

The Free Thinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

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MR. STEAD'S "JULIA."

MR. W. T. STEAD is a characteristic figure of the present age. He typifies what we may call, for want of a technical name, the enterprise of common journalism. Board schools have taught everybody to read—and alas! too many of them to write; and all sorts of scribes are ministering to the literary tastes of the multitude, who require something to interest them without giving them the trouble of thinking. Amongst the purveyors of this mental pabulum, Mr. Stead is easily first. The work exactly suits his faculty and temperament. Mentally he is just on the level of the public he addresses. His advantage over them consists in a certain restless energy, which some people mistake for enthusiasm. He is interested in many things, and shallow in all of them. Even if he had the mental power, it is doubtful whether he could sit still long enough to think, in any proper sense of the word. He does not think, but he has thoughts; and as that is just the condition of the great mass of the public, it is not surprising that he is a very successful journalist. One might say of Mr. Stead's productions what Lincoln said when he was asked his opinion of a certain book in great temporary vogue: "Well, if people like that sort of thing, I should say that is just the sort of thing they'd like."

Now there is one thing your enterprising journalist never does. He never fights a forlorn hope. He has never any convictions which are not shared by a large section of the public. It may be a minority, but it is a minority large enough to keep him going. Your enterprising journalist is always on the look out for "a felt want," and eager to supply it; and this peculiarity is the key to all Mr. Stead's avatars. His genius has had many incarnations, and will probably have many more; but in all of them he will retain a keen eye to the main chance. He has a happy and profitable knack of leaping on to a movement which is attracting attention, and of becoming its spokesman. He is incapable of creating a wave of public interest, but no one equals him in riding upon its crest—until it is breaking, when he flies off to a fresh adventure.

I was once brought into close contact with Mr. Stead. It was at the time of the "Trafalgar-square riots." Much as I detested Sir Charles Warren, and was indignant at his dragging the London Radicals, I saw that we could not fight the police, and still less fight the soldiers behind them; so at the risk of misunderstanding and misrepresentation I tried to drag the Radicals away from Trafalgar-square. Mrs. Besant shrieked against that policy, and was warmly seconded by Mr. Stead, who was then editing the *Full Mall Gazette*, and who saw "good copy" in bloody rows between the people and the police. For my part, I should never have said to others "Go to the Square," I should have said "Come." Mr. Stead was full of "Go," but there was no "Come" about him. I soon saw that his place would be at a window of Morley's Hotel, while the men he egged on were being truncheoned in the roadway.

No. 731.

And ever since then I have smiled at Mr. Stead's eulogists, especially when they have trumpeted his "courage."

Students of human nature will not be surprised to learn that Mr. Stead is a sentimentalist; indeed, he is almost a crank. Set anything "occult" before him, and his eyes widen like saucers. He sniffs up the mysterious as a devout Catholic sniffs up incense, and with the same mixture of spiritual and sensual ecstasy. He patronises Theosophy and goes maudlin over Mrs. Besant. He also dabbles in Spiritism. And in all this he is sincere—that is, as sincere as he can be. But the enterprising journalist is not suppressed. Many other people coquet with Theosophy and flirt with Spiritism. "Go to, then," says Mr. Stead, "I will start a magazine for them, and they shall buy it; and I will make it ghostly and creepy, so that other people with 'nerves' may buy it likewise." And the result is *Borderland*.

In the July number of this curious publication there is a heading "Is Man Immortal?" It appears that an American newspaper syndicate has been putting this novel question to a number of gentlemen who know nothing about it, although they pretend to know a great deal. One of these is Mr. Stead himself, and his answer to the question is printed in full, while extracts are given from the other answers, which are illuminating "seven millions of readers" in the land of Yankee-Doodle.

Mr. Stead does not know whether man is immortal, but he does know that the soul survives the body, which is really an "encumbrance." And *how* does Mr. Stead know it? Why, in this way. Suppose you had a friend who emigrated to America, and that your friend sent you letters and telegrams; would not that satisfy you that America existed, and that your friend was still living? Very well, then; Mr. Stead had a friend "Miss Julia —" who "emigrated to the world beyond the grave scarcely four years ago." He has not seen her since, but others have. She appears to be shy of Mr. Stead, but she sends him "fair speechless messages," by using his hand as an automatic amanuensis. To look at him while he is scribbling you would think that *he* was writing, and your opinion would be confirmed if you saw the stuff afterwards. But you would (of course!) be mistaken. The hand is the hand of Stead, but the words are the words of Julia.

It is a common superstition that ghosts know what is going to happen; although our only definite idea of foresight is prediction founded on experience. Ghosts appear to know the future by intuition. Accordingly, Mr. Stead tells us that Julia has given him many a "tip." She has informed him "confidently of events which were to occur—events which were scouted at the time as impossible, but which nevertheless actually took place."

All this is very edifying, but it would be still more edifying if Mr. Stead would give us an opportunity of checking his prophetess. He is sufficiently cautious to disclose none of her predictions until they are realised. But it would be more satisfactory if he would disclose them beforehand. Our calculations would then be in no

peril of disturbance by Mr. Stead's aberrations of memory. There are even other aberrations which are not beyond the limits of conceivability.

In another part of this magazine Mr. Stead refers to a prediction made two years ago that "the Liberals would be left in a minority of over 100." The same prophet predicted that "after Lord Salisbury got his three-figured majority he will in three years' time pass a measure of local government for Ireland, which will be Home Rule in all but name." Whether the bad grammar be Mr. Stead's or Julia's, we may reasonably assume that the predictions are hers. And what predictions they are! Why, hundreds of people have said that the Tories would pass a Home Rule Bill in disguise. It is almost a commonplace of political prophecy. The "minority of over 100" is a good guess, but it is no more. Had the prophet *known*, she would have given the *exact number*.

And this Julia-Stead nonsense is the world's new pledge of immortality!

G. W. FOOTE.

NAPOLEON'S RELIGION.

(Concluded from page 450.)

NAPOLEON'S phenomenal intellectual capacity is admitted on all hands. His words often have the sharpness of a sword. "Half measures are always dangerous." "Hazard nothing, gain nothing." "Speeches pass, actions remain." Scorn dominates sometimes, as when he says: "No government so tyrannical as one calling itself paternal." "The kitchen is a fine accessory to government." "Men are rare." "People in general are but big children." "There are rattles for all ages." "We must laugh at men to avoid crying." "From the sublime to the ridiculous there is but one step."* "Fortune is an arrant courtesan." "Wash your dirty linen at home." "We can march quicker when we march alone."

His utterances on religion are of this serious cynical turn: "In all countries," he said, "religion is useful to the Government; it should be used to control the people." Again he said: "Nothing more debases a nation than religious despotism." "The decadence of Italy dates from the moment when the priests would govern the finances, the police, and the army."

The intimate alliance of the Christian religion with political tyranny he noted in saying: "The French people, in order to obtain a constitution founded on reason, had to conquer eighteen centuries of prejudices" (*Moniteur*, vol. xxix., p. 90). In Egypt he told his soldiers to co-operate as cordially with believers in the Koran as with Jews and Christians, and to show the same respect to their muftis and inmans as to archbishops and rabbis. He himself observed the feast of Ramazan, realising the verse of Voltaire on Zaire, that he is "a Christian in Italy, a Freethinker in Paris, and a Mussulman on the banks of the Nile."

When First Consul, Lafayette urged him to give equal liberty to all sects, placing them, as in the United States, outside the Government, he observed: "Lafayette is right in theory, but he always believes himself in America. The Catholic religion prevails here. Moreover, I have need of the Pope, and he will do whatever I wish." He disliked sects, and ideologues were his *bête noire*. "An established religion," he remarked, "is a kind of vaccination, which, in satisfying our love of the marvellous, guarantees us against quacks and sorcerers; the priests are worth more than the Cagliostros, Kants, and the rest of the German dreamers."

Speaking of his soldiers wearing the turban when in Egypt, he said: "Collectively, an army may well pretend to be of any description of worship, but it should in this obey the orders of a general-in-chief, who is as much the organ of his country as the flag is its symbol. Yet it would be odious for the soldiers individually to each deny the beliefs and faiths of their fathers, to improve their own position." He found his own policy confirmed, not by the words, but by the deeds of priests in all ages.

At St. Helena he said: "Theologians of all religions are the same; they spare neither ink nor words to enforce, according to their passions, their authority, or their caprice, a certain elasticity to the law of Moses, to that of Jesus Christ, or of Mohammed."

Napoleon sought to, and did, utilise religion in the matter of his coronation, his divorce, and the conscriptions. He considered it as a buttress of his own power, and at the time of the Concordat observed: "Mark the insolence of the priests who, in sharing authority with what they call the temporal power, reserve to themselves all action on the mind—the noblest part of man, and take it on themselves to reduce my part to physical action. They retain the soul, and fling me the corpse." He wished to be head of the Church as well as of the State. "You will see," he said, while negotiating the Concordat, "how I will turn the priests to account, and, first of all, the Pope." Parodying Voltaire, he said: "Had no Pope existed, it would have been necessary to create him"—viz., to give a spiritual sanction to his own authority. He let the clergy know they were servants of the State. When the curé of St. Roch refused to bury an opera dancer, he published in the *Moniteur*: "The Archbishop of Paris orders the curé of St. Roch in a retreat of three months, in order that he may bear in mind the injunction of Jesus Christ to pray for one's enemies." The Church was made the hand-maiden of the State.

All Catholic children were taught to pray for and serve Napoleon. "For God has raised him up for us in times of peril, that he might restore public worship and the holy religion of our fathers, and be its protector." M. Taine says: "Every boy and girl in each parish recite this to the vicar or curé after vespers in their tiny voices as a commandment of God, and of the Church, as a supplementary article of the creed. Meanwhile the officiating priest gravely comments on this article, already clear enough, at every morning and evening service; by order he preaches in behalf of the conscription, and declares that it is a sin to try to escape from it, to be refractory; by order, again, he reads the army bulletins, giving accounts of the latest victories; always by order he reads the pastoral of his bishop—a document authorised, inspired, and corrected by the police. . . . 'You must praise the Emperor more in your pastoral letters,' said Real, Prefect of Police, to a young bishop. 'Tell me in what measure.' 'I do not know,' was the reply. Since the measure cannot be prescribed, it must be ample enough."

Napoleon said: "Popes have committed too many absurdities to be believed infallible."* Yet it was his own attempt to subjugate the Pope which led onwards to the claim for infallibility. He has left on record his plans to be head of the Christian Church. "If I had returned from Moscow victorious," he said, "I should have exalted the Pope beyond measure, surrounding him with pomp and deference. . . . I would have made him an idol. He should have dwelt beside me. Paris would have become the capital of the Christian world, and I would have governed the religious as well as the political world. I would have had my religious as well as my legislative sessions; my council would have represented Christianity; the Pope should have been only their president. I would have opened and closed these assemblies, approved and published their decrees, as was done by Constantine and Charlemagne." Here we see the quality by which Napoleon outshone the great generals of all ages—his imaginative daring. It may seem strange that a man of such soaring mind and dauntless ambition should never have questioned the great god-ghost bogie. But, in truth, with all his clear, direct view of the things before him, he was in matters of speculative philosophy but an uncultured Corsican. "Who made all that?" satisfied him as a complete answer to Atheism, just as it satisfies, for a time, the merest child. So he remained a Deist.

Las Casas reports him as saying: "Everything proclaims the existence of a God—that cannot be questioned; but all religions are evidently the work of man. Why are there so many? Why has not ours always existed? Why does it consider itself exclusively the right one? What becomes, in that case, of all the virtuous men who have gone before us? Why do these religions oppose and exterminate one another? Why has this been the case over and everywhere? Because men are ever men;

* This was taken from Paine, who says in his *Age of Reason*: "One step above the sublime makes the ridiculous, and one step above the ridiculous makes the sublime again."

* *Les Papes ont fait trop de sottises pour les croire infallibles.*

because priests have ever and everywhere introduced fraud and falsehood." He said that his incredulity did not proceed from perverseness or from licentiousness of mind, but from the strength of his reason. Yet, added he, "no man can answer for what will happen, particularly in his last moments. At present I certainly believe that I shall die without a confessor." His doubt on the subject was warranted by self-knowledge. But it was rather his desire to die with all the *éclat* which the Church ceremonies could give than the return of faith which, after his trying illness, led him to receive on his death-bed the sacrament from Père Vignali.

