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Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

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HERBERT SPENCER'S REPLY.

MR. BALFOUR'S *Foundations of Belief* has already been reviewed in our columns. We thought it clever, well-written, and sophistical. Some positions that Mr. Balfour attacks are imaginary, in the sense that they are not the real positions of his opponents. In other words, he knocks down men of straw, and slays mere effigies. This, indeed, is clearly shown by Mr. Herbert Spencer, whose "Agnosticism" and "Naturalism" are so often the object of Mr. Balfour's assaults. Mr. Spencer's reply appears in the June number of the *Fortnightly Review*, and it is certainly very damaging. No doubt Mr. Balfour will pen a readable answer, the literary composition of which will be superior to Mr. Spencer's; but he will probably find it prudent to evade the chief difficulties of his task, and to substitute dialectical thimble-rigging for serious argumentation.

Mr. Spencer opens with a hit, a palpable hit, at Mr. Balfour's distinguished uncle, the Marquis of Salisbury, who demolished Darwinism in his address to the British Association, though his demolition of it has not disturbed the serenity of a single scientific Evolutionist; which is saying, by implication, that Lord Salisbury played to the gallery, and suggesting that Mr. Balfour is guilty of a somewhat similar performance.

Mr. Balfour is very strong on man's "needs and aspirations," which, of course, the universe is bound to satisfy, according to the familiar reasoning of our modern sentimental religionists. Mr. Spencer replies that this is arguing in a circle. The religionist is really assuming the existence of a Ruling Power which has arranged the universe to "minister" to man's requirements. Setting aside this assumption, how does the theory stand the test of examination in the light of fact? Tell a North American Indian that there is no "happy hunting-ground" after death; tell a Mohammedan that there is no unlimited supply of *houris* for him hereafter; tell the half-starved and over-worked Hindoo that he will not ascend to heaven after throwing himself under the wheels of Juggernaut; and one and all of them will tell you that your information is "unsatisfactory" and devoid of true "consolation." Mr. Balfour's needs and satisfactions are of a higher order; but, as Mr. Spencer observes: "The question is whether the comforting character of a belief is an adequate reason for entertaining it; and the answer to this question is not to be determined by the quality of the comfort looked for, as high or low."

Mr. Balfour's view is only a refined form of the primitive view that all things were arranged for human benefit.

"But the anthropocentric view does not appear acceptable to one who contemplates things without foregone conclusions. When he learns that millions upon millions of years passed during which the Earth was peopled only by inferior brutes, and that even now three-fifths of its surface are occupied by an ocean-basin carpeted with low creatures which live in darkness, utterly useless to man, and only lately known to him; and when he learns that of the remaining two-fifths, vast Arctic and Antarctic regions, and vast desert areas, are practically uninhabitable, while immense portions of the remainder, fever-breeding and swarming with insect pests, are unfit for comfortable existence, he does not recognise much adjustment to the wants of mankind. When he discovers that the human body is the habitat of thirty different species of parasites, which

inflict in many cases great tortures; or, still worse, when he thinks of the numerous kinds of microbes, some producing ever-present diseases and consequent mortality, and others producing frightful epidemics, like the plague and the black death, carrying off hundreds of thousands or millions, he sees little ground for assuming that the order of Nature is devised to suit our needs and satisfactions. The truth which the facts force upon him is not that the surrounding world has been arranged to fit the physical nature of man, but that, conversely, the physical nature of man has been moulded to fit the surrounding world; and that, by implication, the Theory of Things, justified by the evidence, may not be one which satisfies men's moral needs and yields them emotional satisfactions, but, conversely, is most likely one to which they have to mould their mental wants as well as they can."

Mr. Balfour's chapter on the relative claims of Reason and Authority, according to Mr. Spencer, is "characterised by philosophic grasp, clear discrimination, and unusual lucidity of statement." Mr. Spencer agrees with Mr. Balfour—as, indeed, every man does outside a lunatic asylum—that life would be impossible if all our beliefs had to be formed by Reason without the aid of Authority. But he points out that we cannot really get behind Reason, for we must exercise Reason even in choosing our Authority. And here Mr. Spencer neatly turns the tables on Mr. Balfour. He remarks that there are two great authorities, Theology and Science; one accepted by Religionists, and the other by Rationalists. Science has been ever progressing, and now presides over "all the developed arts of life." Theology, on the other hand, has ever fallen more and more into discredit. Hebrew religion has really gone the way of Egyptian and Assyrian religion. Nor has there been any success in the *guidance* of theology.

"After nearly two thousand years of Christian teaching and discipline, how near are we to that ideal life which Christian leading was to bring us to? What must we think of the sentiment implied in the saying of a glorified prince, repeated by a popular emperor, lauding 'blood and iron—a remedy which never fails'? Among the peoples who socially insist on duels, what advance do we see towards the practice of forgiving injuries? Or, turning from private to public transactions, what restraint do we find upon the passion of international revenge—revenge by the great mass insisted upon as a duty? How much moralisation can we trace in the contrast between the practice of savages, whose maxim in their inter-tribal feuds is—'Life for life,' and the practice of Christian nations, who in their dealings with weak peoples take as their maxim—'For one life many lives'? Towards the foretold state, when swords shall be beaten into ploughshares, how much have we progressed, now that there exist bigger armies than ever existed before? And where are the indications of increased brotherly love in the doings of Christian nations in Africa, where, like hungry dogs round a carcase, they tear out piece after piece, pausing only to snarl and snap at one another?"

Mr. Spencer argues that all the "certitudes of religion" lack the essential characteristics of true *thinking*, which is nothing if not definite and self-consistent. Religion gives us "multitudinous conceptions of gods," which are out of all harmony with each other. Even when we come to the higher Theism, we find its "rational Author" of the universe to be but a bundle of "abstractions of human attributes existing unlocalised and multiplied by infinity." They are, indeed, unthinkable, and the "assertion of their existence becomes nothing but a blank form of thought."

G. W. FOOTE.

THE ORTHODOX THEORY OF CREATION.

PREVIOUS to the present century orthodox believers had no difficulty in getting from their "spiritual guides" a satisfactory answer to the question: "By whom, and how, and when, was the universe created?" To-day the answer will be much the same as it was in former times, if given by believers in Bible Christianity; but it will not be so readily credited. Orthodox literature, specially prepared for pious folk, re-echoes again and again the old Mosaic story, regardless of the fact that it has long been pronounced by men of science to be utterly false. Even Mr. Gladstone's pen has been employed in the vain endeavor to sustain "The Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture." Those who accept the statement that "in six days God created the heavens and the earth, and all that therein is," and that the period when this occurred was about six thousand years ago, never appear to consider what may be termed the previous question—namely, Was the universe ever created? This would be the first point, we should think, that ought to claim the attention of an unbiased and inquiring mind. Scientific men do not waste their time in trying to discover how or when certain events took place, until they are assured that such events did actually take place. They endeavor to obtain as many facts as can be discovered bearing upon any given problem, before attempting to offer any solution thereof.

Of course, the orthodox view is, that God *did* perform the alleged act of Creation; but those who believe this theory seem to disregard what the terms God and Creation really imply, and also the inability of the human mind to conceive the existence of the one or the performance of the other. If orthodox believers were to carefully study such writers as Herbert Spencer, they would see that, under analysis, the very terms of their statement, as interpreted from Genesis, are not even mentally conceivable, being merely symbols of thought. It is, we know, contended that God was a designer, and therefore a personal being. While, however, we have no doubt that there is a connection between a designer and a personal being, as we understand these terms, it is a totally different thing when these phrases are applied to what is termed God. The word "person," we believe, originated in the age of dramatic literature, when the actors were called personators. They represented upon the stage individuals who were in some way distinguished either for their position or their peculiarities. Hence the word meant dignity and importance, and thus angels and gods had the word applied to them. A similar idea is conveyed by the employment of the phrase in Shakespeare's time of "divers of worship," who were said to have been the poet's admirers and acquaintances. To apply, however, the word "person" to such a being as God is represented to be, appears to us the very essence of incongruity. Why should we allow ourselves to be deceived by imagining that we have a conception of a thing or a being, when we have only a conception of words which are supposed to represent an entity that is entirely unknown to us?

Creation is a word used to denote things that exist; it is also employed to indicate the mode or process by which things came into existence; but it is only with the latter use of the term that we have here to deal. The orthodox party have made concessions to Freethought upon three very important matters that were long held to be not only credible, but absolutely true, being, it was said, attested by the divine authority of the Bible. These were: (1) that all things came into existence at the command of God; (2) that the event took place in six days; and (3) that the time when it happened was coincident with the first appearance of the human race, whose successors we are. All these positions have now been practically given up by the majority of the more intelligent Christians. Science and the higher criticism have destroyed these orthodox theories that were once firmly held to be as solid as the "Rock of Ages." We do not assert that all orthodox writers concede these points; we do, however, allege that but few competent authorities now insist upon their acceptance.

With reference to the first-named position, the language of Genesis has always been open to doubt as to whether things said to have been created meant other than that they were made. It is obvious that the meaning which is applied to the fashioning of Adam out of the dust of the

earth was not the same as that which refers to the exclamation, "Let there be light, and there was light." The first is a description of a mechanical process, while the second resembles the action of a modern conjurer tapping some object with his magic wand. Still, one thing appears evident, and that is, the writer of the Bible account, whoever he was, intended to convey the notion that all things appeared for the first time, at the period stated, in working order, and endowed with reproductive powers. The clearness of the statements made upon these subjects enables us to show their utter inaccuracy, as tested by observation and experience. The idea that the earth was one vast theatre of incessant change never, we presume, occurred to those who sought to explain the "how" of the eternal worker. Whether a man can be honest who accepts the theory of modification as now generally adopted, and at the same time professes to believe in the teachings of the Bible upon these topics, can only be determined by the amount of knowledge he may possess.

Probably those who possess little or no knowledge of the history of animals and plants may be credited with sincerity in adhering to the Bible account; but we fail to understand how men who have studied such writers as Charles Darwin can still believe in the fallacious and conflicting story of Creation given in Genesis. The materials there furnished are singularly deficient for the purpose of maintaining the theory of the original perfection of man. It is overlooked by the orthodox party that primitive man, as we call him to-day, is found to be in much the same condition as Adam is alleged to have been—that is, ignorant, naked, and without shelter. The peculiar point about the matter is, how the concocter of the Bible tale could imagine that the original state, which he describes our so-called first parents to have been in, was that of the highest human existence. It is equally remarkable that individuals with modern knowledge should regard that story as being true, and that they should deem the creation of man from "the dust of the ground" as being more sacred and dignified than his emanation from any other source. The very people who are fond of enlarging upon the beauty and marvellous construction of animal mechanism are those who consider it derogatory to think they have descended from one of them. Surely it is a more exalted idea to entertain the theory of Darwin than to believe that we were made from dust, which, by the way, science has shown to have been impossible.

Taking a broad and rational view of man's origin and history, we cannot escape the reflection that the orthodox theory presents an example of a gigantic failure. To suppose that a once perfect man could become the degraded savage that he has been found to be is one of the greatest possible incongruities; and, moreover, that this degenerated condition was designed by an omnipotent and omniscient being is an appalling reflection upon the "Most High." In the *Fortnightly* for January, 1894, Professor Büchner, in writing upon "The Origin of Man," quotes the following from a pamphlet by Hovelacque: "If God created man in his own image, as the Bible asserts, then the likeness has turned out as little favorable as the likeness that inversely, at different times and places, men have made of God and their gods."

Of course, these Bible fables may serve their purpose for a time by deceiving the uninformed and misleading the uninquiring. But for the intelligent and logical inquirer a study of the Hebrew records themselves is quite sufficient to discredit the orthodox theory of Creation, and to show, beyond all reasonable doubt, that the Bible and science do not agree: the one is stationary, the other is progressive; the first is bound by the ignorance of the past, the second is guided by the knowledge of the present. Modern thought has neither hesitation nor regret in giving up the Bible as a monitor in the practical duties of life; for we have science remaining, and its light will shine with an ever-increasing brightness as the years roll on, until theological ignorance and folly shall be replaced by a knowledge of natural forces and a wisdom based on the experiences of a more unfettered intellectual development.

CHARLES WATTS.

An anthropomorphic God is the only God whom men can worship, and also the God whom modern thought finds it increasingly difficult to believe in.—*J. Colter Morison, "Service of Man," p. 49.*

BIBLE FICTIONS.

III.—THE HISTORY OF ISAAC.

