditions, and weird stories of immortals, both evil and good. Life in the rural parts of England has scarcely possessed great attractions for those whose tastes have been uncultivated and knowledge crude, and therefore the superstitious beliefs and practices of village communities may have been the means of affording some colour to their surroundings, relieving the dull progress of the weeks, months, and years, and of rendering existence, if not exactly romantic, at least tolerable. Many of these fairy stories, students of folk-lore tell us, can be traced back to pre-Christian times, while others have their birth in the days when England was kept ignorant and superstitious by the rule of Roman Catholicism. The duty of the antiquary is to discover from what circumstances these legends arose; this having been done, the moral and intellectual state of the country at any particular period can more easily be fairly determined. Of especial interest are the traditions respecting the Devil, his escapades, and the performances of his attendant demons; for at a time when his fiery majesty is being consigned to the background of theology, and his pretended existence ridiculed by the leading lights of the Church, it is both curious and instructive to learn what a very terrible reality he was to our ancestors, how the fear of his displeasure influenced their actions, making them pay as much deference to his supposed wishes as those of their Deity, and in what manner his records have been preserved and handed down from generation to generation with holy awe and a sense of religious duty.

If all the landmarks, freaks of nature, and other curiosities of the earth's surface in the United Kingdom with which the Devil's name is connected can be taken to imply that the fiend's ownership of them is established, then the question whether the Devil's domains extend outside the "lower regions" is definitely settled. At any rate, the naming of the places indicates the Devil's patronage, and, in many cases, his workmanship. Scarcely can the traveller visit the quietest little nook of the country without learning from the simple folk of the Devil's agency in the district, and many of the tales which are told him of the local operations of the Prince of Darkness are interesting as well as being highly amusing. In other instances the legendary accounts related are of an instructive character.

To the former category belongs the legend of the Devil's Dyke, near Brighton. From the top of the noble hill at the rear of the town, it will be remembered, a vast and beautiful expanse of country is witnessed, and it was here that the Devil, glancing over the fertile weald and noting the numerous church spires shooting skyward betwixt the trees, determined upon a base scheme of destruction. One night he commenced to carry into execution his terrible plan, which was to cut a channel through the downs and let in the sea on the level plain below. He toiled arduously at his task, and when completion was not far distant the noise of his gigantic labors awakened an old woman, who immediately guessed the design of the fiend. She lit a candle and placed it in her window, and the Devil, mistaking this for the rising sun, forsook his work and fled.

A deep "combe" in the hill represents the extent and nature of the Devil's nocturnal exertions. Unlike the dyke at Brighton, the Devil's Dyke (or ditch) on Newmarket Heath and the Devil's Dyke near Andover, in Hampshire, are ancient earthworks. Localities which the Devil was supposed to frequent, probably owing to their gloomy and weird appearance, include, according to Mr. R. Bruce Boswell, a writer on "Footprints of the Devil in Our Own Country" in a recent issue of the *Pall Mall Magazine*, "the Devil's Island, which frowns over Muckross Lake, Killarney; a Devil's Glen in Wicklow, as well as in Wales; the Devil's Point at Plymouth; the Devil's Water, a tributary of the Tyne, near Hexham; the Cave of Devil's at Little Orme's Head; the Devil's Pit at Cadgewith, Cornwall; a Devil's Hole in Jersey; and another near

Lough Erne, in Ireland. On Marlborough Downs there is a dolmen, or cromlech, known as the Devil's Den; and at Castleton, in Derbyshire, is a cavern called the Devils Cellar. To find the Devil's Kitchen we must go to Llyn Idwal, in North Wales; to mount his Staircase one must visit Glencoe; and his Chimney is within an easy walk of Cheltenham." There is also a cavern in the north-western part of Derbyshire called Devil's-ass-o'-the-Peak.