J. M. WHEELER.

OUR VIEW OF THE BIBLE.

THE severe criticism to which the Bible has been recently subjected has induced many intelligent professors of Christianity to considerably modify their opinions as to the nature and authority of the alleged "sacred writings." While many of the old orthodox believers still retain their fetish notions of the Bible, the more enlightened Christians refuse to accept it as "the very word of the very God." Modern thought has so impressed their minds that they cannot submit either to the authority of a tradition which has varied with all climes and ages, or to a Church whose history is a record of blunders, compromises, falsifications, and self-contradictions, which probably are unequalled in the annals of any merely secular institution. Such persons profess to remain Christians by believing that God's saving revelation to mankind is made in the Bible, and that every one may read it for himself if he studies the volume in a reverent and prayerful spirit. They admit many errors of copyists, reject many passages, and even books, as decidedly spurious, and regard many others as doubtful; yet maintain that, all deductions made, there is left a clear and sufficient divine message, whose essential character is untouched by any of the errors or defects, and unchanged by any of the various readings.

Now, although this is termed the "advanced view" to take of the Bible, it appears to us to be the most illogical theory which a Christian can hold upon the subject. The thorough Protestant bibliolater is consistent in his blind submission of reason to faith, and the Roman Catholics are equally consistent in their blind submission to tradition and ecclesiastical authority; for they both seek to reconcile things which are essentially irreconcilable—reason and faith, freethought and revelation, liberty and servitude, the natural and the supernatural. Such a theory is open to the fatal objection that it makes man the measure and standard of his God; setting up certain Scriptures as supernatural and divine, then subjecting them to the arbitrament of human nature and reason. Each of those who hold this theory says in effect: "Here are books purporting to contain the word of God, and I believe they do contain it, but mixed with it are many vain words of men; therefore what suits me I shall consider divine, and what does not suit me I shall reject." Numerous clever attempts have been made to smooth away this sharp self-contradiction; but, so far as we are aware, and as was to be expected, not one has been put forward that can be deemed even plausible by any candid outsider.

Personally, we regard the Bible as a merely human production, abounding in the faults, and errors, and superstitions common to ancient human works, the venerable days of old being the infancy of mankind. There is much in its pages that is very objectionable in phraseology, and decidedly foolish and vicious in sentiment. Still, being, as we believe, an emanation of the human mind, such a work must necessarily contain something of a useful character; and our duty is to examine its contents fairly, to accept the better parts, and to reject that which is not in harmony with the genius of the times. We should make our standard of judgment the value of the writings, not their supposed authority.

In reference to the Old Testament, it appears to us to be in one respect valuable, as representing the earliest traditions, and the gradual religious development, throughout several centuries, of a nation which seems always to have been peculiar, and whose religious convictions were, and are, unusually intense. The work of any one man, however great his genius, cannot have the historical

interest of a national work like this, composed of treatises written at various periods, by men of very various minds, but all to a certain extent controlled by the same great national traditions and expectations. In many respects these various treatises are incongruous, for in the development and decadence of a nation, as of an individual, there are very incongruous phases; but inconsistencies fatal to the claim of Divine inspiration, which should have been immutable throughout, give the greater historical interest to these writings, as the productions of men whose leading inspiration in most cases was the destiny of their own people.

The great legislator who stamped this peculiar character upon the Jews—which, in spite of all aberrations and calamities, has preserved them a distinct people to this day, scattered among all nations for many hundred years, yet merged in none—appears to have been Moses, though we are by no means bound to accept the legends of his miracles and the forty years' wandering in the wilderness. And here it may be noted that those who see something miraculous, or, in other words, the hand of God, in this distinct preservation of the Jews conveniently forget that the ten tribes who were carried away by Shalmaneser, King of Assyria (2 Kings xvii., xviii.), so completely lost their characteristics, and blended with the nations around them, that not a sure trace of them can be found. Speculative writers, indeed, have identified them with nearly every later people, from the Aztecs and Red Indians to us English. But no satisfactory evidence of such an identification has been produced.

Two things are notable as pervading the Old Testament from beginning to end, equally conspicuous in Moses and David and the latest of the prophets. First, loyalty of the Jews to Jehovah was always to be rewarded by prosperity and dominion in this life, in their land of Palestine and its borders; disloyalty to Jehovah and the worship of other gods, by calamity and servitude. Secondly, the patriotism enjoined and cultivated in the Jews was so exclusive as to mean scorn and hatred of all other peoples about them, whom they were not only permitted, but commanded and urged, to drive out, to enslave, or even utterly to destroy. The old Jewish God was a jealous God, who hated all other gods with an abhorrence precisely proportioned to the abhorrence of the Jews themselves for the Gentiles. He was a stern and solitary autocrat, who would allow no rival near his throne; differing herein essentially from the social and easy-natured gods of the Greeks and other Polytheists. His character undergoes very considerable changes in the interval between the Pentateuch and the Prophets. In the former the sins of the father were to be visited upon the children unto the third and fourth generations; in the latter everyone was to bear only his own sins. But, in both alike, mankind are in his hands as clay in the hands of a potter; he is an irresponsible Eastern tyrant, savage and implacable against all who do not worship him alone; and the only people for whom he cared were the Jews. Such is the narrow, intense, pitiless patriotism of the Hebrew Old Testament.

Coming to the New Testament, we find remarkable changes. It professes to reveal to us the very Messiah whom the Jews certainly expected, and whom they expect still, and are likely to expect a very long while yet. They were undoubtedly right in rejecting Jesus of Nazareth as this Messiah, even if we allow that there was such an historical person as a nucleus around which the gospel myths gradually clustered. The Bible states that the promised Messiah was to restore the kingdom of the twelve tribes of Israel in glory and prosperity, in their own land of promise; and no one can pretend that Jesus did anything of the sort. He found the remnant of the two tribes, the kingdom of Judah, subject to the Romans, and left them subject to the Romans; and, so far from attempting to deliver his countrymen from the foreign yoke, his only political advice to them was the galling and absurd command: "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's." No amount of unsubstantial talk about a new Jerusalem in the heavens and a heavenly kingdom can remove this monstrous disparity. Let us do the Jews justice: their promised Messiah has certainly not yet come, and it is gross ignorance and insolence upon the part of the Christians to try to persuade them that he has.

The "higher criticism" has shown that most of the books of the New Testament are not trustworthy, either as

regards their genuineness or their authenticity. Un-accredited and undated, many of these books were slipped into the Canon, while countless other gospels and epistles, with claims of equal worth or worthlessness, have been excluded. The books which composed this New Testament were first circulated at a time when the critical spirit was non-existent, and when true believers accounted all forgeries in favor of their religion not only permissible, but praiseworthy. The amount of falsification prevalent, which can be demonstrated even now, when so many of the required testimonies are lost, is astounding, and even appalling, to one who newly enters on the inquiry by studying the work of some competent and impartial scholar. Of these falsifications and uncertainties the ordinary Christians know nothing; and the learned Christians, who are thoroughly aware of them, are anything but anxious to point them out to their ignorant brethren.

Setting aside the absurd pretension that the New Testament is a "divinely-inspired" book, we acknowledge that it contains features deserving of admiration. Its two great drawbacks are, that most of its ethical teachings are impracticable, and that its writers held the delusion that the end of the world was at hand. Looking for this daily and hourly, they naturally gave no attention to the improvement of this world by social or political reforms, any more than one would plan repairs in his house if persuaded that it was to be burnt down very soon. Their only care was to be ready for the kingdom of heaven, and for this belief in the Lord Jesus Christ was all-sufficient. Hence, while we find in this book many noble moral sentiments, it is worse than neutral, it is bitterly hostile to that scientific Secular spirit of prudence, free thought, free action, social effort, by which we hope to make a happy life for man on earth.

CHARLES WATTS.

TAMPERING WITH TRUTH.

"The profoundest of all infidelity is the fear lest the truth be bad."—Herbert Spencer.

AMONGST all disputants, and, in fact, amongst the mass of men in any community, there must be at least some common accepted standards by which differences can be measured. We must—all of us—have a definite starting point; we must build from some definite foundation. Thus, for instance, every man, whether he be an Atheist or a Christian, a Buddhist or a Bonze, accepts the proposition that things which are equal to the same are equal to one another. Each of them accepts, also, the proposition that two and two make four, and that murder is wrong. I merely instance these at random. There are thousands of other propositions we all agree on, and I am strongly inclined to think that the most extreme Atheist and the most devout Christian agree on infinitely more points than they differ on. That, of course, is no reason why we should not continue to investigate and compare our differences, however.

But in addition to the axioms I have enumerated on which we all agree, there is another most important proposition that we all should agree on, and the discussion of which is the object of this article. That proposition is, that demonstrated falsehoods must not be believed, and that the truth, when fully known, must be accepted. This proposition rests on another truth—viz., that the acceptance and the acting on the truth can never be otherwise than good, and can never cause evil or disaster.

Manifestly, it would be impossible to hold any disputation, say, with a man who did not accept the fact that two and two make four. Controversy would be out of the question. In the same way, how is it possible to discuss with a man who, when you have demonstrated the truth, will not accept it, on the ground that the falsehood is more consoling or more beneficial, and that the acceptance of the truth would cause unhappiness or ruin?

An Atheist, say, and a Christian argue on the assumption that when either has convinced the other—by appeals to reasons and axioms which both accept—that other will admit his error, and no longer hold the opinion he previously held. Otherwise the discussion would be objectless.

But there is a school which is making itself very important, and is attracting great attention latterly, which does not apparently accept the proposition that alone renders discussion possible or profitable. The leaders of this school are not, apparently, sure that demonstrated error may not be essential to race progress, and, in fact, that we must discuss and investigate, not with the object of arriving at the truth, but with the object of finding some belief which it is expedient to hold, whether it be true or false.

These remarks have been suggested by the interest excited by two recent books which have been hailed with acclamation by the religious world as apparently the most up-to-date expositions of the basis of religious faith. The books I refer to are Mr. Kidd's *Social Evolution* and Mr. A. J. Balfour's *Foundations of Belief*. Both of these works are ominous of the line which the defenders of religion are taking up, and it is a line which ought to make sincere religionists anxious for the future of their beliefs. Whether sincere rationalists either can rejoice at the weakness of the religious defence when that weakness is purchased by a wide dissemination of a distrust in truth, is questionable also. For the sincere religionist and the sincere rationalist—in fact, the sincere man of any school of thought—agree that the truth, when found, must be accepted, however disagreeable, or however it may clash with preconceived opinions.

Now, it is not my intention to review at any length the two books I have named, for that has been done already in these columns. But I merely wish to examine the gist of their teaching, in the light of the remarks which I have made. What, then, is the net teaching of Mr. Kidd's book? It is in reality that certain forms of belief fulfil an important function in helping the progress of mankind. As to whether any of these forms of belief are true or false, Mr. Kidd studiously avoids expressing an opinion, whilst some of them—viz., Buddhism, Mohammedanism, Mormonism, etc.—he would undoubtedly concede that he considered false. Here, then, we have put forward and accepted by the religious side, as the best modern "scientific" defence of religion, a book which admittedly discusses the utility of what the author considers to be some falsehoods, whilst it is very possible the author considers all the beliefs whose sociological function he is expounding are not true. The effect of Mr. Kidd's proceeding is naturally to suggest that falsehood may have a use, and a very good use. This is really tampering with truth, and the result of this mode of writing would be to shake all sincerity and the natural instinct in man which finds its highest satisfaction in knowing the truth. We are further, it seems, to pursue our studies into mythology and comparative religion, not by examining the genesis of the religions and seeing how they grew up and by what soil they were nurtured, always being helped in our research by the light of the real knowledge we now possess: we are, according to the fashionable process now in vogue, to begin—and end—by discussing what "function" the religious beliefs we are investigating played in the history of the people who held them. And if we find that a certain nation, under the influence of a certain belief, won military glory or commercial success, we are to write volumes on the "functions" of the said belief, whilst never hinting or concerning ourselves at all with whether it be true or not. Such, by implication, is the style which is suggested by recent developments. We are to take "beliefs"—no matter how absurd or false—as so many positive unchangeable facts, pretending not to see that any function—beneficial or otherwise—which they ever fulfilled depended on the fact that the people who held them held them as part of the truth.