The Bible "history" of Isaac may, with confidence, be pronounced fictitious. A careful examination of the sacred narrative shows no other conclusion to be possible. In the first place, this mythical patriarch is said to have been born when his mother, Sarah, had reached the advanced age of ninety. This event is, of course, stated to have been the result of a special act of divine power; but for the truth of the statement we have no other evidence than the bare word of an unknown writer who lived in an age of unreasoning credulity and gross superstition. In the next place, the stories related to account for the name are in the highest degree improbable, and bear the unmistakable stamp of fiction.

The name "Isaac" in the old, unpointed Hebrew was *Itz-h-k*, and the word "laughter" was *ts-kl-k*. This fact suggested to the minds of the ancient Jewish writers an obvious derivation of the name of their reputed ancestor. Isaac was consequently said to have been so named because somebody laughed, and stories were invented narrating the event. These, like the fictions already examined, show clear evidence of fabrication.

According to the first recorded account, the Jewish God commanded the name to be given when he promised Abraham a son, and the name was suggested to that deity by hearing the incredulous "father of the faithful" laugh at the idea of his age-stricken partner becoming a mother at ninety. "And God said unto Abraham, As for Sarah, thy wife. . . . I will give thee a son of her; yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations: kings of people shall be of her. *Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed*, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years, and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear? . . . And God said, Nay, but Sarah, thy wife, shall bear thee a son; and thou shalt call his name *Isaac*" (Genesis xvii. 15-19).

It is implied that Abraham was alone when this promise was made; but the communication was of such an important nature, and so deeply concerned Sarah, that (assuming the account to be true) the worthy patriarch would, upon reaching home, have immediately acquainted his wife with the great honor that awaited her. Of this there can be no doubt; nor can it be doubted that from that hour Sarah would have lived in daily expectation of the fulfilment of the promise. Such an event—the most momentous in a woman's life—would, in an age when to be childless was accounted almost a disgrace (Genesis xxx. 23, etc.), be regarded as the greatest possible blessing. The promise of being the ancestress of nations and of kings would, in fact, never be absent from Sarah's mind, so that no repetition of the promise would ever be necessary, or cause her any surprise.

Turning now to Genesis xviii., we find another story written, like the first, to account for the name "Isaac." In this second story Abraham is represented as entertaining three heavenly visitors in the form of men, one of whom is said to have been "the Lord" himself. These spiritual beings, we are told, partook of a substantial meal of cakes, veal, butter, and milk, under a tree in front of Abraham's tent. "And they said unto him, Where is Sarah, thy wife? And he said, Behold, in the tent. And he (the Lord) said, I will certainly return unto thee when the season cometh round; and lo, Sarah, thy wife, shall have a son. And Sarah heard in the tent door, which was behind him. . . . *And Sarah laughed* within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also? And the Lord said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh? . . . Then Sarah denied saying, I laughed not. . . . And he said, Nay, but thou didst laugh" (xviii. 9-15).

Now, in this account, it will be seen, the promise of a son comes upon Sarah as a surprise; she is incredulous, and laughs at the idea of the occurrence of such an unlikely event; the conception is altogether new to her; clearly she hears the promise for the first time. The "Lord" also, in this second story, speaks as if he had never made such a promise to Abraham before, or as if the fact of having done so had quite slipped his memory. It is evident that, if one account be true, the other must be fictitious. In these two accounts it is also to be noticed

that "the Lord," who is said to be unchangeable and no respecter of persons, administers no reproof to Abraham for his incredulity and laughter, but is not quite so lenient to Abraham's wife.

I come now to the "history" of Isaac. Now, it is to be remarked that if from the life of this patriarch we omit the stories of the Birthright and the Blessing, which belong more properly to the "history" of Jacob, there remain (besides the short accounts of his marriage and death) but three recorded events. These are: Isaac's denying his wife, his making a covenant with King Abimelech, and the naming of Beersheba; and all three were taken from the "history" of Abraham. Abraham denied his wife when living at Gerar, and some time later made a covenant with Abimelech. Isaac also denied his wife at Gerar, and at a later period made a league with Abimelech. These have already been noticed; we have, then, but to consider the third event.

The inspired writer of Genesis xxi. tells us that, immediately after the making of a covenant between Abraham and Abimelech, the place where the agreement was made was named by the former Beer-sheba, "the well of the oath." "And Abraham reproved Abimelech because of the well of water which Abimelech's servants had violently taken away. And Abimelech said: I know not who hath done this thing. . . . And he (Abraham) said: These seven ewe lambs shalt thou take of my hand, that they may be a witness unto me that I have digged this well. Wherefore he called that place Beer-sheba because there they sware both of them" (xxi. 25-32).

Here we have an account of the origin of the name "Beersheba." It was called "the well of the oath" because of an agreement entered into between Abraham and Abimelech respecting a well which Abraham's servants had digged, and also because on the same day a covenant had been made between the same two persons which had been ratified by an oath. This being the case, it is somewhat surprising to read that before the place was named by Abraham his discarded wife Hagar was found wandering "in the wilderness of Beersheba" (Genesis xxi. 14), though how there could be a wilderness so designated before the place was named passes all understanding.

Leaving the solution of this problem to ingenious Christian apologists, I turn to Genesis xxvi., which contains a narrative of events nearly a hundred years later. According to the veracious writer of this chapter, the same king Abimelech, with his chief captain, made a covenant with Isaac, and the place where the two confirmed the agreement by an oath was named *Beersheba*. "And they rose up betimes in the morning, and sware one to another; and Isaac sent them away. . . . And it came to pass the same day that Isaac's servants came, and told him concerning the well which they had digged, and said unto him, We have found water. And he called it Shebah: therefore the name of the city is Beer-sheba unto this day" (xxvi. 31-33).

Here we are told that Isaac named the place *Shebah*, "an oath," because there he and Abimelech had made a covenant, and had taken an oath to observe it; and also that on the same day his servants had digged a well (*beer*). Hence, connecting the two circumstances—the digging a well and the taking an oath—the place was called *Beer-sheba*.

Thus, it will be seen, we have two accounts of the origin of the name Beersheba. In the first, it was so named by Abraham when Isaac was a child just weaned; in the second, it received its name from Isaac when that patriarch was nearly a hundred years old. In both cases the name originated in an oath and a well; one of the parties, Abimelech, King of Gerar, was the same in both accounts. In both cases Abimelech took with him Phicol, the captain of his army, as a witness.

It does not require much discernment to perceive that one narrative was derived from the other; nor is it too much to assert that, had the three stories we have examined in the life of Abraham never been invented, the same three stories which, in a slightly altered form, constitute the chief events in the "history" of Isaac would never have been written.

VERITAS.

Boy (to his sister)—"The preacher said there is no marrying in heaven." Sister—"Of course not. There wouldn't be enough men there to go round."

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY'S CONFERENCE.

CONSIDERING the distance of Bristol from the North, there was a goodly gathering at the St. James's Hall, which had been tastefully decorated with plants, flags, and mottoes from Paine, Ingersoll, etc. Among the Societies represented were the following:—Aberdeen, J. P. Gilmour; Bethnal Green, C. Cohen; Blackburn, J. Umpleby, N. Ashworth; Bolton, W. Collins, C. N. Atkinson; Bradford, J. W. Gott, J. Sunderland; Bristol, K. Hunt, J. Keast; Bath, J. Oram; Birmingham, R. Taylor; Bedlington, R. Forder, C. Cohen; Cramlington, C. Cohen; Camberwell, Mr. Egan; Chatham, F. J. Boorman; Derby, Messrs. Briggs, Whitney, Swain; Dundee, C. Watts, J. P. Gilmour; East London, E. Bater; Edinburgh, C. Watts; Finsbury Park, G. Ward, Miss Robins; Finsbury, J. Anderson; Glasgow, J. P. Gilmour; Hull, R. Forder; Huddersfield, W. Spivey; Islington, A. Guest; Manchester, Mrs. Pegg, C. Pegg, E. C. Taylor; Nottingham, S. W. Thompson; North-West London, Miss Brown, G. Brown; Rochdale, J. Sunderland; Sunderland, A. B. Moss; South Shields, J. T. Horseman; Westminster, R. Forder; West London, F. Todd, F. Schaller; Wood Green, S. R. Thompson; Ox Hill, J. Keast.

Individual members attended from Bath, Blenavon, Cardiff, Merthyr, Gloucester, London, etc. Many of the Vice-Presidents, including the veterans Truelove and Umpleby, were present on the platform.

Mr. FOOTE briefly opened the Conference by expressing the hope that all the proceedings would be animated by the single desire of advancing the cause.

The minutes of the last Conference having, on the motion of Mr. MOSS, seconded by Mr. TAYLOR, been taken as read, Mr. J. ANDERSON asked if he would be in order in asking some questions, to which Mr. FOOTE replied that, when the Agenda was disposed of, there might be an opportunity to introduce any other business.

The PRESIDENT then read the Executive's Annual Report, as follows:—

Your Executive, in presenting this report for the year 1894-5, feels it to be one with which the Society may, on the whole, be fairly well satisfied. Considering the general and prolonged depression in industrial circles, it is gratifying to know that there has been little falling off in the amount of members' subscriptions, and that certificates have been issued to more than three hundred new members, while new Branches have been formed at Rochdale and Stockton-on-Tees, and another so far away as Kokstad, in South Africa.

It is also pleasant to note the abiding honor in which the Society's late President is held in this country. A statue of Charles Bradlaugh was unveiled at Northampton in the month of June. A tremendous, and perhaps unprecedented, concourse of people filled the square in which it stands, together with all the approaches; and the enthusiasm of the crowd, both then and at the evening meeting indoors, beggars description. A considerable number of Freethinkers were present from London and the Midlands, and your President represented your Society officially at both gatherings. Some months afterwards a fine marble bust of Charles Bradlaugh, presented by the donor of his portrait at the bar of the House of Commons, was unveiled at Manchester; on which occasion your President had the honor to officiate as chairman.

During the late School Board elections in London, which were of immense importance, owing to the great struggle between Church and Chapel, your Executive did what was possible in support of the cause of Secular Education. Mr. Charles Watts was put forward as a special "Secular" candidate in Finsbury. He made a gallant fight, and was well backed by industrious friends; but the press boycott rendered success impossible in such a vast constituency, numbering more than eighty thousand electors. Unfortunately there was a Social Democratic candidate in the field, also in favor of Secular Education, who polled a good many votes, though considerably less than Mr. Watts. Mr. Watts will fight again, and sooner or later he will win, and represent our cause with dignity and efficiency on the greatest School Board in the world. (Applause.)

One incident in this struggle is worthy of special mention. The Rev. Dr. Parker, of the City Temple, wrote a long and able letter to the *Times*, in favor of Secular Education as the logical outcome of Nonconformist principles. This letter was printed as an election leaflet by Mr. Watts's committee, with an invitation to "Vote for Watts, the only candidate running on Dr. Parker's lines."

Your Executive has decided to initiate the formation of a Secular Education Council for the whole of London, and next winter will present a favorable occasion for attempting this important project. (Hear, hear.)

Secularists have engaged in School Board contests in other parts of the country, notably Mr. John Grange at Bradford, and in some cases they have been successful. It is also a matter for congratulation that so many Secularists have been elected under the new Parish Councils Act. One of your vice-presidents, Mr. A. B. Moss, was elected with

Mr. Dobson, another member of your Society, at Camberwell; and during the brief time he has been sitting as a vestryman he has done some good work in a Secular direction. Another vice-president, Mr. Victor Roger, has also been elected at Lambeth, in spite of bigoted opposition.

Owing to reasons which will probably be discussed by this Conference, the past year has not been one of special activity in platform propaganda outside London; though Mr. C. Cohen has done excellent and highly appreciated work on the Tyneside. Curiously, however, there has been more than the usual number of public debates, which are always of the highest value to our movement. Your President has debated before crowded audiences with the Rev. J. Waldron, at New Brompton, and with W. T. Lee, at Derby. Mr. Charles Watts has also held debates with Dr. Jamieson, at Glasgow; with the Rev. David Macrae, at Dundee; and with Mr. George Wise, of the Liverpool Christian Evidence Society.

The open-air propaganda has been well maintained in London, where Sunday lectures are delivered in the Parks and other public places. Very large audiences are addressed by your Society's speakers, such as Messrs. Moss, Heaford, Rowney, Guest, Haslam, Jones, and St. John; and the meetings are almost invariably peaceful and attentive, except when disorder is deliberately created by vulgar and disappointed opponents, who are unable to attract audiences of their own. It may also be mentioned that the London Secular Federation—fortunate in its new secretary, Miss Annie Brown—has weathered all its financial troubles, and wiped out a heavy indebtedness which, for a year or two, had crippled its energies.