Of Devil's bridges there are a number. A noted one is to be found in Cardiganshire, and is known as Pont-y-Mynoch; another can be traversed at Morben, also in Wales; while England has the privilege of the possession of one at Wensley Dale. The Devil's highway, tower, battery, cheesering, mill, pulpit, frying-pan, spoon, cauldron, punchbowl, lime-kiln, bellows, throat, head, elbow, and mouth are to be found in other parts of the country, thus showing that his person and his property are of a fragmentary character.

In a good many cases the legends which give the Devil a connection with the places indicated are not lacking of the comic element. The boulders which are found near Studland, in Dorsetshire, are supposed to have fallen out of the demon's possession under the following circumstances: The Devil was carrying an enormous rock through the air for the purpose of casting it at Salisbury Cathedral, against which he had his anger aroused on account of its great architectural grandeur. Unable to carry the weight to its destination, he was forced to let the huge mass fall on Studland Heath, where it remains to the present day a solid testimony against those who discredit the Devil's reality.

Another queer story comes from Cumberland. It is said that the Devil desired to build a bridge from the mouth of the river Irt to the Isle of Man. He carried a huge stone across the country to the coast in his apron, the string of which was tied round the burden as a security; but ere his purpose could be accomplished the wind arose and took the rock out of his grasp; the apron string was broken, but the mark of it can still be seen upon the stone. Another tale in which the Devil's apron plays a conspicuous part is connected with Wensleydale, aforementioned, where there is a wide chasm, near which are the remains of a structure representing yet another of the Devil's failures. While collecting stones wherewith to build a bridge, the unfortunate constructor lost the all-necessary apron, which apparel was carried away into the stream to the Kail Pot, a deep cauldron which has ever since continued to boil and bubble.

Apparently, the infernal king has a decided *penchant* for stones. The writer quoted from above says: "Zoit's mill, near Liebschwitz, Germany, was haunted at night by the Devil, who was in the habit of using one of the stones to grind down his hoofs. On one occasion a young fellow employed at the mill lay in wait for the fiend, and spied him at his work, but dearly paid for his pains, for the Devil seized him and held his hinder parts to the grindstone till he had lost at least half of them. Another of the miller's men, however, who was older and wiser, came upon the intruder unawares, and this time it was the Devil himself whose posteriors suffered curtailment; while, later on, a clever lad tied him up in a sack, in spite of all his struggles, and threw him into the mill pond, which put an end to his pranks." After which who will henceforth deny those who proclaim "the Devil is dead"? Notwithstanding this legend, the generality of stories do not represent the Devil as half a bad fellow. His pranks were, at the most, innocent amusements, and if some of his designs were not carried into actual execution, who will say that we are not the sufferers? Our ancestors, seemingly, kept his majesty fully employed on the earth, with a view, perhaps, of prevention from torment in other quarters. Now-a-days his exact geographical location is impossible to determine, and men of knowledge have hitherto failed to apportion any part of the solar system for his realms. Anyhow, if only on account of the interesting traditions of his former exploits, a place should be carved for him in our memories, and his cloven foot, goat's beard, cock's feather, ox's tail, horned head, and pitchfork should ever be revered.

FRED WILSON.

I know no great men but those who have rendered great services to humanity.—Voltaire.

## THE JEWS AND PROPHECY.

THE condition of the chosen race is often adduced as a proof of the truth of Bible prophecies. Are they not, indeed, a hissing and a bye-word? Is not the punishment for the rejection of their Messiah manifestly upon them? Well, we are not so sure of that. The Jews are, on the whole, healthier and wealthier than other races, and Christians have had a knack of fulfilling prophecy themselves, as far as persecution is concerned.

If we look at some of the plainest of the Bible prophecies regarding the Jews, we shall see that, manifestly, they are not fulfilled. Take the first: "And the Lord said unto Abraham, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art, northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward; for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever" (Genesis xiii. 14, 15). Do the seed of Abraham possess the whole of this land at present, or does for ever mean a very limited period?