Turning from Mr. Kidd's to Mr. Balfour's work, what is the underlying proposition of *The Foundations of Belief*, really, but an elaboration of Voltaire's *mot* about the necessity of inventing a God? Mr. Balfour is, in fact, so far from being sure about his "foundations" that he tells us he can satisfy himself of the inadequacy of Naturalism much more easily than of the adequacy of any of its opponents. "Man," says Mr. Balfour, "so far as natural science by itself is able to teach us, is no longer the final cause of the universe, the Heaven-descended heir of all the ages." But Mr. Balfour would like still to regard man as the Heaven-descended heir; so, instead of proving that "natural science" is wrong when it tells us he is not, Mr. Balfour says, in effect, "Hang natural science!" The lady

who writes under the pen-name "John Oliver Hobbes," reviewing Mr. Balfour's book some time back in the *Weekly Sun*, put the case perfectly. "Mr. Balfour," she wrote, "may be compared to the Friar John in Rabelais, who encouraged his followers in going forth to battle by saying: 'I know of a charm by way of prayer that will preserve a man from the violence of guns and all manner of fire-arms and engines, but it will do me no good, because I do not believe in it.'" That hits off Mr. Balfour to the life. And, indeed, it is noteworthy that these two books—Mr. Kidd's and Mr. Balfour's—should be of such a character. It has been well said that an interesting moment would be that in which a questioner should ask Mr. Balfour: "This religion which you defend, do you really believe it?"

But it is certainly memorable that the two works which have created most stir in religious circles, and have been accepted with acclamation by almost every religionist, from Mr. Stead to the editor of the *Tablet*, should be so questionable in logic and in sincerity. Mr. Kidd—possibly sincerely—tortuously reasoning on the folly of trusting to reason and "deciding by a process of reasoning that a process of reasoning cannot decide the question"; Mr. Balfour spinning a treatise in defence of that in which no one believes—Mr. Balfour believes—they are pretty pillars of a faith which through history has been buttressed by ignorance and insincerity at every corner.

The fact really is, that religion has been fairly beaten on the ground of Truth. Putting simply the question, "Is religion true?" there is really only one answer that any candid man who examines the evidence can give. And by religion I mean the various beliefs in what is called the "supernatural" and the ceremonies flowing from those beliefs. But, seeing they are vanquished on the question of the truth or falsehood of their creed, the more clever if less sincere religionists are seeking to shift the ground of the dispute to the question, Is religion expedient? It is a shuffle that displays their weakness. Of course we know that religion can be beaten too on this ground, for it will not take much to show that, because religion is false, so it is expedient. But for the moment the religionist who adopts the Balfour-Kidd tactics will have a mass of existing prejudice on his side, and many otherwise straightforward people will begin to drug their intellects into the opinion that, after all, even if their childish beliefs be false, they may be very useful—doesn't Mr. Kidd say they keep society together, and doesn't Mr. Balfour argue that they supply the needs of man, and that what supplies the needs of man must be good?

It must be emphasised, however, that this tricking with what ought to be the most solemn truths is treason to the highest and best ideals of man. And it must be known as such and branded as such by everyone who values truth more than a petty victory for a petty creed. The best philosophy that ever sprang from the brain of man is not worth a single lie, and the philosophy which requires lies constantly to support it is a centre of intellectual and moral poison which saps and kills all vitality of thought or sincerity of action. This thing is true, or it is false. We do not want to know is it useful, does it "supply needs," will it "fulfil functions." We cannot hand these beliefs over to be played with by clever dialecticians, or made the subject of dull paradoxes by self-condemned "scientists." As Lowell has asked, in lines peculiarly appropriate to the present case:—

Think you Truth a farthing rush-light, to be pinched out when you will
With your deft official fingers, and your politician's skill?

Truth, however, the thing that is, is stronger than all the word-mongers and the argument-jugglers and the time-servers and the priests. And we might say, in conclusion, that the more the mass of men are true to themselves, the less chance will the word-jugglers have. It is an evidence of how far insincerity has eaten into our conventional thought, that the insincere book is praised. When thought is free, and things are known for what they are, politicians on a holiday will find some other recreation than writing books, the effect of which largely is to undermine the natural reverence for truth, and shake the inherent faith in man—the faith shared by every sincere human being—that the knowledge of what is true is right, is good, is useful and can never be an evil, and the instinct which rejects the slander that the race needs, or can ever need, an atmosphere of falsehood to enable it to live.

FREDERICK RYAN.

NUDE WORSHIP.

THE thirteenth chapter of the Gospel according to St. John has an account of a supper at which Jesus Christ entertained his disciples. The same relates that, when he had eaten all he wanted, or all there was in sight, he laid aside his clothes, took a towel and girded himself, and proceeded forthwith to wash the feet of the brethren. Two customs of considerable antiquity are supposed to have their origin in the proceedings of this occasion, one being the communion and the other the washing of feet as a religious ceremony. Now another feature of the evening is found to have had a theological significance—namely, the removal of the clothes. And why not? The master of ceremonies evidently had some reason for appearing in the nude, and, whatever it was, those who cannot understand may at least imitate, as they do in many other instances. Hence it occurs that in Omaha, Neb., a sect has arisen which, while retaining the communion and pedobaptism, has added thereto the bath in the altogether. The New Testament account does not tell whether or not ladies were present at the doings described, but the Omaha sect takes it for granted that they were, and so the brethren and sisters worship together like Adam and Eve, and profess not to be ashamed to do so. Their rites consist of a bath, after which the souls of the worshippers repose together and drink in the love of God, as a devotee describes it to the newspaper men. A peculiar theory of this sect is, that the love of God emanates from neither the heart nor the brain, but has its rise in the bowels and in the adjacent organs of continuity; and they hold that, as brethren and sisters should bear testimony openly to what God has done for them, the nude exhibition and contact become a divine command. There is any amount of scripture to be quoted in support of the practice—twice as much as there is for some religious observances that are enforced by law—Sunday-keeping, for example, which is almost entirely destitute of Biblical authority. In the first place, the only perfect beings the Creator ever had the kindness to locate on this sphere were habituated to nudity all the time they were perfect; and it is plain enough that, if any would become like them, the first necessity is to strip. Again, when David blessed his household he wore no clothes. Likewise Saul, when the spirit of God came upon him, "stripped off his clothes," as the inspired book puts it, and did not resume them for twenty-four hours. Micah, too, believed that, by discarding the habiliments of civilisation, he could appease the divine wrath; and Isaiah walked naked and barefoot for years. Woman had not enough influence in Bible times to affect the destiny of the universe by anything she could do of her own motion; still, if Bathsheba had kept her bloomers on, there would have been no savior along the line of David. Passing thence to Solomon, observe the language of his Song. True, there is no doubt (*ohellno*) that here we have Christ addressing his bride, the Church, and the Church responding; but at the same time their descriptions of each other are so minute and circumstantial that we know at once that their observations were not impeded by conventional attire.

The doctrines of this new sect are especially adapted to the purposes of seaside and arboreal camp-meetings, and also to the warmer latitudes, where its missionaries would find the timber peeled ready to hand.

—*Truthseeker*.

GEORGE E. MACDONALD.

CHRISTIANITY, which, if our accounts be true, threatened to seduce large numbers of people from their allegiance to the orthodox creed, was practically extinguished among the Jews themselves by the death of Christ. They could not possibly believe in a crucified Messiah. Only a very small band of disciples persisted in adhering to Jesus, justifying their continued faith by asserting that he had risen from the tomb. But it was no longer among the countrymen of Jesus, whom he had specially sought to attach to his person and his doctrine, that this small remnant of his followers could find their converts. Neither then nor at any subsequent time has Christianity been able to wean the Jews from their ancient faith. The number of those who, from that time to this, have abandoned it in favor of the more recent religion has been singularly small.—*Viscount Amberley*.

GOD AND NATURE.

PROFESSOR GEORGE JOHN ROMANES has left a palinody to the world—viz., *Thoughts on Religion*, edited by Canon Gore. Where the carcass is the vultures appear. He speaks of the religious instincts of humanity, and, treating them as scientific phenomena, he opines that their existence is an argument for an objective reason of religious fact (!), because nature presents us with no analogy for such instincts existing *in vacuo*, and without reference to any reality outside the subject. Nature abhors a vacuum. We know what nature is, but who knows anything of God? They are not connected. "*Les deux ne se disent pas.*" Nature communes with all men, palpably; God communicates with a few favorites, schemers, and mystery-mongers, whose hybrid religions have well-nigh ruined mankind. Nature speaks to us in unmistakable accents; the lessons taught by her are salutary, and readily understood. Not so the so-called words of God. The very language in which they were uttered is a *dead one*. As to a correct translation and interpretation, the most learned men of all denominations differ more or less. The very origin of these so-called revelations—*cui bono?*—is doubtful. Honest thinkers, men not connected with clerical authorities, boldly assert that they are a fraud—a cruel fraud—for they have set millions at variance, and been the cause of diabolical cruelty and bloodshed.

CHARLES KROLL LAPORTE.

WHERE ARE THE WICKED?

A SERIOUS explosion on the footstool had occurred,
And the flames ran up his garment to the throne;
And though no personal damage was done unto the Lord,
The Recording Angel's office soon was gone.
And when he saw his day-books and his ledgers all ablaze,
He wrung his hands and cried, "What shall I do?
When Javeh comes to know it, the Devil he will raise—
I will go consult good Mo, the crafty Jew."

Soon to earth came the recorder, by advice of Holy Mo,
And visited the graveyards every one,
In hopes that he would find beneath the names of so-and-so
The evil and the good that they had done.
But behold, in ev'ry burial-ground from pole to pole, he found
No wicked person e'er had been interred,
For on ev'ry slab of freestone or marble above ground
Not a word to aught but upright lives referred.

"Alas!" exclaimed the registrar, "where are the wicked dead?
No stone records that they have ever been;
Yet sins by billions I have booked—where are the sinners fled?
Not a trace of their existence have I seen.
It seems to me Jehovah has been cruelly misled;
That wickedness was prevalent on earth;
I've read a trillion tombstones placed above the pious dead,
And every one records their honest worth.

"But where will God's chum, Satan, find the wherewithal to fill
The pit of which Jehovah made him king?
When old Gabe gets out his trumpet and tootles loud and shrill,
And Knox with Mary dance the highland fling?*"
The Lord must start creating a different kind of folk,
And give them to the Devil as his due,
Wherewith the pit that's bottomless to plentifully stock—
That peace may ever reign between the two."

T. CLARK.

Nature does not countenance any theory of the original perfection and subsequent degradation of the human race; and the supposition of a frustrated original plan of creation, and of later important endeavors to correct it, is as inconsistent with divine omnipotence and wisdom as the proposed punishment of the human race and the mode devised to save some of them are opposed to justice and morality.—"*Supernatural Religion*," iii., 572.

* John Knox, remonstrating with Mary, Queen of Scots, said: "There'll be nae dancin' in hell." To my thinking, she was a sensible lass to have her reel when she had the chance.

THE WOMAN'S BIBLE.

A FRENCHMAN, having heard of Mrs. Stanton's projected *Woman's Bible*, jumps to the conclusion that it is a new version, and not, as it will be, a commentary. He expects it will read like this:—

"On the sixth day God created woman, and called her name Eve.

"As she was weary in the Garden of Eden, and fell asleep from fatigue under a palm-tree, the Lord took one of her ribs and made of it a man; and he called his name Adam.

"And Eve, when she had looked upon her husband, after she awoke, made a curious grimace which clearly signified, 'What is this fellow doing here?'

"And she added to herself, 'I was alone, and consequently tranquil, in this beautiful garden, all of whose fruits were mine; wherefore has this spoil-sport been sent me? Now I shall have to divide with him. A nice gift, surely!'

"And with a prophetic glance into the future she foresaw the quarrels, the hair-pullings, and the divorces that were henceforth to be the lot of coupled humanity."