The Society's *Almanack* has not had the sale that might be expected. Seeing the number of Almanacks that have entered the market since your Society's was first published, and the impossibility of competing with ventures addressed to the general community, it may possibly be prudent either to publish a smaller Almanack at a reduced price, or to issue the necessary information it contains in some other form.

The most important feature, perhaps, of the year's work has been the vindication of Secularism against its most malignant libellers. It was mentioned in the last annual report that legal action was being taken against the printer and the publisher of an unspeakably vile calumny on the London Hall of Science. That action was carried to a successful issue. The libellers were condemned in a court of law, and their indulgency in the unrestrained luxury of defamation has cost them nearly £300. It was impossible to take action against the men of straw for whom the printer and publisher were acting. Such scoundrels will never be weaned from their dirty business, but it is something to teach Christian printers and publishers that they cannot reckon on impunity if they put the filthy lies of low Christian Evidence advocates into general circulation. (Applause.)

The full report of the trial of this case, with a long and important preface by your President, is published in pamphlet form; and members would do well to circulate it as extensively as possible amongst their orthodox friends and acquaintances.

Your Executive is still responsible for the Freethought propaganda at the Hall of Science. How long its tenancy will continue depends on several circumstances, some of which are beyond the purview of this Conference. An opinion may be elicited, however, as to whether the continuance of the tenancy is desirable; and in order that the expression of it may be unbiassed, the Executive refrains from giving a special opinion of its own.

Among recent changes at the Hall of Science is the disappearance of the Club, to which your Society was affiliated. That affiliation was suspended by the Executive some months ago, as it was deemed necessary to disavow all moral responsibility for a certain class of entertainment, which, though not illegal, was regarded as discreditable. The Hall was sublet for this purpose without consultation with the Executive, and persisted in, despite the Executive's protest. The whole matter was laid before a special members' meeting, which overwhelmingly endorsed the action of the Executive; and the suspension of the affiliation was only removed when the Executive was satisfied that the Board of Directors of the National Secular Hall Society had taken ample precaution against any similar unpleasantness. Now that the old Club has ceased to exist, it is morally certain that whatever social element exists in future at the Hall of Science will be strictly confined to the members (and friends) of the National Secular Society. (Hear, hear.)

An invitation was given to your Society to send delegates to a Conference representing the principal advanced societies of the kingdom, as well as such religious societies as the Salvation Army Social Wing, the Christian Social Union, etc. The Conference was called by the Humanitarian League to discuss the Criminal Code, the public control of hospitals, slaughter-house reform, and cruel sports such as the hunting of tame animals. Your President and Mr. Wheeler attended. On the first and most important question, that of the Criminal Code, a resolution, proposed by

the Rev. W. D. Morison and seconded by the Rev. W. Horsley (both prison chaplains), simply asking for inquiry into the working of the criminal law, was overridden in favor of an amendment, proposed by your President, declaring the Conference in favor of "the substitution of the idea of reform for that of punishment in the treatment of criminals, so that gaols may no longer be places of brutalisation, or even of mere detention, but places of physical, intellectual, and moral elevation for those who are afflicted with anti-social tendencies." As this amendment, which was carried almost unanimously, was in the very terms of the Immediate Practical Objects of this Society, the result so far was highly gratifying. The other resolutions passed at this Conference were also in accordance with the Principles of the National Secular Society.

The Bill to Abolish Prosecutions on account of Religious Opinions, which was introduced last session by Mr. Samuel Storey, M.P., and which is substantially identical with the Bill that was carried to a division by Charles Bradlaugh, has been introduced this session by Mr. Gourley, M.P. Being backed by some influential Radical members, it should obtain considerable support if it comes up for the second reading; but few private Bills have much chance in the present state of public business, and already the air is full of rumors of dissolution.

Your President states from his own personal knowledge that during the past four or five years many thousands of pounds have been lost to this Society through the infamous Blasphemy Laws. (Shame). He is convinced that Secularism will never take its proper place, and never attain to its proper strength and organisation, until the Blasphemy Laws are abolished. It is absolutely essential that Secularism should be able to hold property in trust for its maintenance and propagation; property which could never be alienated, except by a special Act of Parliament, from the purposes of its dedication.

Unfortunately there is little prospect of the Blasphemy Laws being abolished in the immediate future. The growing toleration of the age is too apt to take the line of indifference, while the bigots of every sect fight tenaciously for the last relics of their evil privileges. The worst of good people, as Voltaire said, is that they are such cowards. They allow themselves to be terrorised by the enemies of liberty and progress. How else is it possible to explain the rebuff which has just been experienced by the Sunday Societies? Owing to the late verdict in the case of the Leeds prosecution, men like Sir Robert Ball, the great astronomer, no longer feel it safe to deliver lectures on Sunday. A Bill introduced into the House of Lords by a layman is challenged by the Archbishop of Canterbury; and although the Home Secretary, in the House of Commons, says that the law appealed to by the Sunday bigots is absolutely indefensible, and an outrage on rational freedom, he declares that the Government has no intention of doing anything to remedy the mischief. Happily the Secular party has always defied the Sunday bigots and the Sunday laws; whenever threatened, it has put on a bold front; and this has generally convinced the bigots that they had better turn their attention to easier victims.

In glancing abroad, it may be noted that Mr. Joseph Symes at Melbourne is still maintaining his weekly journal, the *Liberator*, which a few months ago was threatened with extinction. Mr. Symes is a man of great energy and perseverance, and it is not surprising that he has tided over a great difficulty. Mr. W. W. Collins and Mr. Wallace Nelson, also at the Antipodes, are laboring with zeal and success. A field for Freethought propaganda is also opening in South Africa. There is no special news from India. In the West Indies there is a Freethought Society with a journal called *Progress*, ably conducted by Emanuel dos Santos, a member of your Society.

In Sweden, where the cause of Freethought received a considerable impetus through the imprisonment of Mr. Lennstrand for blasphemy, the subsequent illness of this gentleman led to the relinquishment of his paper named *Fränkaren*, or Freethought. Early in the present year a provincial paper, the *Soderkopings Posten*, has been prosecuted for blasphemy, on account of an article on the clericals and the schools, and the editor of the paper sentenced to two months' imprisonment. But the sentence has not been allowed to pass unchallenged, and a new Freethought paper, entitled *Nya Sanningar*, or New Thoughts, has been started in Stockholm, edited by Petrus Asplund, and promises to worthily uphold the Freethought cause in Scandinavia. The veteran Captain Thomson has also translated some of Ingersoll's lectures into Swedish.

Secular principles have also been advanced in Hungary by the discussions upon the clerical opposition to the Civil Marriage Bill; as in our own country the recent Ritualistic disturbance at the marriage of a divorced person has accentuated the Secular position that marriage, being a civil contract, should have a civil celebration, while allowing all who desire a religious ceremony, in addition, to have the same, whether in church, chapel, or other building.

Up to the present no intimation has been received from

the International Federation of Freethinkers as to the date of its next Conference, though a postcard has arrived stating that circulars upon the subject would be sent. There is reason to suppose that the Congress will be held at Brussels, and your Society will doubtless wish to be represented.

Since the last Conference death has removed three of your Vice-Presidents: Mr. Thomas Slater, of Leicester, and formerly of Bury, a veteran worker in the cause of Secularism; Mr. Charles James Hunt, a younger but also well-known public advocate, whose death was probably accelerated by his exertions in the cause of political and social reform; and Mr. Joseph Brown, the indefatigable secretary of the North-Eastern Secular Federation. Mr. Daniel Baker, the second oldest of your Vice-Presidents, has suffered a dangerous illness, but has happily recovered. (Applause.)

There is a name dear to British Freethinkers, though its bearer is an American. (Applause.) Col. Ingersoll has lately entered upon a fresh campaign. For some months he has been addressing crowded audiences in various American cities, great excitement being caused by his new lecture, *About the Holy Bible*. At Hobboken, in New Jersey, the clergy petitioned the mayor to prohibit Colonel Ingersoll from lecturing, but the official attorney advised that this was impossible; the lecture would have to be delivered first, and a prosecution for blasphemy might come afterwards. Detectives attended the meeting, which they probably enjoyed, and took down the Colonel's "blasphemy"; but the authorities shrank from a prosecution. It is noteworthy that the bigotry of the Hobboken clergy elicited a general protest from the American press. Even the religious journals thought it would be more discreet to let Colonel Ingersoll alone.

America is represented at this Conference by the President of the American Secular Union, Mr. S. P. Putnam. (Applause.) Mr. Putnam has been warmly welcomed in London, and in the few provincial cities he has already visited; and doubtless the most cordial reception will be given him by this Conference. Upon this, at least, there may be thorough unanimity. Secularists in this country honor Mr. Putnam as the elected chief officer of their brethren across the Atlantic. He comes from the land where the body of Thomas Paine was laid in its humble grave, to visit the land where that great Freethinker first saw the light of day. He brings with him a message of encouragement from the noblest of Americans, from one whose splendid brain is equalled by his generous heart. And when our American guest returns to his own people, with what we may hope will be delightful memories of the mother country, we trust that he will do his utmost to gain us a visit from Colonel Ingersoll. (Much applause.)

Mr. BOORMAN (Chatham) moved, and Mr. THOMPSON (Wood Green) seconded, the adoption of the Report, which was carried unanimously.

Mr. C. WATTS then moved as a resolution arising out of the Report: "That the members of this Conference hail with unqualified pleasure the presence among them of their able American co-worker, Mr. S. P. Putnam; and they wish to convey to him their appreciation of the great services he has rendered, and is still rendering, to the cause of mental freedom. Further, all present wish to assure Mr. Putnam of their earnest desire to have a visit from the great orator, Colonel Ingersoll; and they hereby kindly request Mr. Putnam to use his influence to induce the Colonel to cross the Atlantic at an early date, and to assure him that he would receive from the Freethinkers of this country a most genuine and enthusiastic reception."

Mr. PUTNAM said it had been the dream of his life to visit England, and when he returned to America he should report the work that was going on under the same flag here. It filled his heart with joy to hear the applause that greeted the name of Colonel Ingersoll. He belonged to the whole world; a citizen of the whole earth. His dominant thought was the sentiment of Thomas Paine inscribed on the walls, "The world is my country, mankind are my brethren, and to do good is my religion." Colonel Ingersoll had constant calls on his time. He had a great law practice, and, in addition, he devoted himself to Freethought. He had listened to Colonel Ingersoll's lecture, "About the Holy Bible," at Chicago with an audience of six thousand persons. He had up to the present only received a brief message, but one full of heart and sympathy for the English Freethinkers. Ingersoll loves and admires England. It would be a pleasure for him to come here, but there are great demands on his time. He, however, felt sure the time was not distant when the great Freethought soldier of America would greet the English Freethinkers.

The adoption of the Financial Report, moved by Mr. KEAST (Bristol), and seconded by Mr. SUNDERLAND (Bradford), was carried after various questions by Mr. J. Anderson had been disposed of.

Mr. Foote having vacated the chair, which was taken by Mr. Watts,

Mr. G. WARD (Finsbury Park) moved the resolution standing in the name of his Branch: "That Mr. G. W. Foote be re-elected President for 1895-96." Mr. PEGG

(Manchester) seconded, and Mr. FORDER read a letter from Mr. George Anderson. Mr. Anderson said he had long felt that the President of the N.S.S. should be recouped for his loss of time and money in serving the party's interests. It was unfair that heavy burdens should be laid upon those who were doing such valuable work. Of course it might be said that Presidents had asked for nothing. But that was no answer. Mr. Bradlaugh had died several thousand pounds in debt, owing to this state of things. Christian congregations looked after the worldly wants of their ministers, and Secularists should do the same; and Mr. Anderson believed the congregation was large enough to do it. He hoped the Conference would appoint a committee to consider the matter and to report upon it forthwith.

Mr. FOOTE said that he doubted whether the suggestion was feasible in the present condition of affairs, but it was a matter on which he could say little, except that he often felt it hard to bear his heavy out-of-pocket expenses. Some discussion followed, and ultimately, in accordance with Mr. Anderson's suggestion, a committee were appointed. They were Messrs. Anderson, Forder, Watts, and Ward.