The next prophecy is the following: "And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth; so that, if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered." Are the chosen ones as numerous as the dust of the earth, or did Jehovah object to David taking a census because any census must disprove his promise?

In Genesis xv. 13 we find the next prophecy concerning the seed of Abraham: "Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years." Doubtless this prophecy was written long after the sojourn in Egypt—if the Jews ever were there. Yet the prophecy cannot be made to tally with the story, which gives only two hundred and fifteen years for that sojourn; as, moreover, during the life of Joseph and of the Pharaoh that knew Joseph, the Jews were favored, the oppression of the Jews could not have extended to half the period named in the prophecy.

The next prophecy with regard to the Jews is to be found in Genesis xxii. 18: "In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Well, this is a whopper! The blessed Jews were commanded to slaughter and destroy other nations wholesale. Were the Canaanites blessed in the seed of Abraham, or are we to-day? Oh, it is said, we are blessed through Christ, who came of the seed of Abraham to save the world. We fancy history shows he brought not peace, but a sword; but, anyway, his coming did not bless those who died before him.

The curses against the Jews, on which Christians lay stress, are found in chapters xxviii. and xxix. of Deuteronomy. Let us see if they are, indeed, fulfilled. Take, for instance, the plain verse: "The Lord will smite thee with the botch of Egypt, and with the emerods, and with the scab, and with the itch, whereof thou canst not be healed" (Deut. xxviii. 27). Is it true that Jews all have these incurable complaints, or are they not healthier than Gentiles?

Perhaps the most ridiculously false of these prophecies is the prediction in verse 44: "That the stranger shall lend to thee, and thou shalt not lend to him." Whereas the very reverse is, and long has been, the case. CELSUS.

## Obituary.

WE have to record the death of Mr. Joseph Brown, one of the N.S.S. vice-presidents, and secretary of the N. E. Secular Federation. Mr. Brown worked too hard for Freethought and all sorts of advanced movements. His health gave way, and finally he was stricken with brain-disease, which is incurable; and it is some consolation, therefore, to know that his troubles and sufferings are over. He was a man of lofty integrity, and full of devotion to his ideals; a brave volunteer in the army of progress.

DIED at Walsall, Mr. E. A. Scholey, well known for many years as an advanced Radical, a temperance reformer, and a Freethinker. He carried on the business of a second-hand bookseller, and, when no free library existed, established a sort of semi-public reading room, and placed his wide knowledge of books at the disposal of the young men who gathered round him. He had been a friend of Thomas Cooper, Ernest Jones, and the leading Chartists.

A VETERAN Freethinker and supporter of Mr. Bradlaugh has passed away in the person of Mr. George Priestley, of Rochdale, at one time president of the Rochdale Secular Society. He died on March 23, and was buried in Rochdale Cemetery on the 28th.

In Rome in 1849 I visited myself every convent. I was present at all the investigations. Without a single exception we found instruments of torture, and a cellar with the bodies of infant children.—Giuseppe Garibaldi.

## LECTURE BY MOSES.

(Delivered at the Convocation of Animals assembled outside the Ark on April 1, 4000 B.C.)