A little further along we read this passage, which is at once a revelation and a revolution:—

"Nevertheless, on his part, the man became weary also. He had not yet invented baccarat and horse-racing; but bad instincts, rising perversities, began to agitate him.

"He had been given permission to eat all the savory fruits that Paradise produced in abundance, but he quickly grew tired of all these good things.

"Now he had been forbidden to taste of the fruits of a single tree, an ordinary apple-tree that produced acrid fruit of detestable flavor—which fact caused Adam to frequent the vicinity of that particular tree.

"One day, not being able to restrain himself, he plucked an apple, and, without even offering a single bite to his companion, he ate the whole himself.

"How well we recognise here the vile taste and the abominable egotism of man!

"In punishment for this disobedience they were both banished from the terrestrial paradise, and the innocent Eve suffered for the guilty Adam.

"So, during the ages, the woman shall pay for the pots that the man has broken!"

MIRACLES: LEGENDS OR MYTHS?

DR. W. S. CROWE, in the *Non-Sectarian*, endeavors to explain the growth of the miraculous in the Christian system. Some of this he attributes to exaggeration, for even natural facts would, by exaggeration, assume a miraculous air; like the feeding of five thousand, or the killing of five hundred thousand chosen men in one day (2 Chron. xiii. 17). Dr. Crowe says: "Solomon made a great sacrifice of sheep and oxen at the dedication of the Temple, but he did not sacrifice a hundred and forty-four thousand. Moses led out a large number of Israelites from Egyptian bondage, but not three millions, and he did not support any such host in the wilderness forty years." He holds that there was a basis of fact at the bottom of the reputed "healings" by Jesus. But it is arguable that the basis of fact lay in the wonders ascribed to the sun. Dr. Crowe observes: "Having credited Jesus with all manner of healing, the idea was completed by crediting him with power to raise the dead." A resurrection was ascribed to all the sun-gods of antiquity, and the very core of the Egyptian religion was that, as the sun came to life after his descent into the underworld, so he had power to raise his worshippers. Dr. Crowe admits, in so many words, that "the story of Samson is an awkward Hebrew version of the universal sun-myth. His long, strong hair represents the burning rays of the summer sun. The Delilah, in whose lap he dallies, is the pleasant autumn, the Indian summer, emerging from which he enters the cold winter—his locks shorn, his strength gone. There he was in prison until his hair grew again, when he broke down the temple of the wintry ice."

Now, may not the gospel story be a Christian version of the universal sun-myth? The turning water into wine, the feeding of multitudes, the walking on the water, the descent into Hades, and the resurrection from the dead, while sheer nonsense if related of a human personality, as Dr. Crowe believes Jesus Christ to have been, are both natural, and, in a sense, true, when related of the sun.

MACSWEENEY SECUNDUS.

There can be but little liberty on earth while men worship a tyrant in heaven.—R. G. Ingersoll.

ACID DROPS.

The *Methodist Times* notes, as we also noted, that Sir William Harcourt was turned out of Derby by Alderman Bemrose, President of the Young Men's Christian Association. Now the *Methodist Times* regards Sir William Harcourt as a Christian statesman. How, then, is the Derby disaster to be explained? Why, easily. Alderman Bemrose is not a Methodist: he is a Churchman. That accounts for his iniquity. How these Christians love one another!

Before the elections Mr. Hughes's paper chortled over the number of Methodists who were in the field under the Liberal banner. Alas! they have nearly all been defeated; and the "sacred cause" is under a cloud. And the worst of it that it is too late for praying. The mischief is done, and God Almighty himself cannot alter it.

The *Weekly Mercury* thinks the reduction of Sir George Trevelyan's majority at Glasgow "shows how feeling goes in the North against the party of Separation and Secularism." Fancy Sir William Harcourt belonging to the party of Secularism! Who would have thought it?

Mr. John Morley has lost his seat for Newcastle, and we are sorry for it. He is a man of intellectual distinction, and the House of Commons will be the poorer for his absence. But as Mr. Morley was to be defeated he might as well have fallen without a shadow upon his honesty. He is himself a Freethinker, and is of course opposed to political and social disabilities on account of religious or irreligious belief. But when he was heckled on the subject of the Blasphemy Laws and Liberty of Bequest he evaded the questions. Perhaps he thought it best to say nothing on such a ticklish subject, without meaning to desert the cause of freedom when it came to voting in Parliament. Yet he has lost his seat after all, so that he gained nothing by not being perfectly straightforward.

Mr. Fred Hammil, the Labor candidate at Newcastle, gave satisfactory answers to the questions put to him. He plainly declared his wish to see the Blasphemy Laws abolished altogether. No doubt there were some Freethinkers who voted for Mr. Hammil in consequence. And who can blame them for supporting candidates who recognise the iniquity of depriving them of the common rights of citizenship? If the Liberal party will keep Freethinkers outlaws until they make themselves "a nuisance," they will be forced to make themselves a nuisance. If it is useless to appeal to honesty, we must appeal to fear.

Mr. John Burns just managed to save his seat at Battersea. At one time he was a Secularist, and we do not know that he has ever renounced his old opinions. It seems to us, therefore, that Mr. Burns ought to be called upon to make some little stand for religious liberty as embodied in the "Religious Prosecutions Abolition Bill." The Battersea Branch of the National Secular Society should really interview him on the subject. It is their duty to do so first. If they neglect it, outsiders may have to perform it for them.

Mr. James Rowlands has lost his seat in East Finsbury. Many years ago he was a frequenter of the Hall of Science, and we presume he has still some affection for Freethought, but it is of a very platonic character. He did not even avail himself of Mr. Bradlaugh's Oaths Act. Instead of affirming at the table of the House of Commons, as the new law allowed, he went up and took the oath. Yet he is called a "sturdy" Radical.

There never seemed to us to be much "sturdiness" about the London Radical members. Still, we did not weep over the spectacle. Courage is really the rarest of virtues. It does not require very much of it to go with a big crowd. True courage comes in when a man plants himself firmly on a conviction, and stands alone, if need be, against the world. At any rate, there is no particular courage in risking nothing.

London Radicalism is at a very low ebb just now, and it will probably ebb still lower unless we get a revival of the old Bradlaugh spirit. Men like Stuart, Cremer, and Rowlands are all very well in their way, but they are not heroic enough to excite enthusiasm in the people. Radicalism was sturdy in the old days, when it was headed by Freethinkers, with Bradlaugh at the top of all, inspiring the rest with his fine mixture of sagacity and boldness.

"Q" has been asking in the *British Weekly* why it is that for Burns Scotsmen everywhere prepare after-dinner speeches, and set up images and sing and cheer and even fall below tables. "Q" thinks they have a greater writer in Sir Walter Scott. "Deas Cromarty" ventures to say "it is

the religious note in Burns that fuses and kindles all the rest, that makes him the voice of the race at its best." We venture to affirm the contrary. It is the note of humanity, the simple pathos and sublime of human life, the freedom from all cant and hypocrisy, the plain absence of all the humbug which goes to make up religion, and especially Scotch religion, which makes hearts feel akin to Burns and vibrate in sympathy with his words of melody all over the globe. Burns is not a religious, but a liberating, influence, and the Burns worship is secretly disliked by the men of God, who feel it has helped to emancipate the once clergy-cowed Scotch from their influence.

Dr. Parker, in a recent sermon at the City Temple, said he accepted the Evolution theory. He did not explain how this was reconciled with the stories of the creation of woman and the Fall. He combated the notion, which he attributed to "some men of science," that man was humbled and degraded by the animals that had preceded him in the process of evolution. He did not say who the "some men" were. And then there are some men who think with Huxley that it is the scriptural story, rather than the story of nature, which is really degrading.

Dr. Griffith John, a missionary in China, says: "It is a fact that cannot be controverted that both the appetite and the demand for opium in China have been created by the introduction of the foreign article." Again: "The opium trade has been forced by England upon the Chinese, and that in direct opposition to the moral convictions of the nation, as well as the honest and long-continued resistance of the Government." This must be pleasant reading to English Christians who send missionaries to convert the heathen Chinese.

"The Chinese," says Dr. John, "call us devils, and when I think of this unprincipled and destructive trade I cease to wonder at it." Well, the "devils" are Bible-readers and true-blue Christians.

"With unbelief," says Dr. Pulsford, "hardness of heart is always associated." Yes, in Dr. Pulsford's mind; but his mind is not the measure of the universe. One is tempted to exclaim to these Pharisaic preachers, Doubtless ye are the people, and virtue shall perish with you!

"The world can stand anything but a fire-baptised church. It can stand logic and philosophy, and oratory, and music; but it cannot stand plain, common Gospel truth, red hot." This appears in the *Methodist Times*, and we hope it is true.

Curate Jones has been found by a jury to have committed adultery with Mrs. Worrall, and Mr. Justice Lawrence has granted a *decree nisi* in favor of the husband, with custody of the children. According to the evidence in court, one meeting between the guilty pair was in a churchyard. Curate Jones, after osculating his inamorata, went off to conduct divine service.

"The name of God has fenced about all crime with holiness." This line from Shelley's *Queen Mab* would be a text for an eloquent sermon. How true it is let the history of persecution and oppression bear witness. We see an illustration of it in the remarks of a certain Russian paper on the frightful assassination of Stambuloff, the Bulgarian statesman, who, while wishing to cultivate friendly relations with Russia, was anxious to maintain the independence of his own country. Stambuloff was murdered at a time when a Bulgarian deputation was approaching the Czar, and the Russian paper discerned in this coincidence the manifest hand of God!

Mr. Balfour (not Jabez, but A. J.) recently congratulated a Lancashire town on having escaped a great danger. That danger was the threatened establishment of a School Board. So much for the nephew, who leads the Tories in the House of Commons. And now let us turn to the uncle, who leads the Tories in the House of Lords. Lord Salisbury told the Church party, only a few weeks ago, that it was their duty to capture the School Boards. Putting the two declarations together, we have a clear view of the Tory policy in regard to education. First, keep up the voluntary schools by hook or crook, and prevent the introduction of Board schools; secondly, when Board schools can no longer be staved off, pervert them to the advantage of the Church. There is no humbug about this policy. It is plain, straightforward, and unscrupulous.

Probably the Tories will use their majority in the House of Commons, without any fear of the House of Lords, to endow the voluntary schools out of the rates as well as out of the taxes. Meanwhile it is well to note what is going on in the London School Board. An effort is being made to let the schoolrooms *free* to ministers who wish to give the children religious instruction out of school hours. A motion to that effect has been made, and, although it was lost, it

may be successful if it is introduced again when the Tories are settled down in office.

It is said that it takes more than three generations to get savagery out of the blood. This seems illustrated by a new religion started in Fiji, of which an account, evidently by Mr. Andrew Lang, is given in the *Daily News* of July 22. The prophet-founder calls himself "He who speaks once," and runs on well-worn lines. He promises immortality in heaven to those who believe in him, and lands here below to those who fight for him. He sells the boon of eternal life for whales' teeth, the rates varying from ten shillings to two pounds' worth. He thus financed his religious movement, whereof the doctrines were a blend of Fiji myth and Bible history, now for the first time correctly interpreted.

His story is that two unpronounceable Fijian heroes went to the white man's country, where they were named Jehovah and Jesus. They were now about to return, drive the whites into the sea, and redistribute white men's property—a most alluring "programme." Of course there is a hell for white heretics and unbelievers. Mr. Lang says: "The whole movement resembles that of the Hau-Haus in New Zealand, who made a religion (like the Covenanters) out of 'the fightingest parts of the Bible,' and gave a great deal of trouble." For our part, we discern a somewhat close resemblance between the new Fiji religion and primitive Christianity.

Mr. Gladstone, and, following him, many others, have spoken in praise of the Christian piety of the late Dr. Andrew Clark, who, we believe, was a good man, as well as an eminent physician. But now the Rev. Edward White writes to the *British Weekly*, pointing out that possibly Mr. Gladstone was not aware of his profound belief in the necessity of reconstructing the Christian faith, on what he believed to be the primitive belief of Christadelphianism. That is to say, Dr. Clark did not believe in Natural Immortality, but that it was a gift of Christ; nor in a personal devil or everlasting hell, but in everlasting destruction for all who do not attain immortality in Christ. This the Rev. Edward White calls "more Scriptural lines on the question of Immortal Life." All we say is, that the person who thinks he is going to be immortal, while the mass of people are going to be annihilated, must have cheek second only to those who believe they themselves are to have an immortality of bliss, while others have an immortality of woe.