Mr. FOOTE was unanimously re-elected, and, on re-taking the chair, was received with applause. He said it would be but the pride which aped humility if he said this was unexpected. Nevertheless, he felt the honor done him. He would rather be the President of this poor, struggling, oppressed society of devoted men and women, working in a great cause, than to enjoy a post of cheap and easy honor in any walk of life. If there be any better man the party preferred, he hoped he should be sensible enough to render him as loyal support as he himself desired. The place was not a bed of roses. Some seemed to regard the President as a sort of Aunt Sally, against whom they must shy all their sticks. He did not complain. Freethinkers have a larger share of individuality than others, or they would not be Freethinkers. He had done his best. No man could do more. He had never been of opinion that the Society wanted a dummy President. When Mr. Bradlaugh spoke to him about taking the post, he said if it was for the good of the Society, he would stand aside. Mr. Bradlaugh said: "No, Foote, I will be no party to having a dummy President. You must either take it or leave it, as I mean to nominate you." Experience had more than ever convinced him that a firmness was necessary. What is our condition? We are outlaws. We have to fight the whole world, living from hand to mouth. A fighting party must submit to some kind of discipline. Blows were only effective when struck with the power of the whole party, and organisation substituted for guerilla warfare. Going about from place to place, he had a more extensive view of the wants of the party, and he felt that the lecture system was chaotic, and required a vigorous concentration and guiding hand from the centre. Money was wasted for want of this. Often circumstances arose rendering it desirable to have at once special lectures or to meet opposition in some place; but it could not be carried out because of our elaborate paper machinery. He had decided to see what he could personally do to organise the lecture system, and intended to put his hand to the task. In conclusion, Mr. Foote pledged himself that he would follow, however feebly, in the footsteps of his predecessor, and he trusted that, when they met again, they would have no cause for regret.

Upon the motion of the Executive, the following Vice-Presidents were nominated for re-election: Dr. T. R. Allinson, G. Anderson, D. Baker, N. B. Billany, J. E. Brumage, Prof. L. Buchner, M.D., W. W. Collins, R. Forder, S. Hartmann, W. Heaford, G. J. Holyoake, P. A. V. Le Lubez, A. B. Moss, T. Parris, S. M. Peacock, W. Pratt, J. H. Ridgway, V. Roger, J. Samson, Dr. E. Schlaeger, R. O. Smith, Mrs. T. Smith, J. Symes, E. Trulove, J. Umpleby, Miss E. M. Vance, C. Watts, J. M. Wheeler.

Mr. J. ANDERSON called attention to the absence of the name of Mr. G. Standring, who, it was explained, had resigned.

Mr. BRIGGS (of Derby) objected to the name of Mr. R. O. Smith, and a motion that it be omitted was seconded.

The PRESIDENT, as on another occasion, asked them not to be hasty at the risk of being unjust. Unless in the case of criminal conduct, it was generally best to let a man decide for himself whether he should remain or resign.

This was done; Mr. BRIGGS having stated that his object had been attained in drawing attention to the matter.

The following were also nominated by the Executive for election as Vice-Presidents: E. Bater (London), J. F. Dewar (Edinburgh), J. P. Gilmour (Glasgow), and S. P. Putnam (America). Carried unanimously.

Upon the motion of Messrs. PEGG and TAYLOR, the standing orders were suspended, and the name of Mr. Cohen added to the list of Vice-Presidents.

The motion by Rochdale Branch, "That the office of Honorary Secretary be abolished," was lost; and the motion by Executive, "That Mr. Robert Forder be re-elected Honorary Secretary," was carried unanimously.

Messrs. W. B. Thompson (Chatham) and Arthur Wheeler (London) were elected Auditors.

Mr. SUNDERLAND (Bradford), on behalf of the Rochdale Branch, moved: "That on and after Whit-Sunday, 1896, no member shall be eligible for re-election as President until three years have elapsed from his vacating such office." He jocularly asked, "When shall I come in?" The motion fell through for want of a seconder.

At this stage of the proceedings the Conference adjourned for dinner, since 'tis mete that those should meet who meet at meetings." The repast provided for the delegates at the "Crown and Dove" was a capital one, giving general satisfaction.

(Continued on page 363.)

ACID DROPS.

JOHN WALSH, of Liverpool, is dead, and the coroner's jury has returned an open verdict over his corpse. John went to a "wake." There was plenty of drinking and the usual row, and John got hit over the head with a poker. According to the coroner, the whole affair was "most disgraceful." There was gross perjury, he declared, on one side or the other; and it was shocking that such things could occur in a Christian country. Very likely! But there will be more wakes, more drinks, more quarrels, and more broken heads. Popular religious ceremonies will not die out in a hurry. The Liverpool coroner must wait.

Sir Daniel Lysons' recent book on the Crimean War gives a pathetic little story showing how little "funk" at the thought of death there is in reality, as compared with pulpit representations. General Lysons found a soldier lying on the ground, and asked if he were wounded. "No, sir; cholera," was the soldier's reply. The general dismounted and offered him some brandy. "Thank you, sir," he said, "it would be wasting it; I am dying."

Now that Arthur Orton is making a clean breast of it, and confessing how he passed as Sir Roger Tichborne, it is worth remembering that the late Charles Bradlaugh took a very decided stand in opposition to "Sir Roger's" counsel, the late Dr. Kenealy. Bradlaugh's open letter to Kenealy in the *National Reformer* caused a good deal of excitement, and sold very largely when it was reprinted in pamphlet form.

Rev. Hugh Price Hughes is priest enough to sympathise with the Church clergy who object to marrying divorced persons. This is all very well, from the priests' point of view; but as long as the Church clergy are State officers, in the religious department, they must conform to the law; and the law says that divorced persons may marry again, even when the divorce was brought about by their own misconduct.

Mr. W. St. Chad Boscawen, lecturing at the British Museum on the Folk-lore of Babylonia, spoke of King Sargon as the Moses of Chaldea. He was born of a princess, who placed him in a basket of bulrushes and entrusted him to the waters of the Euphrates. He was rescued from the water by an irrigator, who adopted him as his child, and instructed him in the art of gardening. He was so prosperous that he became king of the city of Agadé, and the founder of the first Babylonian empire. Mr. Boscawen considers that Sargon was undoubtedly a historical character, which is probably more than can safely be affirmed of Moses.

Another semi-mythical hero was Etanna. It was he who built the great tower to reach to heaven, which the gods threw down as fast as he built it; and finally they changed the speech of man and caused the work to cease. This legend is doubtless the origin of the Bible yarn of the Tower of Babel. Mr. Boscawen affirmed as much himself, and said in conclusion that the field of Babylonian folk-lore promised a rich harvest for the students of comparative mythology.

The Rileyites have revived their tactics on the London School Board. They go there to obstruct and hinder the work of education. Repairs were absolutely necessary to put some dozen schools in poor neighborhoods into fair sanitary condition, but these good Christians opposed the motion tooth and nail.

There is not so much humanity, after all, in this Armenian atrocity agitation. The zeal of English Christians in this matter is very largely sectarian. It is also stimulated by the fact that Turkey is a weak power. You never can be quite sure of a Christian in any good cause. He is so apt to be a Christian first and a man afterwards.

The Arbitration Alliance is "an association of Christians founded last year on behalf of international arbitration," and one day last week it held its annual meeting. One of the speakers was Dr. Brooke Herford, but this reverend gentleman's ideas of arbitration are rather peculiar. "The kind of arbitration he desired to see at the present moment," he said, "was the dispatch of English war-ships to Constantinople, to distinctly show the Turkish powers that we meant business with regard to the future protection of Armenian Christians." It appears from this that arbitration is all right until "Christian" interests are at stake; and then, especially if you are strong enough, you must go in for blood and blazes.

According to report, a Christian has actually been found in Russia in the person of Prince Dimitri Khilkov, who has been influenced by Tolstoi to divide his estates among his peasants. Perhaps humanity is the motive rather than Christianity. At any rate, we hope the Prince will not join the sect of Skopski, the only Christians who follow out the teachings of Matthew xix.

Mr. Mark H. Judge, honorary secretary of the Sunday Society, in giving evidence before the Select Committee of the House of Lords, stated that his Society "did not encourage lectures or entertainments on Sundays for commercial profit." This is true in a certain sense, but to some people it may be misleading. The Sunday Society pays its lecturers, and it is as "commercial" to take money for lecturing as to take money for making chairs. Would it not be better if the Sunday Society did its own work without touching outside matters? For our part, we do not see why the proprietor of a hall should not be free to organise Sunday lectures and musical entertainments just as well as religious or philanthropic committees. Surely a thing which is right in itself cannot become wrong when it is done for a profit; and if lecturers and musicians are paid, why should not other persons devote their time, skill, and experience to the enterprise, and take their legitimate share of the financial results?

Mr. Gavazzi King, in giving evidence before the same committee, made some humorous observations. "There was difficulty," he said, "in getting subscriptions in Yorkshire. Yorkshiremen would pay for their seats, but it was difficult to get money after the event. They did not care to contribute to a collection, because they had got in then. Of course, that was a Scotch characteristic as well." Yes, and we fear it is a common characteristic of human nature.

An inquest has been held at Nottingham on the body of Mrs. Long, a widow, who died suddenly as she was entering the Tabernacle, Mansfield-road, Nottingham, of the congregation of which she was a member.

James Canning, the ex-soldier, sentenced to death for the murder of his sweetheart, expresses his wish to die and be with the murdered girl in heaven. Truly the Christian religion is a very consoling one.

The Rev. J. H. Sheldrake, D.D., of Cincinnati, is being tried before the Pittsburg Presbytery on the charge of adultery, which is made by the Rev. G. W. Chalford.

Charlotte Cooper, a servant living at Southsea, was found dead in her bed-room, laid out ready to be placed in her coffin, with her hands folded and her face tied up. On the table was a bottle containing carbolic acid, and a note saying: "My only dread is that I am not taking enough poison. God grant I may, for I want to be out of all these petty worries, for his dear Son's sake, Jesus Christ. Amen." We pity the poor girl, but then, as Talmage says, those Atheists are always committing suicide.

Rev. Alfred Barber, vicar of Burton Fleming, Hunmanby, E. Yorkshire, who has been in holy orders since 1877, and whose present living is worth £282 a year, has been before the Filey magistrates on a charge of indecently assaulting John Pogmore, a boy aged eleven. Enough evidence was taken to justify a remand, and the bail was fixed at £400.

The Rev. Charles Joseph has for some time been looking after the morals of Portsmouth. He does not seem, however, to look properly after his own congregation. One of the members has just been figuring in a nasty paternity case, and has been ordered to pay up by the magistrates. The "father" of the girl's baby, however, has appealed against the magistrates' decision, and it is probable that the reverend gentleman himself will have to appear as a witness.

Mr. Joseph has to pay £75 damages and costs for slandering a local publican, all in the interest of morality. His appeal has been dismissed at the Law Courts, the Master of the Rolls incidentally remarking that Mr. Joseph's speech was the dullest nonsense ever heard.

The Rev. Benjamin Waugh, secretary to the Society for the Protection of Children (salary £800 per annum), is pushing a Bill through the House of Commons to prevent parents insuring the lives of their children for a sum sufficient to meet funeral expenses. The insurance agents stigmatised his accusations against the working classes as calumny, and are actively opposing the Bill.

Even the pious New York *Herald*, after noting that there are only 50,000 professed Christians among the 45,000,000 inhabitants of Japan, reckons that "there will be few Japanese statesmen who will be inclined to look with favour on the introduction of more of the sort of Christian civilisation that has made itself so selfishly prominent during the last few weeks. We have seen during that time the most powerful European nations, professing the glories of the Christian religion, striving, not to assist Japan on her pathway to the highest civilisation, but exerting all their influence and menacing her with diabolical threats to the end that they, in their stupendous greed, may still gain a few more decades of years to milk the bloated cow of Confucius for their own pecuniary benefit."

A correspondent of the New York *World* sneers at Ingersoll for getting information out of encyclopedias and "such like handbooks." Suppose he does. Ingersoll's encyclopedias are up to date. The sneerer's encyclopaedia is an antiquated Jew book, compiled by men who made up in assurance for their want of information.

The Rev. James Hunt, the Rector of Donegore, in Ulster, who said he would like to dynamite the Protestant chapel at Madrid, when brought before the Court of the General Synod last week, made a recantation "because ordered by the Court." Mr. Campbell, Q.C., contended that the recantation was insincere, and ought to be refused; but Lord Justice Fitzgibbon held that the Court could not enter into the question of sincerity or insincerity without trying the defendant for a new offence. The *Belfast News-Letter* says: "There must be some defect in the legal procedure of the Church which enables Mr. Hunt to continue to hold the position of Rector of Donegore."

The steeple of St. Nicholas's Cathedral, Newcastle-on-Tyne, needs repair, and counsel says that the Corporation is responsible for the expenses. It seems to us that St. Nicholas should repair his own church, or induce his friends to raise a subscription.

Rev. A. I. Steyler loudly complains in the *Cape Argus* of the growing desecration of the Sabbath. People out there are actually going in for entertainments on the Lord's Day. "Cannot they rest satisfied," asks this sky-pilot, "with six days for the pursuance of wealth and pleasure?" Which, being interpreted, means: Can't they let the clergy have one day all to themselves? Free Trade won't do in religion, anyway.