Now all you animals are about to start on a voyage of discovery, and there is a certain amount of uncertainty as to where you are going, how long you will be away, when you will start, and what will become of you generally. Now you will have the supreme advantage of sailing in an ark that is commanded by my most excellent friend, Mr. Noah. Probably no man living has had the experience in sailing one of these delightful pleasure boats possessed by my aged friend; for is it not an undisputed fact that he has worked the route between the "Cock," at Kilburn, and the Mansion House for the past four hundred years? (Hear, hear.) Now, one thing that I wish most particularly to impress upon you is that, if any of you should feel a kind of sinking sensation when you arrive in the middle of the Serpentine, be sure you immediately call for Shem, Ham, or the other son of my worthy friend, who will bring you with celerity the white china basin. (Loud cheers.) By paying attention to these instructions, you will obviate the necessity of frequently swabbing down the decks; and I might add in passing that a sea-sick elephant is no joke. Your meals will be served most regularly, and it is hoped that the lions and tigers will bear in mind that there are only two sheep on board, and will treat them with respect, for it is very much to be desired that so useful and intelligent a breed of animals should not be allowed to die out. (Hear, hear.) With regard to your luggage, the firm of Noah & Sons will take the greatest care of any articles of value deposited with them; but they give you most distinctly to understand that they will not hold themselves responsible for the negligence of any of their servants, or for the thieving propensities of Shem, Ham, and the other Johnnie. The elephant is expected to take care of his own trunk, and the male domestic fowl will look to his own comb; the robber of poultry yards is also expected to keep an eye on his brush, otherwise it may be used by the pelican for brushing the sand off his boots in the desert, or by the owl in the wilderness, or possibly by the common or garden sparrow to pick his teeth when engaged in relieving the monotony of sitting all alone upon a housetop. And now, as time is pressing, it behoves me to bring this short address to a close. (Loud and prolonged cheers.) I have only to wish you a long, happy, and prolonged voyage, a happy Christmas, and a glad New Year. May your shadows never grow less, and may the Lord look sideways upon you. Farewell, and mind the varnish. (Roaring, barking, trumpeting, etc.)

—Fairplay.

## A BUDDHIST STORY.

In the first volume of the *Jataka*; or, *Stories of the Buddha's Former Births*, edited by Professor E. B. Cowell, is one which illustrates the roguery practised under pretence of religion. One of the Buddhist brethren was found to be a hypocrite, and the Buddha told how he had a similar disposition in a former incarnation. Ages ago a certain rat was king of the rats in the forest. This rat was a Bodhisatta—this is, a being on the road to Buddhahood.

"Now, there was a roving jackal who espied this troop of rats, and fell to scheming how to beguile and eat them. And he took up his stand near their home with his face to the sun, snuffing up the wind, and standing on one leg. Seeing this, when out on his road in quest of food, the Bodhisatta conceived the jackal to be a saintly being, and went up and asked his name. "Godly" is my name," said the jackal. "Why do you stand only on one leg?" "Because if I stood on all four at once, the earth could not bear my weight. That is why I stand on one leg only." "And why do you keep your mouth open?" "To take the air. I live on air; it is my only food." "And why do you face the sun?" "To worship him." "What uprightness!" thought the Bodhisatta, and thenceforward he made a point of going, attended by the other rats, to pay his respects morning and evening to the saintly jackal. And when the rats were leaving, the jackal seized and devoured the hindermost one of them, wiped his lips, and looked as though nothing had happened. In consequence of this, the rats grew fewer and fewer, till they noticed the gaps in their ranks, and, wondering why this was so, asked the Bodhisatta the reason. He could not make it out, but, suspecting the jackal, resolved to put him to the test. So next day he let the other rats go out first, and himself brought up the rear. The jackal made a spring on the Bodhisatta, who, seeing him coming, faced round and cried, "So this is your saintliness, you hypocrite and rascal." . . . The king of the rats sprang at the jackal's throat, and bit his windpipe asunder just under the jaw so that he died. Back trooped the other rats and gobbled up the body of the jackal with a 'crunch,

crunch'—that is to say, the foremost of them did, for they say there was none left for the last comers. . . . This hypocritical Brother was the jackal of those days, and I the King of the rats."

It is noteworthy that, although bloodshed of any kind was a deterrent to the attainment of Buddhahood, nevertheless the Bodhisatta, or Buddha, in an earlier incarnation, deemed it right to destroy the hypocritical jackal who used piety as a pretence to gain his own ends.

## WANTED—A FACT.

Ah, parsons are solemn, and grave, and wise!  
But still, when I sit in some cushion'd pew,  
My lashes will droop o'er my half-shut eyes,  
And I can't help wishing the service thro'.