The *Popular Science Monthly*, writing on "The Passing of Torture," says "King Menelek, who is said to have recently condemned a treacherous page to terrible sufferings by mutilations and exposure in the wilderness, calls himself a Christian. The Inquisition was in full blast under the aegis of the Church only two or three centuries ago, and *autos-da-fe* were festivals in Madrid down to 1750. Prisoners convicted of certain crimes were broken on the wheel only a bare hundred years ago in France." The *P. S. M.* does not mention that it was Voltaire who more than any other man contributed to the passing of torture from European law.

T. Ubsdell, a newsagent at Clacton-on-Sea, is determined to save Christianity, if one man can do it. He had been innocently supplying a customer with the *Freethinker*, but on learning the character of this publication—which, if he had any sense worth speaking of, he might have guessed from its title—he wrote to his customer as follows: "After this week I shall not be able to supply the *Freethinker*, as I find that it advocates principles that I cannot assist in circulating." We congratulate T. Ubsdell on the strength of his convictions. It is not every Christian who would sacrifice a farthing a week for his principles. We are sorry, however, that we cannot congratulate T. Ubsdell on the strength of his intelligence. It takes a fool in a newsagent's shop to see that he is responsible for the opinions of the various publications on his counter.

Our American contemporary, the *Progressive Thinker*, prints the following passage from a recent sermon by the Rev. A. A. Taylor, D.D., Chicago: "Hell is exactly fifty-two miles below the level of the sea, and my knowledge is based on the Bible, as Christ spoke of hell being below, and not above. The Bible also says that the sun moves around the earth, and does not say that the earth is round; for that reason I believe the earth to be flat; I have about concluded that there are many suns, and that we have a new one every day." Some Chicago asylum is evidently about to receive a new inmate.

Sabbatarianism is growing in Chicago. Barbers' shops are now closed on Sunday. But hair grows on human faces all the same, and the barbers are mocking the law by going round to their customers' houses and shaving them for twenty-five cents.

Rev. W. E. Broadhurst, pastor of a Methodist Episcopal

Church in Arkansas City, being accused of immorality, has thrown up the sponge. "It is due to the public," he says, "that I make this confession. I am a fallen preacher, after twenty-one years of acceptable work in the Methodist Episcopal Church. I have resisted thousands of temptations, but was caught at last." Parson Broadhurst is like old father Adam—"The woman tempted me, and I did eat." He hints that the women of his church were always after him. So much for the ethical value of Christian preaching! And so much for the gallantry of this pious tomat!

"How long, O Lord, how long?" asks a writer in the *Twentieth Century* with reference to the wretched condition of so many of the workers. Well, we guess it will last as long as men are foolish enough to ask that question.

The reactionary Education Bill, put forward by the, for a while, triumphant clericals in Belgium, is occasioning much excitement there. When M. de Barlet, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, said he pitied parents who let their children wallow in a slough of Atheism, such a tumult arose in the Chamber that he was forced to resume his seat. Those who attend the Freethinkers' Congress at Brussels will have an opportunity of seeing how unfortunate are the children who wallow in the slough of Atheism, for a review of the infant troops of Freethought will be one of the features of the gathering.

We hear on every side that the Church has shown itself thoroughly partisan in politics, and that clergymen who once posed as Liberals have been working might and main for the winning side. This is all very well while it lasts; but when fortune changes the Church may find she has made a mistake in taking sides, and, if now triumphant with the winners, may some day be abased with the losers.

Father Joseph, a Capuchin friar, of the Church militant, has been in the habit of going about preaching in the South of France, and attracting attention to his open-air sermons by firing off a cannon. He has had the misfortune of killing a man therewith, and the too enterprising preacher has been fined two hundred francs for "homicide through imprudence."

Pilgrimages are not played out in Italy. More than ten thousand travelled from the province of Lucca, headed by their archbishop, to the shrine of the Madonna at Montenevo, where they made rich offerings in gold and silver. Ordinary waxworks are out of the running when priests take to the show trade; and they all are taking to it, more or less.

Dr. J. T. Reece, a medical practitioner at Ystradgvalas, Breconshire, had been called upon to attend a case of burning in a neighboring village, and, as he reached the top of the hill, he was struck and killed by lightning. Dr. Reece, and the horse he rode, were both discovered lying dead on the summit of the hill by the parent of the patient whom the deceased was about to attend. Providence thus interfered to thwart an errand of humanity. No wonder the old farmer said, "Drat that Providence!"

F. H. Groom, in *Two Suffolk Friends*, tells a good story of an old native who thought it "wrong of fooks to go up in a ballune, as that fare (seemed) so bumptious to the Almighty." It looked like an attempt to poach on the Deity's preserves.

G. W. N. Yost, the inventor of the typewriter, according to the *New York Herald*, got into the hands of a mejum, one Henry A. Rogers, who held out hopes of type-written communications from the spirit world. The result is that Yost is poor, and believed to be daft, while the mejum has a sumptuous house in West Fifty-Second-street. The *Herald* says Yost is as certain about "the lies which Rogers has told him as he is that there is a heaven." After all, Rogers only plays a certain phase of the racket which is the common game of all priests and charlatans.

An American bishop, B. Turner, has recently written at length in favor of the theory that Solomon was a colored man. We have not seen the work, but it certainly will prove curious reading. Possibly he attributes the words of the Canticles, "I am black, but comely," to Solomon, and not to his lady-love. King Solomon's mines, it is well known, are situated in Africa.

Christian Gent.—"What is your reduction for clergymen on books?" Shopkeeper—"Twenty per cent. Are you a clergyman?" Christian Gent.—"Not yet, but I expect to be. I'm half through my course at the theological seminary." Shopkeeper—"Then you can have ten per cent. Half clergyman, half reduction."

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, July 28, Milton Hall, Hawley-Crescent, Kentish Town : 7.30, "The Bible and Local Veto."

August 4, Newcastle; 11, 18, and 25, St. James's Hall, London.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—July 28, August 4 and 11, Camberwell; 18 and 25, Milton Hall, London.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent to him (if a reply is required, a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed) at 81 Effra-road, Brixton, London, S.W.

W. STRASSHEIM.—Your letter arrived too late for notice in last week's *Freethinker*. Nor would a notice have been of any use, as the Newcastle polling was on Wednesday and our publishing day is Thursday. See this week's "Acid Drops."

J. BURT.—St. James's Hall is not in the centre of London, but it is remarkably accessible. Buses run from Piccadilly-circus to almost every part of London.

W. STEPHENS (Northampton).—As you are a reader of the *Freethinker*, it is best to answer your query in this column, instead of by post, as you desire. Mr. Foote has several times been questioned on this matter. Some months ago Mr. Johnson wrote to ask whether the rumor "all over Northampton" was true, that Mr. Foote was coming down to speak in support of Mr. Harford. The same rumor was "all over Northampton" during the recent election, and a friend of one of the candidates was commissioned to find out whether it was true. Mr. Foote has never been asked to speak for any candidate at Northampton, either by letter or otherwise. This was the answer Mr. Foote returned to Mr. Johnson; and this is the answer he makes now. All the non-Tory candidates were in favor of repealing the Blasphemy Laws; and, in the circumstances, it is difficult to see how Mr. Foote—as a Secularist—could discriminate between them.

G. T. GIBBONS.—Close your ears to death-bed stories in Christian tracts. You will find the real facts about Paine's last hours in our *Infidel Death-Beds*. The story that he said the devil helped him to write the *Age of Reason* is one of the many lies told about this great Freethinker. The Christians, who could not answer him when living, slandered him when dead. It is a way they have.

E. G. TAYLOR.—We note that the Christian who, a few weeks ago, uttered an obscene libel against Colonel Ingersoll has publicly apologised in the Manchester Secular Hall, and expressed his regret at having been misled by the wretch who originated that convicted libel on the Hall of Science.

A. LE LIEVRE, who has read Mr. Watts's "admirable articles" on Cromwell, points out that, according to Macaulay, the great Protector not only tried to obtain the readmission of the Jews to England, but actually permitted them to build a synagogue in London "in spite of the strong opposition of jealous traders and fanatical theologians."

L. LEVINE (Charleston).—Hearty thanks and greetings. We now exchange with the *Blue Grass Blade*, which we hope will flourish.

A. B. PRICE.—We have seen the statement again and again in the public press that Sir William Harcourt is not a teetotaler. As we do not know him personally, we are confined to public sources of information. If you are dissatisfied on the point, why not write to Harcourt yourself?

P. H. ECHLIN.—No good advertising in that way. Apply to Mr. Forder, who will find you a customer, if anyone can.

T. WISE.—See paragraph. Thanks.

T. E. M.—Confucius taught the golden rule in China; so did Isocrates in Greece. The substance of it was taught by Buddha, and by most other ancient moralists.

J. H.—The Catholic Church is one church all over the world. Your question must therefore be answered in the negative.

H. BRYCESON, late of Cook's-road, Walworth, is requested to send his address to William Simons, 12 Wolsey-road, Mildmay-park, N.

W. WAKER.—It is a nonsensical evasion to say that the Church of England is not State-paid. All its property is held under a legal—that is, a parliamentary—tenure. Then look at *tythes*. Are they voluntary offerings? They are exactable by the same means as rates and taxes. We intend to deal with the whole subject shortly.

R. HARDY.—We can scarcely see the material for a paragraph in our special line of criticism.

J. ROBERTS (Liverpool) writes: "I hope Mr. Wise will not consider me tediously pertinacious when I ask him why he has not replied to the question whether opponents at his meetings have, or have not, been demanded their names and addresses. If he should now reply in the affirmative, we in Liverpool will know what reason to assign for his unconscionable delay."

J. G. BARTRAM.—Mr. Foote will have pleasure in "naming" the child at Newcastle. Send one of the lecture-bills when printed. We hope that sentiment, however justifiable, will not be allowed to stand in the way of the debate between Mr. Watts and the Rev. A. J. Walrond. All of us should keep an eye on the greater good, and subordinate our personal feelings.

MEREDITH (Birmingham).—Tuesday afternoon is too late. Still, we are obliged to you for the trouble you took.

W. T. ANDERSON (Sunderland) wishes to correct a statement in our last issue. It was not members of the Anti-Infidel League who disturbed Mr. Foote's meeting, but members of the Anti-Infidel Association. We should be sorry to do anyone an injustice, and we cheerfully publish the correction; but we wish these two bodies were more clearly distinguished.

JAMES GARROW.—Thanks. See "Sugar Plums."

H. DINES.—You do not seem to understand our paragraph. Satire must not be read like an affidavit.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Progressive Thinker—Light of Truth—Light—Two Worlds—Blue Grass Blade—New York Tribune—New York Sun—Brighton Examiner—New York Herald—Accrington Advertiser—Glasgow Weekly Herald—Truthseeker—Morning—Twentieth Century—Independent Pulpit—Western Figaro—Glasgow Evening Times—Single Tax—Liberator—Progressive Thinker—Kew Mercury—Freethought Ideal—Isle of Man Times—Public Opinion—Crescent—Post.

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.

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

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

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

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.

SPECIAL.

THE three Sunday evening lectures I have arranged to deliver at St. James's Hall, on August 11, 18, and 25, are now being advertised, and Miss Vance has the tickets ready for sale. They do not allow a charge of less than one shilling for any assembly at St. James's Hall; and as the experiment will cost over twenty pounds, I must take reasonable precautions against a loss. The seats will be one shilling, two shillings, and five shillings. But for the sake of our own people I have had *course* tickets printed at the price of eighteenpence and three shillings.

It must be distinctly understood that no money can be taken at the doors, and I am not sure at present that it will be possible to have any free seats. Those who mean to attend for certain should secure tickets in good time.

I know that August is not the best time of the year for such an experiment, but the hall is engaged by others right through the winter, and I had to take the opportunity then or lose it altogether. May I therefore ask my London friends to make a special effort to fill the hall on these three Sunday evenings? It will be a kind of demonstration. While I am speaking in one part of the building the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes will be speaking in another part; and that in itself should be a kind of attraction.