In a prominent position on the wall of a house of refreshment in North London is displayed the following: "Happy is the people whose God is the Lord." The effect is somewhat spoiled by the proximity of this warning in large type: "Patrons are requested to keep a sharp eye on their overcoats and umbrellas."

The priests of the shrine at Bansi (India) found one morning recently that the god, Mahadeo, was missing. Search was made, and the god discovered in a shawl beside a tank. Their first impression was that a miracle had been vouchsafed, which would bring grist to the priestly mill. This idea was dispelled when it was discovered that the god had lost his gold cuirass, his silver throne, and all his jewellery.

A Kansas "mejum" has published a pretended letter from the spirit of Horace Seaver, late editor of the *Boston Investigator*, addressed to the former proprietor of that paper, Mr. J. P. Mendum, telling him his wish to make that paper the organ of spiritual philosophy. The joke is, Mr. Seaver died in 1889; the message came on March 3, 1895, Mr. Mendum having died on January 11, 1891. The spirit message says: "Keep a more determined will on your health. The longer you remain on earth the better will I be pleased, and the better will it be for you." Evidently the Kansas "mejum" had not heard of the death of Mr. J. P. Mendum.

A terrible cyclone passed over a portion of Kansas, in the vicinity of Wichita, on the 1st inst., leaving death and desolation in its trail. The horrified people saw the approach of the destroyer, and prayed most fervently for deliverance; but the demon of the storm, the instrument of God's wrath, as churchmen call such afflictions, swept right on over their prostrate forms. A teacher in a district school saw the impending danger. With the little brood under her charge she fled from the line of destruction. Looking

back a minute later, the school-house had utterly disappeared; but, relying on her own strength and energies, the dear children were safe. Moral: Don't stop to pray to any God when danger threatens, but, in Western parlance, "get up and get."—*Progressive Thinker*.

The Rev. Mr. Macaskill, of Dingwall, brought the heresies of Professor Drummond's *Ascent of Man* before the Free Church Assembly at Edinburgh. He showed that the teaching of Professor Drummond, who, he said, would send us to look for our ancestry among "vile baboons and horrid gorillas," was quite incompatible with belief in the Bible. A motion for a judicial investigation into the teaching of the book was negatived, the Assembly being well aware that an investigation means badly in the long run for their own claims and those of their fetish book.

The Presbyterians in America, in their General Assembly at Pittsburgh, have also been troubled with the heresy of Dr. Briggs; but they shrink from expulsion, and the body is virtually deserting the Westminster Confession of Faith.

The *Boston Investigator* says: "A country judge in Hungary gave a decision a few days ago of which Solomon himself might be proud. Members of the Nazarene sect in the town of Gyoma requested his Honor to be allowed to crucify one of their number, 'who was a Messiah, and had been called by heaven to save men.' The judge for a moment was dumbfounded. 'Friends,' he replied, after recovering his senses, 'I do not wish to interfere with your religious practices. If your Messiah wishes to be crucified, let him prepare for death. Remember, however, that if he does not rise again in three days, I shall cause every one of you to be hanged.' The Nazarenes, it is needless to add, allowed their chief to live."

The example of Solomon and the patriarchs continues to operate in America, even though Mormon polygamy is stamped out. The *Boston Investigator* says: "The following list of witnesses to the saving power of Jesus' name is sent us by a Georgia correspondent:—Rev. F. B. Taylor, of Alabama, left his wife and ran away, and is now in Bullock county leading a false life; that Rev. Tombs Thomas has three living wives in Alabama, and one in Georgia; that one Sherwood, who goes around selling song books with a band of boys, has several wives; that Rev. S. B. Henderson quit the A. M. E. Church because the bishop would not agree for him to marry again while his first wife was alive; he married again, and now has quit wife No. 2 and gone off with another woman; that Rev. E. J. Smith has deserted his wife in Alabama and gone to the red hills of Georgia."

The same paper mentions that Sam Wah Kee, a converted Chinaman of this city, recently visited China and returned with his third living wife. This came to the ears of his former teachers, and they went to his place in Harrison-avenue to protest. Sam was surprised that exception should be taken to his polygamous tendencies, and he tried to explain that his action was in accordance with the dictates of true religion.

The *Baltimore Herald* says: "Hypocrisy is undoing religion. The scandals in the lives of ministers, particularly, occupy an inordinate amount of space in the daily records of events. In extenuation it may be said that men of the cloth are exposed to greater temptations than others, and that a much higher standard is set for them. But it is also true that they pretend to the attainment of a superior degree of grace, which ought to make them proof against the pitfalls and snares in their path."

A so-called *Story of the Life of Jesus* has been put out, for the young, by Mr. W. L. Sheldon. Mr. Sheldon is the lecturer of the Ethical Society at St. Louis, and the story is "told from an ethical standpoint." This means that the whole of the supernatural and miraculous elements of the Gospels are carefully eliminated. The angels that appeared to Mary and Joseph, to the shepherds, and to Jesus himself, the temptation of Jesus, the appearance of the risen Jesus to his sorrowing followers, all were dreams, illusions. The darkness at the crucifixion was simply the oncoming of night. When Jesus said "Peace, be still," it was the troubled minds of his disciples, not the waves of the sea, that were quieted.

This may be an "ethical" rendering of the Gospel stories, but, assuredly, it is not a rational and fair one. *Public Opinion*, of New York, remarks: "It is simply impossible that the New Testament record should be even approximately correct unless it is inspired; and to reject the theory of inspiration, and then proceed dogmatically to relate, in matter-of-fact detail, what Jesus did and said and thought, is certainly anything but reasonable and consistent. And such a course is the more to be deprecated because the book is especially designed for children, who will, of course, take everything in its most literal sense, and will never regard it,

even if the author so intended it—though he evidently does not—as a historical and biographical romance, a 'Ben-Hur' sort of story from an ethical standpoint.

"Moreover, viewed in its purely secular and educational aspect, the book must be even more strongly condemned. To give the child his first important lesson in biography and history after this fashion is to risk vitiating his whole attitude towards history. It is demoralising to the youthful mind to treat it in this way. Every sort of teaching that tends to give the child a wrong attitude towards facts, everything that does not directly tend to cultivate and strengthen his ability to weigh and sift evidence and to reach a reasonable conclusion, is both unjust to the child and dangerous to the social order."

A similar work has been put out here by the Rev. Walter Lloyd, entitled *The Galilean*. It is founded on the altogether false assumption that the truth can be obtained from ancient records by simply omitting from them all that is inconsistent with modern knowledge. Mr. Lloyd ascribes to the Church, and not to the Gospels, all that he objects to, forgetting that we derive the Gospels themselves from the Church.

MR. PUTNAM'S ENGAGEMENTS.

MR. CHARLES WATTS has made the following lecturing engagements for Mr. S. P. Putnam:—

June 9, Glasgow; 10 and 11, Aberdeen; 13 and 14, Dundee; 16, Edinburgh; 23, Manchester; 24, Derby; 30, Sheffield.

July 6, Chester-le-Street; 7, Newcastle-on-Tyne; 14 Bristol; 16 and 17, Plymouth; 21, Birmingham.

August 11, Failsworth; 18, Leicester.

Mr. Putnam will return to New York on Sept. 7, therefore friends who have not engaged him should communicate with Mr. Watts at once. Societies near any of the above towns requiring week-night lectures should arrange for Mr. Putnam to visit them when he is in their district on the Sunday.

Did Christ Predict his Resurrection?

If one conclusion from the records be more certain than another, it is that Christ's most intimate friends and disciples, even the twelve, looked upon his Crucifixion as the termination of his career, the prostration and crushing of all their hopes, the end of all things as far as their faith and future were concerned. They not only had no expectation of their Lord's Resurrection; they had plainly never dreamt of such a thing—the bare idea of it appears never to have crossed their minds; the rumor of the occurrence, when reported to them, "seemed to them as idio tales"; nay, they had the greatest difficulty in realising the fact even when Jesus appeared to them. Now, is it credible—is it even conceivable—that this should have been their state of mind if the Resurrection had been repeatedly foretold to them by their beloved Master, and specifically as the sequel of the Crucifixion? Could the previous announcement of so astounding an event have failed to create the most intense excitement at the time, and the most vivid expectation, after the Crucifixion had already three days previously so impressively recalled those (alleged) predictions of his sufferings and death, with which the prophecy of his rising from the dead was, according to the Evangelists, so inextricably mingled? I confess it appears to me simply inconceivable. If Christ did so utter himself, wishing thereby to prepare the minds of his disciples, the least that can be said is, that he entirely failed in his purpose.—*W. R. Greg, "Miscellaneous Essays," pp. 235, 236.*

For aught I see, though the Mosaic part of Judaism be abolished among Christians, the Pharisaical part of it never will.—*Rev. Robert South, D.D.*

If there were no preachers, we would know nothing of God; if no mediums, nothing of spirits. Our knowledge in this line is strictly limited to terrestrial beings.—*Otto Wettstein.*

In Italy the Bible is just this: for priests, a sacred text; for infidels, a book full of obscurities and contradictions; for the learned, an historical document, to be used with great caution; for lovers of literature, a collection of very fine specimens of Oriental poetic eloquence. But it never has been, and never will be, a fruitful inspirer of men's life.—*Professor Angelo de Gubernatis.*

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, June 9, Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, London, E.C. : 7.30, "The Romance of the Twelve Apostles."

June 16, Hall of Science.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—June 23 and 30, Hall of Science, London. July 28, August 4 and 11, Camberwell.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent to him (if a reply is required, a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed) at 81 Effra-road, Brixton, London, S.W.

E. SMEDLEY.—(1) The quotations from Gibbon in *Crimes of Christianity* are taken from the best edition—Milman's, re-edited by Dr. Smith—in 8 vols. (Murray). Perhaps your reference is to another chapter, or another part of the same chapter. (2) The quotations from Justin and Tertullian are from the translations in the Ante-Nicene Library. Yours is a different translation and would not correspond verbatim, though the substance should be the same. (3) Mr. Watts's quotations from Renan's *Life of Jesus* were taken from the old Trübner edition. The cheap translation to which you refer is one that we have not examined. Trübner's books can generally be relied upon.

O. N. WILD.—We commented on the case as it stood, and could not well foresee what was to be disclosed at the next hearing. And our comment stands good, for the Catholic prosecutors were then no wiser than we. Thanks for your trouble.

JOHN SMITH.—We do not know Mr. W. Mawer's present address.

A. LIDDLE.—Thanks. We agree with you that letters like "Aldebaran's" in the *Glasgow Weekly Herald* are most serviceable to the Freethought cause. The appearance of such letters, in such a paper, is indeed a pregnant sign of the times.

BELLEBUB.—Sorry we cannot find room for letters on Mr. Engstrom's unsatisfactory reply. Thanks for cutting. We note that the Portsmouth Branch was twitted with giving nothing to hospitals just when it was taking up a collection for them.

T. RILEY (Halifax).—Sorry to hear that you endorse Mr. Haines's letter.

H. G. SHEPHERD.—Thanks. It shall have a paragraph in our next.

E. HOWARD.—See paragraph.

OWING to the holidays, our correspondence this week falls within narrow limits.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Truthseeker—Crescent—Liberator—Western Figaro—Church Reformer—Newcastle Evening Chronicle—Cape Argus—Bristol Mercury—Western Daily Press—Freidenker—Secular Thought—Isle of Man Times—Freedom—Liberty—Two Worlds—Progressive Thinker—New York Literary Digest—Bolton Journal and Guardian—De Dageraad—Light—Belfast News-Letter—Post—Christian Globe—Anti-Gambling Bulletin—Twentieth Century.

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

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

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

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

CORRESPONDENCE should reach us not later than Tuesday if a reply is desired in the current issue. Otherwise the reply stands over till the following week.

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

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.

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

SUGAR PLUMS.

MR. G. W. FOOTE occupies the London Hall of Science platform this evening (June 9). His subject will be "The Romance of the Twelve Apostles."

The National Secular Society's Annual Conference was a great success. It was pleasant to meet delegates who had come all the way from Glasgow, though it was strange to see no representative from Plymouth. The large St. James's Hall was tastefully decorated with flags and flowers, thanks to the forethought and exertions of the local Reception Committee. Several ladies graced the platform with their presence.