For they dish up miracles not a few—  
With dogmas galore is the discourse pack'd;  
But I long for talk that's a trifle new,  
And I'd give all creeds for a single fact.

They ask me to swallow such ancient lies,  
With fictions and stories each phase imbue;  
They dwell on the gourd of stupendous size  
That up over Jonah so quickly grew.

And by pictures the old-time prophets drew  
My spirit is tortured, my brain is rack'd.  
And I'm tired of their texts and tenets, too,  
And I'd give all creeds for a single fact.

And so, when I listen, I can but rue  
That rarely the preachers will seek to rise  
Up into the heights of the brave and true,  
Away from the darkness their faith implies.

But seldom they offer to serve in lieu  
Real knowledge, the world has always lacked;  
So when they hold forth I'm exceedingly blue,  
And I'd give all creeds for a single fact.

## ENVOI.

And silent they are when I humbly sue  
For legends with proof and the vouchers back'd;  
But still they must know it's my simple due,  
And I'd give all creeds for a single fact.

—*Freethinkers' Magazine.* NELLY BOOTH SIMMONS.

## Boys, Don't Copy David.

"All men are liars," said the sweet singer of Israel, otherwise the good David (Psalm cxvi. 11), and thus gave utterance to what he conceived a great truth. Knowing his character, he judged others by his own standard. David was consistent, even in his dying moments, with the vile conception he had formed of his fellows. At such a moment, the eyes dim, memory nearly gone, his hates should have been forgotten, in view of the awful change he knew was coming on him. He had called Solomon before him, whom he made his successor, and instructed him how to conduct himself towards God, so he should prosper in all he did. The death sweat on his brow, the heart beating languidly, he turned to his loving son: "Thou knowest Job. . . . Let not his hoar head go down to the grave in peace." Scarcely able to speak, he stammered on: "When Shimei surrendered to me at Jordan, I swore to him by the Lord, saying, I will not put thee to death by the sword. . . . but his hoar head bring thou down to the grave with blood." These were David's last and dying words. The narrative continuing: "So David slept with his fathers" (1 Kings ii.).

We pray our youthful readers not to copy after this David, who was a man after God's own heart, for revenge and kindred passions should end at the grave at least. Those kings of Israel must have been a bad lot.—*Progressive Thinker.*

The Christian world has something to learn at this day, even from the Atheist; for he asks entire freedom for human nature; freedom to think, freedom to will, freedom to love, freedom to worship, if he may—not to worship, if he will not.—*Theodore Parker.*

The virtuous man is he whose actions tend uniformly to the welfare, constantly to the happiness of his fellow creatures. The vicious man is he whose conduct tends to the misery, whose propensities form the unhappiness of those with whom he lives, from whence his own peculiar misery most commonly results.—*D. Holbach.*

BOOK CHAT.

SOME of the poems by Mr. Lowell which are to appear in the forthcoming collection made by Professor Norton have never been printed. The editor has written an introduction for the volumes, and for a frontispiece it will have a new etched portrait of the poet.

\* \* \*

Omar Khayyam, the Persian Freethinking poet, will ever be known to English lovers of literature by the incomparable translation of Edward Fitzgerald. There is, however, in addition to the scholarly translation by Mr. Whinfield and the pretentious one by Mr. J. H. McCarthy, an American translation by Mr. John Leslie Garner, published at Milwaukee. Mr. Garner is no poet, but his work is done with sympathy and scholarship. There is a French translation of Omar by M. Nicholas, and a German one by F. Bodenstedt. Some of the quatrains have been rendered into Dutch by one of our friends on the editorial staff of *De Dageraad*.

\* \* \*

Shakespeare's plays have been translated into the Armenian language, and the translation will soon be published in Russia.