One great advantage of this experiment will be that we may approach the proprietors or lessees of other halls afterwards with a better prospect of success. It will tend to break down prejudice against us and our propaganda.

While the pen is in my hand I venture to refer to the "Honorarium Fund" opened by a special committee for the National Secular Society's President. It would be silly to affect an ignorance of this matter. But all I have to say about it is this. I should not like to see the committee's appeal in the *Freethinker* for a long succession of issues. Those who intend to subscribe might do so promptly, so that I may look at my own paper without feeling uncomfortable.

G. W. FOOTE.

THE HONORARIUM TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.

It will be remembered that at the last Conference of the National Secular Society a letter was read from Mr. George Anderson, suggesting that its President "should be recouped for his loss of time and money in serving the party's interests." Accordingly, the Conference appointed a Committee, consisting of Mr. George Anderson, Mr. Charles Watts, Mr. Robert Forder, and Mr. George Ward, to consider the best plan to be adopted for carrying out the suggestion. The Committee met and drew up a circular, which probably most of the readers of the *Freethinker* have seen.

This Committee unanimously passed the following resolution, proposed by Mr. George Anderson, and seconded by Mr. George Ward: "That the sum to be paid the President of the N.S.S. for this year be £100, to be confirmed, augmented, or diminished each year by vote of the Conference."

By this resolution it was the desire of the Committee to carry out the object, for which it had been appointed by the congress of delegates, in the most satisfactory manner both as to terms and amount, leaving the Society to act yearly in future as circumstances might dictate.

It is to be hoped that what has been done will meet with the approval of the Secular party, and that its members will subscribe the required amount as promptly as possible.

CHARLES WATTS.

[Subscriptions can be sent to Miss Vance, 28 Stonecutter-street, London, E.C., or paid to any member of the Committee.]

Subscriptions Received:—

Already acknowledged, £41 12s.

Per R. Forder: J. Denham, 2s. 6d.; D. Young, 1s.; Bolton Branch, 14s. 6d.; R. Green, 5s.; S. J. W., 5s.; J. Downing, £1; Seventeen Stone, 2s. 6d.

Per George Anderson: W. Cabell, 10s. 6d.; A. Stanley, 5s.

Per Miss Vance: W. H. Stevens, £1 1s.; C. Shepherd, 2s.; G. H., 2s. 6d.; W. Johnson, 5s.; G. W., 2s.; C. B., 10s.; A. F., 2s. 6d.

SUGAR PLUMS.

DESPITE the heavy rain, an excellent audience met at Milton Hall on Sunday evening, when Mr. Foote lectured on "Secularism and the New Parliament." Many questions were asked in response to the chairman's invitation. This evening (July 28) Mr. Foote lectures again at Milton Hall, his subject being "The Bible and Local Veto." Freethinkers in the district should try to bring some of their Christian friends to this lecture, in order that they may learn how much the Bible is a friend of Temperance.

Mr. Foote lectures at Newcastle-on-Tyne next Sunday (August 4). On that occasion he will formally open the Branch's new hall in Northumberland-street. Local friends who have promised to subscribe towards the expenses of this meeting-place are requested to remit to the secretary forthwith.

Mr. Charles Watts lectures this Sunday evening (July 28) at North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road. Our South London friends should rally in full force and give Mr. Watts a good reception.

Mr. W. B. Thompson, a "Secular" member of the Gillingham School Board, has just had a good stand-up fight with his clerical colleagues. The Rev. R. Morris, the chairman, moved that the Board schools should be opened and closed with hymn and prayer, and grace or doxology be sung at the dismissal before noon. In his sky-pilotship's opinion, this would give a good moral tone, and also fit the scholars for their secular education. This was seconded by the Rev. W. H. Bowers, and partially supported by two other members. Mr. Thompson, however, protested. He maintained that there were other people besides Christians to be considered. He moved as an amendment that parents should be notified that the attendance of their children at religious instruction was purely voluntary. This was defeated by the casting vote of the chairman. Mr. Thompson then moved that one moral lesson a week should be given to the children. Parson Morris couldn't very well

oppose that, so it was carried unanimously. Let us hope the moral lesson will counteract what Mr. Thompson rightly objected to, on ethical and æsthetical grounds, in many of the hymns taught to children.

Referring to the matter of heckling the candidates about the blasphemy laws, the *Two Worlds* says: "Reports reach us from all sides of satisfactory replies to the questions put to the would-be Parliamentary representatives. This matter must be forced upon the attention of Parliament. We hope to deal more fully with it in an early issue. Last week's *Freethinker* had a valuable article and series of questions on the same lines."

Mr. James Pender, M.P. for Mid-Northamptonshire, gave a favorable reply to all our "Questions for Parliamentary Candidates," and stated his willingness to support a Bill, no matter by whom introduced, with the object of securing religious liberty for all. This pledge was given at a Conservative meeting.

Mr. G. J. Warren wrote to all the candidates for the various divisions of the Tower Hamlets with respect to the Blasphemy Laws and Liberty of Bequest. Out of the fourteen only three replied, though stamped, directed envelopes were enclosed for the purpose. Mr. James Haysman (Mile End), Mr. J. W. Benn (St. George's), and Mr. W. H. Dickenson (Stepney) gave satisfactory answers. Unfortunately, neither of them secured a seat. Better luck to them next time.

Both the Liberal (A. H. Pollen) and Unionist (E. W. Byrne) candidates at Walthamstow agreed that legacies ought not to be withheld from Secular Societies. Mr. Byrne, however, most illogically said he could not support the Liberty of Bequest Bill; while Mr. Pollen thought that if God was spoken of irreverently, the law ought to put a stop to it. Of course Mr. Pollen meant *his* God.

Mr. A. M. Latham, Liberal candidate in the Altrincham division, answered all our "Questions for Candidates" satisfactorily, and added: "I am in favor of the fullest religious equality."

Mr. E. H. Pickersgill, in South-West Bethnal Green, wrote to Mr. J. G. Neate: "I am in favor of the abolition of the Blasphemy Laws, and of the granting of Liberty of Bequest."

It is proposed in *Nature* that a national memorial to the late Professor Huxley shall be placed in the Natural History Gallery of the British Museum, South Kensington, where it will be beside the statues of Darwin and of Sir Richard Owen. A meeting has also been held to forward a memorial at the Charing Cross Hospital and Medical School, with which Huxley was connected in early life.

A very favorable report and balance-sheet were adopted at the half-yearly meeting of the Westminster Branch. Mr. W. Tanner was elected chairman in place of Mr. H. J. Stace, and it was unanimously agreed to present the late chairman with a written scroll as a mark of appreciation. Mr. Debney was elected delegate to the L.S.F., and it was decided that the Branch's Annual Excursion be by brake to Epping Forest on Sunday, August 25; tickets 3s.

A special entertainment and dance will take place this Sunday evening (July 28) at the Battersea Secular Hall, to raise funds for the Branch. Tickets are 3d. and 6d. each. Help is greatly needed just now, and members whose subs. are due are notified of the fact.

The Belgian Freethinking writer, Charles Lemonnier, is engaged on a work, entitled *La Légende de la Vie*. It will endeavor to give a picture of the progress of mankind onwards from the Stone Age.

The *Freethought Ideal* is a bright little paper published at Portland, Kansas. It announces itself as "the cheapest paper of its kind on earth." The price of a single copy is five cents. Our contemporary does not seem to know that the *Freethinker* is a much larger paper, and is published at four cents.

"Atheist" writes to the *Rangoon Times* taunting the ministers of religion with having failed to take up the gauntlet thrown down by "Non-Credo" in that paper. He says: "The weakness and absurdity of their cause are painfully dawning upon Christians. They too are beginning to doubt the divine plan of salvation, and are afraid to press the question home in their time. That the system is a doomed one their very evasion of the question tacitly implies."

The program of the International Congress of Freethinkers, to be held at Brussels September 22, 23, and 24,

is now issued. The sittings of the Congress will take place in the Grand Hall of the *Loge des Amis Philanthropes*, 10 Rue du Persil, commencing at ten o'clock each day. The subjects have already been announced. The serious proceedings will be diversified with a children's fête organised by the *Cercle des Soirees Populaires Rationalistes*, and will close with a banquet to the foreign delegates.

Mr. S. P. Putnam lectured on Sunday at Birmingham. Mr. G. J. Holyoake presided at the morning and evening meetings, and Mr. Ridgway in the afternoon. We hear that the Birmingham friends were highly delighted with Mr. Putnam's lectures. Some of them went with him on Monday to Stratford-on-Avon, the birth-place of the mightiest genius that ever lived on this planet. Our American visitor is of course enraptured. He has seen something that, in a certain sense, beats Niagara; and we may look out for an eloquent letter in the *Truthseeker*.

MR. PUTNAM'S VISIT TO ENGLAND.

Extracts from his Letters to the New York "Truthseeker" (June 22).

My second day's drive is to Bettwys-y-Coed. We leave at 10 o'clock in the morning, and return at 6 in the evening. It is a forty-one-mile journey, and the same vast and wonderful views constantly charm the eye, only they are not really the same, for our road lies in a different direction. Again we see the old castle of Conway, Queen Elizabeth's palace, "Pean Mawr"; the Suspension and Tubular bridges, the estuary and Carnarvonshire mountains. Beyond Conway we wheel on a different course. We climb great hills, and thence proceed forward on a pleasant and elevated road, whence for fifty miles the eye can gaze upon the most stupendous scenery, conspicuous mountain peaks, whose names I cannot attempt to spell; tablelands and valleys, lovely lakes, and the winding glimmer of the river Conway, here and there. Sometimes the green forest wholly encircles our way, and the most brilliant emerald hues toss and roll away in the arching distance. Then we come to villages, nameless evermore, until more vowels are invented to fill in the battlemented consonants of the Welsh language, which I believe is the original language. Indeed, it does, in its rhythm and rolling pronunciation, fitly re-echo the wild and wondrous scenery from which it sprang. The Welsh language is a musical language, adapted to poetic fire; and if you could only pronounce the names of its mountains and villages, they would be most suggestive and beautiful sounds. About 50,000 people still speak the language, and it has a noble and charming literature.

Bettwys-y-Coed is reached about noon, and we have a vigorous appetite. By this time all the passengers are well acquainted, and we make a jolly company. I do not so far find any unsociability among English tourists. We were all strangers when we began this journey, but were ready to join in for friendly intercourse, and at the close greetings were exchanged and hopes for further acquaintance. I find the same hospitality and frankness here that I do in the great West of our own country. Of course I only meet the travelled public. They are generous and polite. If they know you are from America, they give you a hearty welcome, and treat you as their cousin from across the waters.

We stay at the Royal Oak Hotel for dinner, once the headquarters of David Cox, the famous artist. In the year 1847 he painted a sign-board for the hotel, which now hangs in the coffee-room, an object of great interest and a beautiful painting. It was the occasion of a remarkable lawsuit. When the hotel and its appurtenances were sold a few years since, the party selling endeavored to take away this picture as private property. The party buying claimed that the painting, being the sign-board of the hotel, was one of the appurtenances. The court sustained this view, and the picture, now valued at £4,000, is a part of the freehold of the hotel.

Swallow Falls is a beautiful place. The falls are not large at this season of the year, but the almost flying waters dash in silvery sheen over wild, precipitous rocks in infinite variety of motion; while the foliage of a magnificent forest on either side adorns the pathway of the bird-like cataract.

On the return journey we take the Denbighshire side of the Conway River; but time will not permit me to delineate the picturesque views that, with still different forms and colors, unfolded in panoramic beauty.

On Thursday morning I take the Marine drive about great Orme's Head, a vast promontory towering seaward from Llandudno. One of the finest highways in the kingdom has been carved, we might say, about this mighty abutment, hundreds of feet above the rolling waters. The sea, the islands, the mountains, the villages, castles, and dwellings, as you ascend and curve around this enormous crag, gather and

multiply upon the view. A circuit of almost immeasurable expanse is filled like a sparkling cup with grandeur and delight.

At one o'clock the same day I take the boat for Menai Straits and Bridge. The bridge is a stupendous structure, from which a view can be obtained of the straits, of the surrounding country, the village itself, the great railway bridge, and other objects of interest. It was a mosaic of exquisite beauty compared with the vastness and grandeur of former scenes.