As we predicted, there was a great supply of speaking talent. Messrs. Foote, Watts, Putnam, Moss, Cohen, Heaford, and Gilmour were all in fine form at the evening meeting, when addresses were delivered to the general public. One of the best speeches was that of Mr. Touzeau Parris, whose attendance had been doubtful until within a few days of the Conference. Mr. Watts was last on the list of speakers, and as the hour was getting late he had to speak *too* briefly, much to the regret of his many admirers. Mr. Foote had to be equally brief. Mr. Putnam had the most time allowed him, as was natural, and he kept the audience well alive to the end.

All the old Vice-Presidents were re-elected. The new ones are a welcome accession to the list. Mr. Foote was re-elected President with unanimity and enthusiasm. In the next number of the *Freethinker* he will address the Secular party, and explain what he briefly sketched at the Conference as to his immediate intentions with respect to the organisation and conduct of our propaganda.

A good report of the evening meeting appeared in the *Bristol Mercury*, and a briefer report in the *Daily Press*. This is an improvement on last year, when the Conference was practically tabooed by the Liverpool press.

Mr. Putnam delivers three lectures to-day (June 9) at Glasgow. During the week he visits Dundee and Aberdeen, and next Sunday he lectures at Edinburgh. We have not the slightest doubt that he will receive a splendid welcome from our Scottish friends. The hope we have to express is that they will bring their more orthodox friends to his meetings.

The *Truthseeker* (New York) for May 25 has arrived at our office. It contains the first of Mr. Putnam's letters, giving an account of his voyage across the Atlantic, and ending with the following sentences: "Yesterday at Southampton I was met by Watts and Foote. It was truly like a wonderful dream. It was a royal day, indeed, and I can only suggest the grand inspiration of the occasion. Next week I shall have much to write of our splendid English allies. My heart is full of this beautiful welcome to new shores and new work."

Our "sub," Mr. J. M. Wheeler, had rather a bad time on Monday night, in common with a good many other London friends returning by excursion train from the Conference. The Railway Company landed them on the Paddington platform about one o'clock on Tuesday morning, when the metropolitan traffic had all ceased. Mr. Wheeler had to walk to Holloway, and get up in the morning to write the Conference report. Before breakfast, as luck would have it, the postman brought him a Mahatma letter from India. It is written in Sanskrit, and our "sub" has to get it translated. This is rather rough. Mahatmas, who know everything, should at least condescend to be intelligible.

The envelope of this Mahatma letter is a common English one, and the handwriting, which is disguised, is English too. No doubt the envelope was sent out *addressed* to India, and posted there by the Mahatma—with his letter inside.

We have been pressing our "sub" to start a new Theosophical section himself. Everybody does that who gets Mahatma letters, and we don't see why Mr. Wheeler shouldn't have his share of the business while there is any money left in it. But somehow he doesn't take kindly to the idea. Ah, Mr. Wheeler, you'll never make a fortune; not in this world, anyhow.

Our gallant contemporary, the *Church Reformer*, edited by the Rev. Stewart D. Headlam, is a paper we admire, though we are opposed to most of its principles. Mr. Headlam is such a "good fellow" that you cannot help liking him, and respecting him, even when you think him wrongheaded. It was an act of generosity on his part to go bail for Oscar Wilde. "I was surety," Mr. Headlam writes, "not for his character, but for his appearance in court to stand his trial." Mr. Headlam knew little of Oscar Wilde, having only met him twice; but he felt that the man's chance of a fair trial was imperilled, and he resolved "on public grounds" to let him have an opportunity of self-defence.

The Failsworth Secular Sunday-school will "procesh" on Whit-Friday (June 7). Headed by the Sowerby Bridge Friendly Brass Band, the young people and their teachers will start from the school at 10 o'clock. There will be singing by the choir as usual. In the afternoon the party will adjourn to a field, where sports, games, etc., will be provided. In the evening there will be a tea party held in the school. Some of our readers in the Manchester district will probably go to Failsworth to "assist" at this interesting function.

We see, not from an official source, but from our foreign exchanges, that the International Congress of Freethinkers is to be held at Brussels on September 22, 23, and 24. The secretary of the Federation is M. J. Dons, 42 Rue du Fort, Saint Gilles, Brussels.

Mr. Moncure D. Conway, the latest editor and biographer of Thomas Paine, contributes a letter to the *Athenaeum* on the Junius controversy. Mr. Conway refers to the curious theory of a certain school of American Liberals, headed by Colonel W. H. Burr, that Paine was Junius; a theory which is utterly untenable on the face of it, for the styles of the two writers are very different, and it is pretty certain that Paine did not possess the exact classical scholarship of the writer of the famous Letters. Besides, as Mr. Conway points out, Paine wrote of the "brilliant pen" of Junius, which he could hardly have done if he had been the author. He also wrote that the pen of Junius "enraptured without convincing; and though in the plenitude of its rage it might be said to give elegance to bitterness, yet the policy survived the blast." Neither the praise nor the censure is such as a man could well pass upon himself; and it is noticeable that when Paine is writing about Junius his style is as different as possible from that of the Great Unknown.

Félicien David, the composer of "Lalla Roukh" and "Le Desert," and one of the Saint Simonien forerunners at Suez of De Lesseps, has now, our Paris correspondent says, a monument in the cemetery of Le Pecq. His last wish was that no priest should officiate at his funeral. The monument, unveiled yesterday, is by M. Chapu. Few persons were present at the ceremony, but the pedestal of the bust was covered with roses, placed there by some friendly hand. —*Daily News*.

The *English Mechanic* (May 24), in a leading article, estimates the age of the earth at about twenty millions of years, and says that "the age of man runs into three hundred thousand years, and probably a hundred thousand or so more."

The proposed New Utah Constitution not only prohibits Bible-instituted polygamy, but provides for woman suffrage.

Under the heading "Literary Notes," the *Conservative Morning* devotes considerable space to Colonel Ingersoll's Home Life. It says: "Colonel Robert Green Ingersoll, the American Agnostic, lives in Fifth-avenue, New York, with his wife and two daughters, Eva and Maud. The elder daughter is now Mrs. Ralston Brown, and she has two children. Mrs. Ingersoll's mother is a member of the family, as are also her sister, Mrs. Farrell, and Mr. and Miss Farrell. This makes a family of eleven, and, excepting the two little children who are not yet old enough to solve the problems, they are followers of the Ingersoll anti-religious idea."

A correspondent, who recently visited Colonel Ingersoll, thus describes his daily habits: "He always rises at seven o'clock, shaves himself, and takes a cold bath with the regularity of clockwork. The breakfast hour is eight o'clock, and usually the whole family sits down at the table. There is no end to the conversation at that family board. All there are readers and thinkers. The Colonel enters into all of the family talk, whether it be about politics, music, the stage, some new actor, a recent book, a question in finance or law, or the doings of his baby grandchildren. Half an hour is usually given to the morning meal, and the next thirty minutes the Colonel spends in looking over his letters and glancing at the papers. He is an astonishingly rapid reader. Half-past nine finds him in his law office at 45 Wall-street."

Colonel Ingersoll holds the belief that no man's life should be written while he is alive. A record of the man's daily life is kept by his private secretary, as well as his important utterances and writings upon notable subjects. Scarcely a day goes by without bringing to the surface someone who desires to convert the Colonel. Whether the caller be a gentleman or a lady, the Colonel is always ready to be seen, and he listens politely.

It is usually five o'clock in the afternoon when the Colonel starts for home. The dinner hour is six, and the two daughters are invariably attired in white for this meal. Two or three times in the week the Colonel and some of the family go to the theatre. During the opera season they are regular attendants, both of the girls being musicians of exceptional ability. The Colonel is a great music-lover, although he is no musician himself.

The Colonel is a great admirer of Shakespeare. He has a collection of various editions of Shakespeare's works which rivals any private collection in the country. Hugo and Dickens are his favorite novelists. *Les Misérables* he

regards as the greatest novel ever written, and *A Tale of Two Cities* is second in his affections. Wagner is his favorite composer.

Mr. Herbert Spencer has been elected an honorary member of the Philosophical Class by the Vienna Academy of Sciences. Dr. Mommsen, the great German historian, who gave the *coup de grâce* to the "history" of the third Gospel as to the birth of Christ, has also been elected an honorary member by the French Academy of Letters and Inscriptions. This is a welcome sign that the bitter feeling in France against Germany is abating, at least enough to permit recognition of the fact that science, like art, is international.

Humanity, the journal of the Humanitarian League, edited by Mr. H. S. Salt, is now in its fourth number. The June issue contains an important article on the "Report from the Departmental Committee on Prisons," and a stimulating appeal in relation thereto by Edward Carpenter. A paper on Public Control of Hospitals is contributed by Edward Maitland. We wish this modest little journal every success. Should any of our readers desire to become members of the Humanitarian League, they can address their communications to its office, 79A Great Queen-street, London, W.C. The minimum subscription is half-a-crown per year.

A written debate "About the Holy Bible" is to take place in the columns of the *Freethought Magazine*, of Chicago, between the Rev. J. R. Kaye, Ph.D., and Professor Felix L. Oswald. The latter gentleman has been for years a contributor to the *Popular Science Monthly*, and is author of *The Secret of the East*, *The Bible of Nature*, and other works. He can be trusted to worthily uphold the Freethought position.

The *Blue Grass Blade*, of Lexington, Kentucky, edited by C. C. Moore, an Infidel Prohibitionist, gives a good portrait of Mrs. Helen Gardener, the authoress of *Men, Women, and Gods*, and of several Freethought novels.

Alluding to his prosecution, Mr. Moore says: "They didn't merely 'threaten' me with a prosecution for blasphemy, but they put me in jail for blasphemy before they prosecuted me, and then prosecuted me; and when I beat them in the lower court, they took it to the Court of Appeals, and it's there now; and as soon as they can get to my case, some time in forty or fifty years from now, they will probably send me to jail, or the penitentiary, or hang me. In the meanwhile, however, I shall continue to blaspheme."

The *Independent Pulpit*, of Waco, Texas, in its May number, reprints from our columns Mr. Wheeler's article on "The Moral Claims of Christianity." The other contents of Mr. J. D. Shaw's paper are good, Mr. J. P. Richardson writing on "A Change of Heart," and Mr. C. L. Abbott on "The Philosophy and Development of Religion."

The Italian Freemasons and Freethinkers will make a special celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the entrance of the Italian troops into Rome. The poor Pope, who has never reconciled himself to the Papacy losing the temporal power, although the States of the Church were a standing disgrace to Roman Catholicism, will, it is said, resent the national celebration as "injurious and insulting to the Pontiff and the Holy See."

The American Protective Association, a body formed to protect the interests of native-born Americans against foreign Catholics, has decided to go in for the taxation of all Church property and the absolute separation of Church and State.

The separation of Church and State in America. Some will say, Why, there is no connection. There is no established Church in the States, but there is State patronage of religion in many ways, one being the appointment of chaplains.

In Texas, for instance, the *Waco Daily News* says, "each branch of the State legislature is allowed a chaplain who gets \$5 per diem for opening the daily sessions with prayer. That makes \$10 a day which the taxpayer puts up for the good of the legislative soul—with cotton at 4 cents and a half million dollar hole in the treasury that must be plugged by his pocket-book. The average length of these invocations is two minutes. That is at the rate of \$1,500 a day for ten hours' work."

The teacher was impressing upon her class her notion of the design argument. Providence had given feathers to birds, wool to the sheep, fur to the beaver. "Now, children, tell me what has a dog got?" Tommy held up his hand, and then answered: "Our dog has got pups."

THE N.S.S. CONFERENCE.

(Continued from p. 358.)

AFTERNOON SITTING.

Mr. SHALLARD moved, on behalf of his Branch: "That no person be eligible as Vice-President who has not been a member for five years," and accepted an addition suggested by Mr. Cohen, "except on the express recommendation of the Executive," with which the motion was accepted by the Conference.

The motion of the Rochdale Branch, "That from this date no member shall be permitted to take part in and vote at the meetings of the Executive Council but the properly-appointed delegates from the Branches; the President, Treasurer, and Secretary alone excepted," fell through for want of a seconder; and its fourth motion for a monthly official statement was also, after some discussion, rejected in favor of the previous question, moved by Mr. GILMOUR, who characterised the proposal as costly and impracticable, while the demand for the list of persons receiving grants from the Benevolent Fund was "abominable."

Mr. JAS. ANDERSON moved: "That no Vice-President shall henceforth hold any paid office in the Society." Mr. BOORMAN seconded, as a matter of form, though he did not see any particular harm in the present arrangement.

Mr. FOOTE said obviously one person was aimed at by the motion. That person was the lady on his left. Miss Vance was Vice-President before she was appointed Secretary. She was rather more than less qualified on that account, and would rather forego the post of Secretary than her honorable position as Vice-President. He thought the motion hardly decorous.