\* \* \*

Messrs. Remington and Co. will begin, early in April, the publication of a new series of foreign classics, edited by Mr. Sonley Johnstone. The first issue will be volume one of Molière's Comedies, to be followed, at monthly intervals, by La Rochefoucauld's Maxims, Corneille, Boileau, Voltaire, Racine, etc. Each volume will contain a short history of the author's life and work.

\* \* \*

*That Monster, the Higher Critic*, by Marvin R. Vincent, is a brochure showing the untenability of the old views of inspiration. The author gives an explanation of what the "Higher Criticism" really is, and offers a vigorous defence of its rights. "Let it be plainly understood—and the sooner it is understood the better for all parties—that criticism, Higher Criticism, has come to stay, and to fight if necessary."

\* \* \*

We see announced as issued by the Industrial Publication Co., of New York, *The Natural History of Hell*, being a discussion of some of the relations of the Christian plan of salvation to modern science, by John Phillipson.

\* \* \*

It is notable that the *Quarterly Review*, in noticing Mr. Froude's *Erasmus*, says that the three most notable men of letters during the Christian era were Augustine, Erasmus, and Voltaire. Of these the first may be said to have established Christian dogmas, the second to have diluted them with reason, and the third to have destroyed them.

\* \* \*

Professor J. M. Baldwin, of Princeton College, has written a work on *Moral Development in the Child and the Race*. The book is published by Macmillan & Co.

\* \* \*

*The Familiar Letters of Thoreau*, edited with an introduction and notes by Frank B. Sanborn, has been issued by Houghton, Mifflin, & Co., of Boston.

\* \* \*

The third volume of the late Canon Liddon's *Life of E. B. Pusey* reveals the morbid asceticism of this devout religionist. He writes to Keble: "Amid special mercies and guardianship of God, I am scarred all over and seamed with sin, so that I am a monster to myself; I loathe myself; I can feel of myself only like one covered with leprosy from head to foot."

\* \* \*

The *London Quarterly* is shocked at the disclosure: "Such highly-colored and self-loathing pictures of penitential experience, such confessions of inward sin and guiltiness, are not to be found, so far as we know, in any modern biography, scarcely even in the confessions of such penitents as Bunyan, John Nelson, or Newton of Olney. They are profoundly pathetic, but it almost makes one shudder to read them."

\* \* \*

The *L. Q.* continues: "He regarded himself as a penitent who had greatly sinned after baptism, and who could only obtain peace through confession and absolution. His wife's death he regarded as a direct punishment for his sins, and his suspension as a preacher as a providential chastisement for his secret faults. The death of his daughter also was a punishment for his sins. His illness was another stroke of punishment from the hand of God."

\* \* \*

"One of Pusey's rules of discipline was not to smile. Among an infinite number of details, he resolved 'to wear

haircloth always by day unless ill; to use a hard seat by day and a hard bed by night; not to wear gloves or protect his hands; to eat his food slowly and penitentially, 'making a secret confession of unworthiness to use God's creatures before every meal.'" Jesus, we are told, was a man of sorrows, and most of his devoted followers have indeed been miserable creatures.

\* \* \*

That ancient Rome was brought to a state of ruin rather by the Christians than by the Pagan barbarians was shown last year by Signor Lanciani, the eminent archæologist, in the *Strand Magazine*. The recently-published translation, by Annie Hamilton, of F. Gregorovius's *History of the City of Rome in the Middle Ages* shows that Gregorovius is of the same opinion; and no higher authority could be given. Goths are still blamed for what Roman Christians themselves did. The historian points out that the gradual process by which the city was stripped of its beauties and laid in ruins could not have been the result of disconnected wars. What really happened was that the people changed in their feeling towards the art and architecture which they beheld around them. They turned their backs upon Pagan civilisation, stripped the temples of the old gods, and used the materials for their own churches. When the noblest ceased to care for the rites and symbols of the old religion, it did not take the ignoble long to lay hands on ancient things for new uses. Many a priceless bronze was turned into old metal by those to whom sculptors were only objects of superstition.