The same evening I return to Liverpool. I am met at the wharf by my good friends, Mr. Lawrence Small, Mr. John Roberts, and others, and we spend a happy evening together, not in Liverpool, but in Bootle, a town of about 60,000 people, which adjoins Liverpool, and which Liverpool is trying to incorporate into itself. It is really a part of Liverpool, but prefers its municipal independence. Mr. and Mrs. Small give a cordial reception to the Secular Pilgrim. There was a feast of reason and a flow of soul among these radical comrades. Mr. and Mrs. Tarleton and Mr. Roger Pride join the circle.

I arrive at Bristol Saturday afternoon and meet London friends, etc. The delegates to the National Conference are coming in, and there promises to be a notable gathering of the clans, the colors of Scotland mingling with those of England. I become acquainted with friends whom I expect to meet further on in the campaign.

Sunday morning the Conference comes together. They do differently here from what we do in America. They hold one day instead of three days. The morning and afternoon sessions are devoted to business, and the evening to speeches. I find the same elements here as elsewhere—plenty of individualism, some crankiness, hobbies occasionally, but, on the whole, frank sincerity, honesty of purpose, and when a question is settled a general determination to abide by the result and make the best of it. The main differences of opinion were about methods, and these will always occur. There was the largest latitude of discussion. Every one had a chance to talk. Quite a number of plans were presented, all of which received due consideration. From the beginning it was evident that Mr. Foote had the fullest confidence of the delegates, and there was no question as to his ability and fitness, or his heroic and generous devotion, and there was no thought of electing anyone else as President of the National Secular Society. A difference of opinion existed as to the best way of doing things. But Mr. Foote is one of those who is always ready to receive suggestions. He is open to conviction, and ready to accept any feasible proposition. He is exceedingly affable in the chair—patient, allowing the utmost liberty, while keeping strictly to the matter in hand. So that a most successful Conference was held, a large amount of business transacted, and amicable conclusions reached. By the wise and courageous and, at the same time, genial administration of President Foote, the National Secular Society is in a better and stronger position than ever to-day. It fronts the future with a noble captain and a gallant company. My staunch comrade of the American campaign, Charles Watts, is also side by side with Mr. Foote in this strenuous combat. No one could be a more able and brilliant supporter than Charles Watts. He is growing somewhat grey in the cause, but he has all the sparkle and vigor of youth, with the wisdom and the amplitude of age.

The society also did honor to itself by re-electing Robert Forder as honorary secretary. He has been a most faithful worker, an eloquent ally with Bradlaugh, Foote, and Watts. I am glad that women are also in the Freethought ranks, and willing and capable for frontier labors. Miss Edith M. Vance, the assistant secretary, has won the heartiest commendations of English Freethinkers by her loyalty, her activity, and her excellent business qualifications. Miss Annie Brown, secretary of the London Secular Federation, has shown herself a reliable worker in placing that organization out of debt and upon a firm foundation for the future. I feel quite honored to be elected, with Charles Watts and others, as a vice-president of the National Secular Society. It is a proud position to occupy before the world, even if we are a poor and struggling host. I could not stand with a more royal company than the president, vice-presidents, and officers of the National Secular Society. I am quite sure that President Foote will receive the hearty support of all, and that there will be more enthusiasm and harmony than ever in the ranks of our English brethren.

There is no need in this report to give details of the Conference. I point out simply the results, that with the widest difference of opinion on some questions, and a momentary clash at times, there is among English Secularists a splendid brotherhood. They have the same difficulties to contend with that we have; there are rough places, but the staying power is present. The army will suffer defeat only in the end to attain a greater victory. This Conference was interesting to me in all its aspects. It was a sign of the times. There was a letting-off of steam, but, at the same time, there was a gathering of electric force, and the lightning blow will come.

At noon we all took dinner together at the expense of Mr.

George Anderson, who is a Secular philanthropist of the first order. He believes in creating good conditions for humanity, and then virtue will prevail. I assure him that the Freethinkers present enjoyed that fine dinner. It was a delightful occasion for sociability and general good feeling, and no doubt contributed to the unanimity of the Conference.

The evening session was devoted to speeches, and I thoroughly enjoyed the varied and brilliant display of oratory. Mr. A. B. Moss did himself credit, and gave a splendid outline of the progress of Freethought. Mr. Parris was vivid and to the point. He was logic on fire, and roused the enthusiasm of his audience. Like myself, he has had a varied experience in the fields of orthodox and liberal Christianity. He has tried them all and found them wanting. He, like Harriet Martineau, desires "the unfenced universe" and the wisdom of science in the place of the ignorance of theology. He made a rattling good speech. Mr. Gilmour is a true Scotchman, with the humor and the imagination of Burns himself. His was a breezy address, and received a hearty ovation. Mr. Cohen was born to be a rabbi, but by nature became a Freethought lecturer, and a most successful one too. He is a man of promise. There was something of Hebrew poetry in his oration, the prophetic fervor; but all the superstition was gone, and it glowed with the hopes of humanity, the sublime and brilliant future of man. In my turn I did my level best to show that the supreme battle-ground to-day is the rights of man on both sides of the Atlantic, and that the most important and urgent reform is the secularisation of the State. Through this reform only can other reform be made triumphant and permanent. In this respect the English and American organisations are identical in their purpose. The manner in which my ideas were received convinced me of the noble friendship of our old-world allies. I was followed by Charles Watts, who spoke with his old-time eloquence and power, when he was wont to thrill and arouse the Freethinkers of America. The same impetuous oratory bore his audience to a splendid burst of enthusiasm. Mr. Heaford contributed a fervent discourse, which illustrated his excellent service in the field; and then Mr. Foote, as President, delivered the final address. Mr. Foote is one of those who have a great deal of reserve power, and he is ready for any occasion with unexpected abilities. He put the cap-sheaf to the speeches of the evening by pointing out the lines of present conflict; the inevitable battle that is to come between Rome and reason; that there will be a marshalling of hosts such as the world has never seen before, and that the banners of Freethought will shine victorious through the mighty struggle over a peaceful and happy world. Round after round of applause followed the utterances of the eloquent President, and the Conference closed with bright memories and unconquerable hope.

Bristol is an old city of evangelical flavor. Robert Hall and John Foster radiated here in somewhat brilliant fashion. Lady Huntingdon and Whitfield and early Methodism in this place exhibited fiery faith. It is an orthodox town still. There are a few earnest Liberals, who will not go with the majority, but stand by their convictions, and are ready to work. The churches, however, are numerous and solemn, and there is a somewhat slow appearance in the general aspect of the city. It has not the snap of a modern manufacturing town like Glasgow and Manchester. However, it is a charming residence city. There is an ample and fruitful country about it. On Monday, with my friends, I had a delightful drive among the environments of Bristol. Especially magnificent is Clifton and the scenery about it. Here is the great Suspension Bridge over the Avon. The view along this massive structure is superb. On either side, between precipitous green and wooded banks, flows the calm, bright river. In the distance is caught a glimpse of the majestic Severn, and a wide expanse of fields and hills rolls afar. It is Bank Holiday, and throngs of people are sailing on the waters or meandering along the verdant swards and the wide pathways, an animating picture of outdoor English life. There seems to be, after all, an immense amount of happiness in the British Isles.

We return to London on Monday evening. The coaches are crowded, and there was a rush and tumult constantly, so many excursion trains were thundering and flashing along. When we arrived in London it was almost impossible to secure a cab or omnibus. Some of the party did not get home until one o'clock in the morning, and had to walk at that. But finally the holiday is over, and all find rest and quiet.

SAMUEL P. PUTNAM.

(To be continued.)

THE THREE CHINESE SECTS.

The Buddhist priests declare their Fo in the abyss to be. Say Lao's followers, "Paradise lies in the Eastern Sea." But great Confucius' pupils look on real things around; Before their eyes the airs of spring, fresh-blowing, brush the ground.

—From W. R. Alger's "Specimens of Oriental Poetry."

SOME LITTLE-KNOWN FREETHINKERS.—X.

HENRY HETHERINGTON.

How many of those who enjoy the benefit of a cheap press know anything of the labors, dangers, and sufferings of those who made the cheap press possible? Not least among these must be counted the name of Henry Hetherington. Born in Compton-street, Soho, in 1792, he was apprenticed to Hansard, the parliamentary printer. He was one of the most energetic working men engaged with Dr. Birkbeck in establishing the Mechanics' Institution in London. In 1830 he drew up a "Circular for the Formation of Trade Unions," which formed the basis of the "National Union of the Working Classes," and led eventually to Chartism. On July 9, 1831, he first issued from his house in Kingsgate-street, Holborn, the *Poor Man's Guardian*, price one penny. On the title appeared the words, "Established contrary to the 'Law,' to try the power of 'Right' against 'Might.'" In place of the Government fourpenny stamp was a picture of a printing press, with the words, "Liberty of the Press," "Knowledge is Power." The *Poor Man's Guardian* was issued to fight the Battle of the Unstamped. It consisted of but eight small quarto pages; yet, immediately on its appearance, obtained a circulation of 50,000 copies, and when prosecution began it ran up to double that number.

Only those who know the tyrannical censorship exercised over the newspaper press when it first became an influence in this country can rightly estimate the work of men like Carlile, Watson, and Hetherington in establishing for us a cheap and free press. Little more than a century ago publishers of papers were fined and imprisoned whenever they as much as mentioned the name of a peer of the realm. Press prosecutions were numerous. Hardly any paper ventured to exercise independent judgment. Anything and everything relating to politics or religion was at the mercy of the Attorney-General, who had the power of summary arrest for seditious or blasphemous libel. As the demand for newspapers increased the tax upon them was enhanced. In 1765 the newspaper stamp duty was three-halfpence; in 1789 it was raised to twopence, in 1797 to twopence half-penny, in 1804 to threepence, and in 1815 to fourpence. Here it remained until, through the agitation of Hetherington and his co-workers, it was in 1836 reduced to one penny, at which figure it remained until abolished by the exertions of men like Austin Holyoake and S. D. Collet in 1857.

Hetherington's *Poor Man's Guardian* was the chief instrument in the battle for the removal of taxes upon knowledge. It was the first penny newspaper in the country, and was followed by *Cleave's Gazette* and other unstamped papers. The general price of newspapers at that time was seven-pence. The first number of the *Poor Man's Guardian* coolly cited the law under which it was liable, and which it defied. Three convictions were soon obtained against Hetherington; but the Bow-street magistrates were unable to enforce their order for some time. With provoking coolness Hetherington sent them a note to say he was "going out of town," and went on a tour spreading the *Poor Man's Guardian* in the provinces. On returning to London to his mother, who was dying, he was dragged off to prison while knocking at his own door; and in prison he was kept for six months. Hibbert, Watson, Cleave, O'Brien, and others, saw that the *Guardian* with its outspoken policy was maintained, and as soon as Hetherington came out he was again directing affairs.

Mr. James Grant, in his work on the *Newspaper Press* (vol. ii., p. 302), says: "Hetherington was in many respects a remarkable man. He was intelligent and clever, but it was in the qualities of determination and courage that he chiefly excelled. Nothing daunted him. He knew not what fear was. In the army he would have been a hero. Of all men in London at the time, he was just the man to fight the great battle of an Unstamped Press." To courage he added resources. He evaded arrest by disguise. To distribute his paper dummy parcels were made up, duly labelled "*Poor Man's Guardian*," and sent off in one direction by persons instructed to make all resistance they could to constables who seized them; while the real parcels were sent off by another exit. He got his friends to dress in his clothes, and again and again they were arrested in mistake for himself. In 1832 he was again convicted and imprisoned, together with his friend, James Watson, for six months. During the progress of the "unstamped" agitation fully five hundred persons were arrested for selling the *Poor Man's Guardian*. Their pertinacity gained the day in 1834.