Mr. S. R. THOMPSON, Mr. E. G. TAYLOR, Mr. COHEN, and Mr. BATER having spoken against the resolution, it was lost, one hand only being raised on its behalf.

Mr. WARD moved on behalf of the Finsbury Park Branch: "That an Organising Secretary be appointed by the Society, who shall devote his time to interviewing persons known to be in sympathy with Secular principles, with a view to securing their adhesion to the Society or their financial support, obtaining as far as possible the renewed support of lapsed members, and furthering the interests of the Society in any other manner the Executive may deem expedient."

Mr. GILMOUR said the motion in the abstract was excellent; but how was it to be carried? In London itself there was a field large enough for such a man, while in the provinces a week in each town would not cover each of the Branches.

Mr. FOOTE thought that the motion might be allowed to stand as a suggestion to the Executive. Mr. WITBY, of Bath, said he thought this motion a most progressive one, and would relieve the President of some of his work. (Mr. FOOTE dissented.) If adopted, he should be prepared to make a substantial contribution to the fund.

Mr. WARD having acceded to his motion being taken as a recommendation only, it was carried with but one dissident.

Mr. COHEN, in moving "That properly-qualified speakers be sent by the Council of the N.S.S. into different districts for organising and lecturing purposes, and that a Committee be appointed by this Conference to draw up a scheme to that end, and submit the same to the Executive Council," said that at present there was plenty of chaos and very little system. Hotel keepers and railway companies profited, but little lasting good was done by spasmodic efforts. He dwelt on the advantages of a lecturer having a district where he understood the local needs, and of being able to meet emergencies at once as they arise. This he illustrated by his Tyneside experience. He thought the scheme would bring both men and money to the Society. Mr. KEAST (Bristol) approved of the resolution, but wished to add the words, "and Branches."

Mr. WATTS asked if this would not clash with the President's scheme.

Mr. BOORMAN (Chatham) would like to have more of a detailed statement; generalities were not of much use. Mr. Foote had intimated his intention of dealing with the whole subject. He was at a loss to see how the motion would prove of benefit.

Messrs. TAYLOR and PEGG both considered the motion valuable.

Mr. COHEN observed that he had not given details to avoid discussion on exterior issues. He thought the place for details would be a committee. They should work not to get big special audiences, but steady congregations.

The motion was carried, and Messrs. Cohen, Forder, Ward, Pegg, and S. R. Thompson elected on the committee.

The motion of the Islington Branch, "That a total abstinence section be formed in connection with the Society," was withdrawn on the explanation of the President that a similar motion had been carried at the Newcastle Conference, only the teetotalers had failed to carry it out.

It was proposed and seconded that numbers 17 and 18 on the Agenda be taken together.

The first was the motion by Nottingham Branch: "To add the following to the Society's 'Immediate Practical Objects':—(a) The promotion of the fullest inquiry into all matters affecting the well-being of Humanity, especially in regard to topics (e.g., the Population Question) which it may commonly be the fashion to evade or suppress. (b) The encouragement of a more general interest in social and political problems."

The second was the motion by Battersea Branch: "That the N.S.S. shall engage in real Secular work by advocating political and social reforms, with a special view to ameliorating the wretched condition of our fellow men."

These having been briefly proposed, Mr. THOMPSON (Wood Green) held that Branches should confine themselves to their own Freethought work, leaving other questions to other societies.

Mr. E. G. TAYLOR said he should speak "Yes," though instructed by his Branch to vote "No." The Manchester Branch had widely circulated a leaflet showing their relation to social matters. The Church, and even General Booth, was doing this; and he urged the Conference to show that their attitude was a positive and constructive one.

Mr. WATTS proposed, as an amendment: "That it is desirable that this Conference should appoint a committee of three, or more, persons, to draw up an authoritative and more elaborate statement than the one we possess at present, dealing with the human needs, and with the relation of Secular teachings to the social, political, and religious questions of the day."

Mr. BOORMAN said he should like to see elaborated something like a creed upon which all could agree.

Mr. PEGG (Manchester) thought that what we have in our Immediate Practical Objects rendered this not necessary. The immediate work—and there were too few to do it—was anti-theology, and he thought that work better kept distinct.

Mr. TOUZEAU PARRIS said that, though anti-theology was our object, we fought that the world might be better. There were many views as to how to do this; but let each of us try to make the world better our own way. We go against theology because we find it a hindrance to progress. We fight the Bible because we want a better world, and he thought we should make this known.

Mr. COHEN thought that, as with teetotalism, they might form Socialist sections.

The PRESIDENT: Which might break the Society up.

Mr. SHALLARD (West London) held there was great danger unless we adopt the plan of keeping to our Freethought work. His experience was that, when other questions were brought in, it was to the neglect of Freethought, and he contended that all the power we have should be thrown into the subject of anti-theology.

The PRESIDENT said our bond was a Freethought bond, and it was understood that in drawing up the list of immediate practical objects nothing should be incorporated which was any matter of contention in the party. It was rather late in the day to ask the Society to pay attention to the population question, on account of which it had suffered so much odium. He thought Mr. Watts's idea of a document showing how the Freethought view contrasted with the religious view might be useful.

The amendment was then put and carried, becoming the substantive resolution, and Messrs. Watts, Parris, Moss, and Wheeler were appointed as committee.

The motion by the Executive, "That in all elections to public bodies Secularists should endeavor to put forward candidates in distinct sympathy with Secular principles," was spoken to by Mr. MOSS, who adverted to the advantages of having men who held our views and are proud to hold them upon public bodies, and mentioned his having been proposed as a people's churchwarden on the Camberwell Vestry, which gave him an opportunity of declaring his sentiments.

The next resolution, "That strenuous efforts be made to get the Education Department to change the code so that the three quarters of an hour now devoted to Scripture instruction in Board schools be utilised in teaching elementary science," was also moved by Mr. MOSS, who thought it possible that some modification might be obtained from Mr. Aeland. Mr. SAMSON seconded, and the motion was carried.

On the motion of the Manchester Branch, "That this Society take energetic measures for the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws," Mr. E. G. TAYLOR read the following letter from Mr. S. STOREY, M.P.: "DEAR SIR,—In an ordinary year we might have done something with the Bill, but the Government demands upon the time this year are, and are likely to be, so great that all I can fairly promise is to keep it before Parliament, and await a better time for carrying it into law. To promise more would be to mislead you, and I cannot do that, nor would you desire it.—Yours very truly, S. STOREY." Mr. TAYLOR thought the whole Society should take this matter up. Each candidate should be interviewed and written to. Public opinion was ripe, and he thought it would only need a favorable election to carry the ship right over the bar. The resolution was carried.

The next, that the Society cease to issue members' certificates, was spoken against by Mr. THOMPSON and Mr. PARRIS, who alluded to how prized they were by some members, and was negatived by a large majority. The final motion about arrangements for the Annual Conference was allowed to drop, as founded on a misconception.

The time allotted having already been exceeded, the President declared the Conference closed.

EVENING MEETING.

A large number of ladies graced the platform at the public meeting, and there was a good attendance in the body of the hall.

The PRESIDENT, in a few brief words, introduced each of the speakers, who proved themselves fully entitled to the American designation of orators.

First came Mr. A. B. MOSS, who dealt with the indefinite character of modern Christian teaching and its modifications under the doctrine of evolution. "Do away with the fall of man," he said, "and there is no need for atonement by the blood of Christ. Let the people understand science instead of theology, give them facts instead of fiction, and then we can rear a race fit to make the earth the dreamt-of Paradise."

Mr. J. P. GILMOUR followed in a capital speech, at once humorous, sensible, and, at the close, poetic. He showed the progress of Freethought in Scotland, from the time when even the Rev. Robert Taylor did not cross the Tweed for fear of being shipped off to the hulks at New Holland for fourteen years, to now, when bicycles were a great agency in breaking the Sabbath. They saw in the everyday life of the people a freer and more courageous spirit, and for the state of things Buckle had depicted they had ever a desire for enjoyment, for rational recreation and pleasure. Mr. Gilmour concluded with a fine description of the breaking of the sun through the mist on Goatfell in Arran, which he compared to the progress of the cause in Scotland.

Mr. PARRIS, introduced as a Bristolian, made a fine rousing speech, urging that Freethinkers in good positions in Bristol should express their opinions, not only privately, but openly. The thoughts of our forerunners were now spreading in the Church. Christianity was seventy-five per cent. of orthodoxy kept in the background and twenty-five per cent. of Freethought stolen from us. The Freethought Holy Ghost had enlightened them. He contended that the work of Freethought was joyous and glorious, and urged his hearers to go for the truth, go for the reality, get away from the illusions of the childhood of the world kept up by authority, and to realise true human freedom.

Mr. COHEN spoke of the theological spirit as still venomous. It no longer burns, but bars; no longer fights, but slanders. He fought Christianity because he knew it and its history. It weakens man's intellect by teaching him to depend on revelation. It made the divorce between creed and conduct. To those who could discern the signs of the times, Christianity was passing away like the faiths that had preceded it.

Mr. PUTNAM, President of the American Secular Union, spoke of the work in America in regard to Church taxation, public schools, the attempt to place God in the Constitution, and the Sunday laws. He had hoped to read a letter from Colonel Ingersoll which was on its way. He ventured to prophesy that in the near future they would have the opportunity to welcome the Colonel. Mr. Putnam dwelt on the inefficacy of theology, and closed his address by reciting his poem, "Why Don't He Lend a Hand?"

Mr. HEAFORD, in a brief but energetic speech, spoke of the work of Freethought in hewing the way as pioneers for all classes of thinkers.

Mr. C. WATTS answered the questions, What are we as Secularists? and What we hope to be in future. He extolled the struggle for mental freedom in the past, and drew a contrast between the two armies—one with the banner, "Ignorance is the Mother of Devotion," and that with the inscription, "Knowledge is Power."

The PRESIDENT concluded the proceedings. He spoke of the disabilities of Freethinkers. In America they were striving for complete separation of Church and State. Here they had a bigger Church in a smaller State. To his own personal knowledge, thousands of pounds that would have come to this society had been lost because it was an illegal body. We are robbed, and the robbers insult us afterwards, asking what we do with what is stolen from us. He alluded to Mr. Bradlaugh's prediction that the great fight of the future would be between Catholicism and Freethought, the logical extremes of faith and reason. They, as Freethinkers, must be a fighting party and go on fighting, confident that reason would triumph in the end.

On Monday morning many of the delegates assembled at the hall, and were shown the lions of the city and neighborhood, visiting Clifton Downs, with the camera obscura and caves, or taking a Channel cruise, or going to Cardiff, Weston, Bath, and other places in the vicinity. A general feeling of satisfaction with the Conference, and the arrangements made by the Bristol friends, was expressed.

THE TEMPERANCE MOVEMENT.

It is unfortunate that so many good causes are impeded in some instances, and in others rendered futile, by the thoughtlessness and perversity of their adherents. Not a few estimable movements that have been originated with grievances to redress, or rights and privileges to gain, have failed to accomplish their objects, breaking up hopelessly ere the goal is in sight, owing to the injudiciousness of well-meaning advocates and the misplaced ardor of hair-brained enthusiasts. Particularly true is it that the practical success of what is known in England as the Temperance Movement has not been as extended as it might have been, and that what it has accomplished has been far less than what its early promoters anticipated; the present condition of the country respecting sobriety even evidencing the fact that what improvements in the drinking habits of the people have taken place are traceable to agencies other than, and in some cases in complete contradistinction to, the methods held in favor by teetotal reformers. This is not tantamount to questioning that during, say, the last twenty-five years the temperance army has assumed enormous proportions; that it has been the means of rescuing many inebriates from their folly, and of implanting in the minds of numberless children the virtue of temperance. It has done all this. Moreover, men and women of all shades of opinion give it their sympathetic support. The sight of so many people banded together with such an object undoubtedly exercises a moral influence on the nation, while it has become so potent a political factor in the land that Ministers of State have taken many of its principles and embodied them in legislative proposals. Further, it is not necessary to controvert the contention that, by means of an intricate and far-reaching organisation, the relation of the Temperance Movement to all forms and developments of social life is a critical and important one; nor would it be safe to deny that it has not outlived calumny, and is now enjoying the smiling sanction of the respectable classes. And yet, when all this is readily granted, there remains much to be noticed of the absence of any great and permanently elevating element in the mission of reformation. The party's program betrays the hand of the amateur, the disposition of the coercionist, and the exclusiveness of the narrow-minded. Its propagandists are but little more fortunate in their mode of spreading its gospel, for if they are not committing blazing indiscretions they are often flagrantly disregarding the laws of logic, and they not infrequently allow their ostentatious fervor to carry them from the domain of reason and truth. For much of the abuse showered on temperance advocates to-day they are, in the main, responsible themselves; and their lack of success is attributable to their lack of sense and ingenuity. Having chosen to found their movement on illogical and very controvertible grounds, it is small wonder that their principles are so discredited and the cause pulverised with ridicule.