\* \* \*

The *Literary Guide* (Watts & Co.) for April is an excellent number. The supplement is a summary of Graham's *Creed of Science*—a book which can hardly be called new, and which the summariser (who does his work well) praises far above its merits. The *Guide* attributes a volume of poems by George Anderson to a gentleman whose name is familiar in Freethought circles. This is a mistake. The poet is another George Anderson, and his verses are lauded extravagantly under a misapprehension.

\* \* \*

Mr. A. B. Moss's *Christianity and Evolution* was noticed in our columns at the time of its first publication. His publishers (Watts & Co.) now issue a "cheap popular edition" at one shilling. We hope it will have a much wider circulation in the new form. Mr. Moss has put his best thought and knowledge into this volume.

PROFANE JOKES.

Aunt—"Don't you say your prayers at night?" Willie—"Nope! I ain't afraid with a light in the room."

Mr. Longtext—"Johnny, can you tell me where the bad little boys go?" Johnny—"Yes, sir; to Sunday-school, when there's going to be a picnic."

Two little children looking at the moon one evening, the younger asked: "Is the moon God's wife?" Older child (patronisingly)—"No, you silly child. God is a bachelor."

She—"I wonder why Eve was not created before Adam?" He—"Oh, that's simple. The Lord knew that, if he made woman first, he'd never be able to make a man to suit her."

Miss Dogood—"You are very active in charity work, Miss Slumly, but how is it you never visit Rat-alley or Tumble-down-lane?" Miss Slumly—"You know, my dear, I belong to St. Dives' Church, and it owns all that part of the town."

Parson (condoling with widower on death of his wife)—"The Lord has indeed seen fit to afflict you. The last time I saw you your cattle were dying of pleuro, and now I hear a more grievous calamity has befallen you." Widower—"Aye; there ain't even a hide to sell this time."

Farmer—"That new hand's a fraud. He's only ploughed one furrow, and than laid down and gone to sleep." Wife—"What excuse does he make?" Farmer—"He says he believes in going according to Scripture, and that when a man puts his hand to the plough he should never turn back."

First Beggar—"Where did you get that fine overcoat?" Second do—"At the big house at the corner." First do—"Why, I went there only this mornin' shiverin' with cold, and dey wouldn't gimme a rag." Second do—"Oh, ah! but I didn't ask for clothes for myself. I told 'em it was fur the pore heathen in darkest Africa."

Deacon Sassafras (a Hardshell Baptist)—"I have just been reading about a man who was killed by lightning while playing base-ball on Sunday in Kentucky. There's a judgment for you!" Hiram Oatcake—"I don't know about its bein' a judgment; a church near by was struck and destroyed at the same time." Deacon Sassafras—"That doesn't cut any figure. It was a Presbyterian church."

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

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

LONDON.

HALL OF SCIENCE (142 Old-street, E.C.): 6.30, musical selections; 7, G. W. Foote, "The Death of God and the Life of Humanity." (Admission free; reserved seats 3d. and 6d.) BATTERSEA SECULAR HALL (back of Battersea Park Station): 7.45, Robert Shaw, "Radicalism v. Socialism." (Free.) Tuesday, at 8, social gathering. Thursday, at 8, committee. Good Friday, at 8, entertainment and dance. (Tickets 3d.) CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 4, members' general meeting; 6, tea and soiree. FINSBURY BRANCH: 12, important members' meeting at 120 St. John-street, Clerkenwell. ISLINGTON: 3, special business meeting at secretary's, 19 Alwyne-road, Canonbury. WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Princes' Hall, Piccadilly): 11.15, Dr. Stanton Coit, "The Popular Belief in a Higher Power." WEST LONDON BRANCH ("Yorkshire Stingo," Silver-street, Notting-hill-gate): Tuesday, at 8.30, business meeting. WEST HAM SECULAR ETHICAL SOCIETY (61 West Ham-lane): 6.15, discussion class; 7.15, J. Veitch, "That Man Survives Physical Death."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, W. J. Ramsey, "Mansions in the Sky." HAMMERSMITH BRIDGE (Middlesex side): 7, S. E. Easton, "Under which Flag?" Thursday, at 8.30, F. Haslam, "How I Became a Secularist." HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, S. E. Easton, "Under which Flag?" 3.30, "Some Bible Stories." MILE END WASTE: 11.30, W. Heaford, "Why we Do Not Believe in Christianity." OLD PIMLICO PIER: 11.30, F. Haslam, "History of Our Times." VICTORIA PARK: 3, J. Marshall will lecture. WOOD GREEN (Jolly Butchers' Hill): 11.30, Stanley Jones, "The Soul and Science"; 7, "The Origin of the Bible."