The case came for trial before Lord Lyndhurst, who, says Mr. James Grant, was then a thorough Republican. In charging the jury he took up the copy of the *Poor Man's Guardian*, and, looking at it with an aspect of pity and contempt for its poor appearance, said, with a peculiar expression in his countenance, and no less peculiar in his tones: "Gentlemen of the jury, that is what they"—meaning the Government—"call a newspaper." All in the court then saw that the triumph of Hetherington, and the defeat of the Government, were certain. The jury returned a

BOOK CHAT.

verdict that the *Poor Man's Guardian* was not a newspaper. No. 159 bore these words: "This paper, after sustaining a persecution of three years' and a half duration, in which upwards of five hundred persons were imprisoned for reading it, was declared in the Court of Exchequer to be a strictly legal publication."

The veteran William James Linton, in his *Memoir of James Watson*, has the following on Watson's friend, Hetherington: "For four years he bore the brunt of the battle for a free press. Ever busy in the interest of his class during the Whig Reform ferment, he was among the most zealous as well as the wisest leaders of Chartism afterwards. A ready speaker, bold and fluent, passionate, sarcastic, or humorous on occasion (he had a spice of fun in him through all his trouble), he was deservedly popular in those days; and in the Chartist Convention of 1832 sat as delegate for Stockport and for London." In 1840 Hetherington was again arrested for selling Haslam's *Letters to the Clergy*. To test the impartiality of the law, some of Hetherington's friends commenced prosecutions against four high-class publishers—Moxon, Frazer, Richardson, and Saunders—for the publication of *Queen Mab*. The law was clear. Shelley's poem was a blasphemous libel, and, despite the eloquent defence of Sarjeant Talfourd, Moxon was declared guilty. It remained for the prosecutors to call him up for judgment, which was never done, their object being merely to call attention to the state of the law, and to advertise *Queen Mab*. This course obtained for Hetherington the mildest sentence then given for blasphemous libel—four months' imprisonment. While in prison Hetherington wrote *Cheap Salvation*, a tract showing that all the advantages ascribed to religion could be retained, while dismissing priests and their theology. On coming out, Hetherington resumed Freethought publication, issuing the first translation of Strauss's *Life of Jesus, The Existence of Christ Disproved*, by a German Jew, *A Few Hundred Bible Contradictions, A Hunt After the Devil and Other Odd Matters*, by P. Lecount, tracts by Emma Martin, etc. He also devoted himself to the spread of Chartism and Socialism. He died August 24, 1849, leaving a will, signed shortly before his death, in which he says: "I calmly and deliberately declare that I do not believe in the popular notion of the existence of an Almighty, All-wise, and Benevolent God, possessing intelligence, and conscious of his own operations; because these attributes involve such a mass of absurdities and contradictions, so much cruelty and injustice on his part to the poor and destitute portion of his creatures, that, in my opinion, no rational, reflecting mind can, after disinterested investigation, give credence to the existence of such a Being." He was buried in the unconsecrated portion of Kensal Green Cemetery, where lie the remains of many other worthy Freethinkers.

J. M. W.

MR. PUTNAM'S ENGAGEMENTS.

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

August 11, Failsforth; 18, Leicester; 25, Liverpool.

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.

PROFANE JOKES.

He—"I hear you attend the Handel and Haydn performances. Were you present at the 'Creation'?" She (indignantly)—"I suppose you will next want to know if I sailed in Noah's ark."

Rev. Mr. Goodsoul—"Ah, my boy, that cigar will carry you to perdition. How can you travel to your end with that cigar in your mouth?" Boy—"Yah! in de smoking-carriage, of course, yer old chump."

Johnny was saying his prayers before going to bed, his slow thoughts helped out by his mother's suggestions. "Bless all the lambs of the flock," said mamma. Johnny knew that meant him among the rest, and reasoned quickly and generously from the children to the parents. "Bless all the little lambs," he repeated, "and the old sheep too!"

A reverend gentleman was addressing a school concert recently, and was trying to enforce the doctrine that the hearts of the little ones were sinful, and needed regulating. Taking out his watch, and holding it up, he said: "Now, here is my watch; suppose it doesn't keep good time—now goes too fast, and now too slow. What shall I do with it?" "Sell it!" shouted a flaxen-haired youngster.

HUMPHRY WARD praises Leslie Stephen's life of Sir James Fitzjames Stephen as the memoir of a very remarkable man, set amid the records of a highly interesting family by a writer who is not only his subject's brother, but also one of the most skilled biographers, sanest judges, and keenest intelligences of our time. This is a good deal to say of any man, but it is certainly true of Mr. Leslie Stephen, a man whose services to English letters have never been recognised by the general public as quite so great as they really are.

* * *

Lord Acton's inaugural lecture as Professor of History at Cambridge will attract considerable attention, as he is a Roman Catholic with a reputation beyond any published performance. In his lectures he eulogises mental freedom, and acknowledges the triumph in modern times of the Protestant races. His distinctive note is that all historical judgments must be subordinate to ethical standards.

* * *

One of the latest and best of the series of "*Les Grands Écrivains Français*" is the study of Diderot by Joseph Reinach. Diderot was one of the greatest and most fecund of French thinkers, and to compress an adequate study of such a man into a small book was no light task.

* * *

For over a dozen years the American translation of Max Nordau's *Conventional Lies of our Civilisation* has been sold in England, first by the Freethought Publishing Company, and then by Mr. R. Forder. Now Mr. W. Heinemann, doubtless impressed by the success of *Degeneration*, advertises a new translation of Herr Simon's old iconoclastic volume as "Max Nordau's New Book."

* * *

Another brilliant work by Max Nordau, not so iconoclastic or pessimistic as *Conventional Lies*, is *Paradoxes*, also on sale by Mr. Forder. It deals with such topics of modern life as optimism and pessimism, majorities and minorities, genius and talent, the influence of fiction, the natural history of love, evolution in aesthetics, the State an annihilator of character, nationality; and takes an imaginary glance at the future, in which the small and feeble peoples will disappear, and pressure of population will spread the dominant races all over the earth.

* * *

The Humanitarian League is issuing a new miniature series of "Humanity" reprints, of which Nos. 1 and 2 are now ready. These are *The Humanising of our Prisons*, by Edward Carpenter, and *Experiments in Hospitals*, by Edward Maitland. The reprints, which may be obtained from the office of the League (79A Great Queen-street, W.C.) at fourpence per dozen, post free, are of the size of a square post-card, suitable for enclosure in letters.

* * *

J. Timewell, 141 Gower-street, W.C., publishes a penny pamphlet called *The State Carriage*, and with it a cartoon by "Cynicus." The idea of both is, that Charity in our present social system only balances the carriage which enables the rich and privileged to ride over the poor.

* * *

Mr. James Leatham writes in the July *Westminster* on "The Religiosity of the Scot," which he accounts for by Scotland having so long been a wild, lonely country, and the struggle with a poor soil and harsh climate.

* * *

Canon Cheyne, in the *Contemporary*, dwells on "The Archaeological Stage of Old Testament Criticism," which he urges must come to the front. He endeavors to ascertain when the Genesis story of creation was evolved from the earlier Babylonian one, and concludes that it must have taken some hundreds of years. "It is not only Babylonian, nor wholly Canaanitish, nor wholly Israelitish, but has developed out of elements supplied by each nationality."

* * *

In an article on "The Mystery of Birth," in the current *Fortnightly*, Grant Allen contends that the real mystery is in the Not Me becoming the Me, a process carried on at every meal. "William Evans makes himself daily out of meal and mutton. There is the mystery." Mr. Allen tries a flank movement against Weismannism, and asks: "Is there any real and essential difference between the transmission of functionally acquired modification to offspring, and their registration or persistence in the individual organism?"

* * *

Esmè Stuart writes in the *Fortnightly* on the French academical and Atheist poet, Leconte de Lisle, and tries to make out that "the religion of the Lisle won back his respect, though never his adhesion." Of course the poet was a man of many moods, but in his most serious work Christianity has not even his respect.

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.

MILTON HALL (Hawley-crescent, 89 Kentish Town-road): 7, musical selections; 7.30, G. W. Foote, "The Bible and Local Veto."

BATTERSEA SECULAR HALL (back of Battersea Park Station): 8.30, musical and dramatic entertainment. Tuesday, at 9, dance.

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, Charles Watts, "Does Death End All?"

WEST HAM SECULAR ETHICAL SOCIETY (61 West Ham-lane): 7, adjourned discussion—"Morals the Outcome of Evolution."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, Mrs. Thornton Smith will lecture. CAMBERWELL (Station-road): 11.30, J. B. Coppock, F.C.S., "Animal Development."

CAMBERWELL GREEN: Tuesday, at 8, a lecture.

CLERKENWELL GREEN: 11.30, S. E. Easton, "Prayer."

DEPTFORD BROADWAY: 6.30, G. James, "Christianity the Foe of Liberty and Progress." Thursday, at 8, G. James will lecture.

EDMONTON (corner of Angel-road): 7, A. B. Moss, "Behold how the Gods Vanish."

FINSBURY PARK (near the band-stand): 11, debate between Lucretius Keen and Job Williams, "Atheism or Christianity: Which has Done Most for Mankind?" 3.15, W. Heaford, "Christ and His Teachings."

HAMMERSMITH BRIDGE (Middlesex side): 7, F. Haslam, "How I Became a Secularist." Thursday, at 8, a lecture.

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, F. Haslam, "The Exodus from Egypt"; 3.30, "How I Became a Secularist." Wednesday, at 8, T. Thurlow will lecture.

ISLINGTON (Prebend-street, Packington-street): 11.30, St. John will lecture.

KILBURN (corner of Victoria-road): 7, a lecture.

KINGSLAND (Ridley-road, near Dalston Junction): 11.30, a lecture.

LAMBETH (Kennington Park): 3.30, S. E. Easton, "Prayer."

MILE END WASTE: 11.30, W. Heaford, "Bible Lessons in Morality."

OLD PIMLICO PIER: 11.30, A. B. Moss, "The Bible and Evolution."

REGENT'S PARK (near Gloucester Gate): 3, W. J. Ramsey, "Immortality."

TOTTENHAM GREEN: 3.30, S. R. Thompson, "Christianity and Slavery." (Collection on behalf of Sam Staundring.)

VICTORIA PARK (near the fountain): 11.15, a lecture; 3.15, a lecture.

WOOD GREEN (Jolly Butchers' Hill): 11.30, Stanley Jones, "Evolution and Darwinism"; 7, "Reason and Revelation." Thursday, at 8, a lecture.

COUNTRY.

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 11, Annie Besant, "The Uses of Evil"; 3, "The Place of Politics in the Life of a Nation"; 6.30, "The Evidence for the Supersensuous."

PLYMOUTH (Democratic Club, Whimble-street): 7, Mr. Shaw will lecture.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): Excursion to Wharfedale Side; members and friends meet at 2.30 in Norfolk-street, near the corner of Arundel-street, to go by carriage.

STOKTON (Borough Hall): 11, C. Cohen, "Is the Belief in God Reasonable?" 3, "Religion or Freethought"; 7, "Who was Jesus Christ—God, Man, or Myth?"

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

BRADFORD (Open Market, James Street): 6.30, H. Smith, "Is the Bible the Word of God?"

BRISTOL (Eastville Park, Lower End): 7, a lecture.

DERBY (Market-place): 11, Mr. Briggs will lecture.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE (Quayside): 11, R. Mitchell, "Providence."

SOUTH SHIELDS (Market-place): 11, Hall Nicholson, "Christianity and Slavery"; 3, "The Established Church the Enemy of the People."

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 12 Merchant-street, Bow-road, London.—July 28, Stockton-on-Tees; 29 and 30, Middlesboro'. August 1, Wood Green; 4, m. and a. Victoria Park, e. Deptford; 6, Camberwell; 8, Wood Green; 11, m. and a. Victoria Park, e. Edmonton; 15, Wood Green; 18, m. and a. Finsbury Park; 22, Wood Green; 25, Manchester.

STANLEY JONES, 53 Marlborough-road, Holloway, London.—July 28, m. and c. Wood Green.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Oredon-road, Rotherhithe, London, E.—July 28-28, m. Pimlico Pier, e. Tottenham. August 4, Camberwell; 11, Westminster; 18, m. and a. Hyde Park, e. Hammersmith; 25, m. Clerkenwell, a. Victoria Park.

T. THURLOW, 350 Old Ford-road, E.—August 4, Kingsland. Sept. 15, e. Kilburn; 22, m. and a. Hyde Park, e. Hammersmith.

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