Like religion, the temperance folk think that temperance should have "foundations," and in their anxious search for authority they have unluckily chosen that text-book of every creed, doctrine, fad, and craze—the Bible. Following the example of apostles of liberty, who have sought in its pages the gospel of freedom, and of slave-owners, who have found their traffic in human bodies sanctioned by the same holy writ; of lovers of peace, who declare that the precious volume breathes the spirit of brotherhood, and of fierce militarists, who gain satisfaction from the contemplation that its God was a god of war, who trumpeted his mission as being that to bring the sword; of the poor, who seek solace in its blessing, and of the rich, who aver that the Lord is on the side of the mighty; of the modern saviors of womanhood, who see salvation in the motherhood of Jesus, and of their opponents, who cite St. Paul's condemnation of woman, the high priests of temperance have gone to this book and built upon it the temple of their creed. No more striking evidence of inanity is needed than their incongruous attachment to the Bible on the ground of its injunctions to abstemiousness. Why, from drunken Noah, who imbibed so deeply that his sons were compelled to envelope him in a cloak, down to the New Testament Jesus, who turned brewer at the Galilean feast, and St. Paul, who advised his young friend Timothy to "take a little wine for his stomach's sake," there is

absolutely nothing in the book enjoining the benefits of abstinence from intoxicants; nothing advocating the morality of sobriety and the desirability of temperate habits. On the other hand, its leading characters are intemperate men and women, full of greed for wine, loving dissipation, and rejoicing in freaks of intoxication. When a body of would-be reformers wish to be taken seriously, and given an attentive audience, they must make their premise at least reasonably legitimate; their foundations must be strong, and their deductive contentions logical. To try to advance temperance on scriptural or religious grounds is as nonsensical as it is paltry; it is playing a game which can be only witnessed with mixed amusement and contempt.

In other ways have the temperance people signally failed to turn to good account an unprecedented opportunity. By their alliance with the clerical party they have robbed their movement of no small part of its sincerity, and imported into it a spirit of hypocrisy and deception. Clergymen of all denominations are appealed to for support to the cause. They lend their kindly patronage, attended, it is true, with beneficent results in many cases, but too often accompanied with the flavor that attends the advocacy of their religion—the flavor of mere professionalism, and consequently there are many preachers of total abstinence whose lives are in complete variance with the principles they teach. Since the assumption of sympathy with the Temperance Movement has become an affair of respectability, it has placed many wine-bibbing people in awkward situations. Thanks to the Church, they are heroically rescued from the dilemma, provision being made by that august body for their membership in the Church of England "Temperance" Society as passive adherents to temperance principles, which is to say that they extend their pity and condemnation to the unfortunate poor, whose intemperate habits are often the effects of unfavorable environment, while they themselves indulge in endless guzzling without injury to their consciences. When what should be an unsectarian movement is bound up with religious organisations, it becomes contaminated, its energy is sapped, and its power for good rendered impotent.

Recent developments should certainly convince those in authority that the assistance of the clergy is not an advantageous help. In following their ordinary avocations, these professors of religion acquire such a cultured disregard for truth, and such a supreme taste for calumny, that when they are called to figure in other departments of life their distinguishing characteristics still cling to them. Thus, during the last few weeks, we have seen a publican named Pitt bringing to book a parson named Josephs for a libellous attack on him and his business house. Of course, as one satirical journalist has already pointed out, it was not altogether unnatural that a Joseph should exhibit antipathy to a Pitt; but, for all that, most rational people would think that his hatred might have stopped short of an attempt to ruin the man and his trade. And the humble apology that another clerical, the Rev. G. Wakeford, of Liverpool, was compelled to make the other day, withdrawing his accusations against a political club of that town, which he had described in his pulpit as a drinking and gambling hell, shows again that clergymen are far more likely to do harm than good to the temperance crusade, which, at any rate, should be conducted with seeming decorum. Beer and Bible, and the Church and "the trade," have been long enough in close alliance to beguile an ordinary observer of the real sincerity of the Church on matters concerning temperance. Nor are the actions of those men of God who in the late severe weather forbade their parishioners to go to a public-house for free soup calculated to enhance the confidence of the general public in the teetotal party. While so much time and effort are being worse than wasted in rancorous contests with publicans, and in other petty disputes, a glorious opportunity of accomplishing something is being neglected. The excessive indulgence in strong drink continues a blight on the health and prosperity of the country, in spite of the prevalence of religion and its alleged wondrous properties of redemption. From their seats of authority the judges are reiterating their declarations that four-fifths of the crime of the country is directly traceable to drink. Social reformers state that, were it not for the degradation of the people by the demoralising influence of intoxicating liquors, the social

problem would be less cumbrous and better able to be dealt with. There is scarcely an adult in the land who cannot bear some testimony to the pernicious effects of the consumption of the fluid; for, without borrowing the language of the temperance tub-thumper and speaking of the "wretched homes," "brutal fathers," "beaten wives," "starving children," etc., it can be averred that much misery and much crime are brought about by this cause. And yet the temperance folk do little but spin arguments and talk words; they delight in shadowy dreams which will never be realised, and create an Utopia which will never be effected.

Impracticable ambitions are but hindrances to a radical movement like that of temperance. To secure success, cant and hypocrisy must be cast off; wisdom must be accepted from the learned, whose knowledge of human kind and natural laws has been acquired by life-long labor, and has not been shaped by the emotions; and more account must be taken of circumstances. The whole question is a deep and perplexing one. Inebriety is now getting to be more regarded in the light of a disease, and the less the idea is current that people get intoxicated for the fun of the thing, or mere cussedness, and the more the evil is dealt with from a matter-of-fact and scientific standpoint, the sooner will there be a perceptible diminution of the national drink bill. The tendencies of education and enlightenment are against all manner of intemperateness. Salvation may, perhaps, be nearer at hand when the sciences of physiology and hygiene are taught the children in the schools in place of the "instruction" in the book which may be called the guide to drunkenness, and when the ceremonies of the Churches are abolished that require special brands of wine for their proper performance.

F. WILSON.

CORRESPONDENCE.

WHERE IS GOD?

"The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God" (Psalms xiv. 1; liii. 1).

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Mr. G. L. Mackenzie, and other writers in the *Freethinker*, want an answer to the above momentous question. I only desire a brief space to vindicate David's answer. David, if we have any belief in Scripture history at all, was in a position to know. David had himself brought the deity from Baale to Jerusalem (2 Samuel vi.). God was in the ark "dwelling between the cherubims" (verse 2). When David had got him safe there he "danced before the Lord with all his might." His wife reproved him for uncovering himself in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, but never thought of questioning the existence of God, or David might have called her a fool indeed. God at that time was safe in an ark. What has become of him since? The only information I have been enabled to gather is from Bishop Wilson, who thinks that Jeremiah, at the destruction of Jerusalem, carried the ark to the halls of Tara, in Ireland. Who will subscribe to dig it out?

ANGLO-ISRAELITE.

PROFANE JOKES.

Aunt—"If you are a bad boy, you won't go to heaven."
Tommy—"But I want to go where you go!"

Jack—"Well, Nellie, what book is that you are reading?"
Nellie—"The Brand of Cain." Jack—"Oh, a very able book that."

Clara—"Your new minister is a much younger man than the old one, is he not?" Phoebe—"Yes. What made you ask?" Clara—"I heard you had applied for a front pew."

"Jonah," expostulated the whale, "do keep quiet."
"Certainly," answered the famous man, "now that I know where I am. I wasn't sure but I had been caught in a folding bed, doncher know."

"What is the meaning of a backbiter?" asked a gentleman at a Sunday-school examination. This was a puzzler. It went all round the class until it came to a simple urchin, who said: "Perhaps it's a flea."

Penelope—"Well, Bishop, it seems to me there is not much difference between salvation and perdition; only a syllable."
Bishop Hellmuth—"My dear young lady, how can you say that?" Penelope—"Why, it's either eternal bliss or eternal blisters."

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.): 7, musical selections; 7.30 G. W. Foote, "The Romance of the Twelve Apostles."
BATTERSEA SECULAR HALL (back of Battersea Park Station): 8.30, social gathering for N.S.S. members and friends. Tuesday, at 9, dance.
CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, Stanley Jones, "Miracles and Science."
EAST LONDON (Swaby's Coffee House, 103 Mile-end-road, E.): 8, F. Lassazie, "Arbitration or War?"
ISLINGTON (19 Alwyne-road, Canonbury): 3, adjourned quarterly meeting.
WEST LONDON BRANCH ("Sun in Splendor," Portobello-road, Notting Hill Gate): Monday, at 8.30, special general meeting.
WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Princes' Hall, Piccadilly): 11.15, Dr. Stanton Coit, "John Bunyan and Puritan Thought."
WEST HAM SECULAR ETHICAL SOCIETY (61 West Ham-lane): 7, E. E. Sims, "The Case against Theism."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, A. G. Hertzfeld, "Belief and Morals."
CAMBERWELL (Station-road): 11.30, C. James, "The Philosophy of Atheism."
CLERKENWELL GREEN: 11.30, F. Haslam, "Mohammed and the Koran." Members' meeting after lecture to receive Conference report.
DEPTFORD BROADWAY: 6.30, C. James, "The Soul and Immortality." Thursday, at 8, C. James, "Still it Moves."
EDMONTON (corner of Angel-road): 7, A. B. Moss, "The Bible as a Guide."
FINSBURY PARK (near the band-stand): 11.15, W. J. Ramsey, "The Curse of the Cross"; 3.15, F. Haslam, "Bible Stories: Are they True?"
HAMMERSMITH BRIDGE (Middlesex side): 7, W. Heaford, "Spiritual Consolations." Thursday, at 8.30, F. Haslam, "Bible Stories: Are they True?"
HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, W. Heaford, "Bible Lessons in Morality"; 3, "The Power of Prayer." Wednesday, at 8, St. John will lecture.
ISLINGTON (Prebend-street, Packington-street): 11.30, A. Guest, "Bible Tragedy and Comedy."
KILBURN (High-road): 7, W. J. Ramsey, "How Christ Came."
KINGSLAND (Kildley-road, near Dalston Junction): 11.30, T. Thurlow will lecture.
LAMBETH (Kennington Park): 3.30, M. Pack, "God's Favorites."
MILE END WASTE: 11.30, A. B. Moss, "Design and Natural Selection."
OLD PIMLICO PIER: 11.30, Stanley Jones, "Stories from the Bible."
REGENT'S PARK (near Gloucester Gate): 3, a lecture.
VICTORIA PARK (near the fountain): 11.15, St. John will lecture; 3.15, A. B. Moss will lecture.
WOOD GREEN (Jolly Butchers' Hill): 11.30, S. E. Easton, "From Christianity to Secularism, and What I Saw on the Way"; 7, "Moses and the Exodus." Thursday, at 8, Stanley Jones, "The Social Aspects of Christianity."

COUNTRY.

LIVERPOOL (Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street): 7, C. Doeg, "Christianity and Paganism Compared."
MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, Sheikh Abdullah Quilliam, "Buddha, Christ, and Mohammed: A Reply to Dr. Marcus Dods."
SOUTH SHIELDS (Free Library Hall, Ocean-road): 11, C. Cohen, "An Old Attack upon Religion with Modern Appliances"; 3, "Do we Need a Religion?" 7, "Jesus Christ: God, Man, or Myth?"
SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): Members and friends meet at the tram terminus, bottom of Snig Hill, at 2.30, and will go by car to Hillsbro' for Little Matlock.
STOCKTON-ON-TREES (32 Dovecote-street): 6.30, business meeting.
SUNDERLAND (Lecture Room, Bridge End Vaults, opposite Echo office): 7, R. Weightman, "Priestcraft."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

BRISTOL (Eastville Park, lower end): 7, J. Keast, "The Philosophy of Secularism."
DERBY (Market-place): 11, Mr. Briggs will lecture.
NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE (Quayside): 11, Mr. Mitchell will lecture.

Lecturers' Engagements.

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ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon-road, Rotherhithe, London.—June 9, m. Mile End, a. Victoria Park, e. Tottenham; 16, m. Mile End; 23, m. Wood Green, e. Tottenham; 30, m. Clerkenwell, a. Finsbury Park.

T. THURLOW, 350 Old Ford-road, E.—June 9, m. Kingsland; 23, Chatham. July 17, m. Kingsland.

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