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM (Coffee House, corner of Broad-street): Thursdays, at 8, papers, discussions, etc. BLACKBURN: 8, members' meeting at secretary's house. CHATHAM SECULAR HALL (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 11, J. B. Coppock, F.C.S., "The Life Growth of a Plant"; 7, "The Nervous System"—with lantern. DERBY (Pollicott's Dining Rooms, Market-place): 7.45, Mr. Wright, "God and the Devil." GLASGOW (Ex-Mission Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): 12, discussion class; 6.30, J. Ritchie, "Criticism and Gospel History." IPSWICH (Co-operative Rooms, Cox-lane): 7, members' meeting. LIVERPOOL (Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street): 11.30, quarterly meeting of Tontine Society; 7, Ernest Newman, "Mr. Balfour's Foundations of Belief." MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, C. Doeg, "The Best of all Possible Worlds." (Free.) NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE (Northumberland Hall, High Friar-street): 3, C. Cohen, "The Scientific Basis of Morals"; 7, "Religion or Freethought." ROCHDALE (Working Men's College, 4 Acker-street): 6.30, Sam Standing, "Bel and the Dragon"; 8, Branch meeting. SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 11, Charles Watts, "Trust in God a Delusion"; 8, Religion with and without Theology"; 7, "Theism Tested and Found Wanting." Tea at 5. SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation Schools, King-street): 7, important business meeting. SUNDERLAND (Lecture Room, Bridge End Vaults, opposite Echo office): 7, Robert Weightman, "The Bible and Common Sense."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

DERBY (Market-place): 6.45, Mr. Briggs will lecture. NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE (Quayside—weather permitting): 11 O. Cohen, "Christianity." ROCHDALE (Town Hall Square): 11, Sam Standing, "Some Events of the Week"; 3, "St. Matthew's Gospel."

Lecturers' Engagements.

STEPHEN H. ALISON, Sunnyside, 72 Union-grove, Clapham, London, S.W.—April 28, Manchester. May 5, Sheffield.

C. COHEN, 12 Merchant-street, Bow-road, London, E.—April 7, 14, 21, 28, Newcastle-on-Tyne. May 2, Wood Green; 5, m. Mile End, a. Victoria Park, e. Edmonton; 9, Wood Green; 12, Sheffield; 19, Manchester; 23, Wood Green; 26, m. Finsbury Park, a. Victoria Park, e. Wood Green; 30, Wood Green.

STANLEY JONES, 53 Marlborough-road, Holloway, London.—April 7, m. and e. Wood Green; 14, m. Pimlico Pier, a. Hyde Park, e. Camberwell; 28, m. Battersea. May 5, e. Battersea.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Oredon-road, Rotherhithe, London.—April 14, m. Mile End, a. Victoria Park; 21, m. and a. Hyde Park, e. Hammersmith; 28, m. Camberwell. May 5, a. Finsbury Park; 12, m. Mile End, a. Victoria Park; 19, m. and a. Hyde Park, e. Hammersmith; 26, Clerkenwell.

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