

# The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.

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## SUNDAY CLOSING.

CHRISTIAN Reunion is the dream of a few enthusiasts. It can never be realised except under the arbitrary dominion of the Catholic Church. But there is one form of union which the Churches will always join in—namely, a union of conspiracy against the liberties of the people.

We have lately been trying to show that the Black Army is a huge body of professional soul-savers, animated in the mass by ordinary trade-motives; their chief object being to secure wealth, privilege, and power for themselves. Now, if our diagnosis be a true one, it is only natural that these earth-seeking mystery-mongers should be always encroaching on the rights of the community. This has been their policy in all ages, and it is their policy still. They will never forsake it until it forsakes them; that is, they will play the old game for all it is worth, down to the very last card in their dirty hands.

There is one book which is favored by all divisions of the Black Army. It is the Bible. A Christian without the Bible is a fish without water. Accordingly, the Churches all agree to force the Bible into the hands of the children in our public schools. They are at loggerheads as to how the blessed book should be interpreted, for even revelation requires to be revealed; but they form a common ring against all outsiders. They unite at the circumference, however they are divided within the circle. Churchmen, Nonconformists, and Catholics are at one in opposing liberty and justice where their privileges are involved. There are many signs that, in face of a common danger, they are coming to a general agreement, in order to secure at least an equality of robbery to all sorts and conditions of clerical exploiters.

Another matter on which the Churches are coming to an agreement is the preservation of Sunday as a day for religious worship, and, if possible, for nothing else. They want the day all to themselves. When they take down their shutters they want to do business under a strict law of protection. No one must compete with them. If they cannot *compel* the people to come to the house of God, as they did in the good old times, they can at least give them the choice of church or nothing.

This is the governing idea of the Temperance Bill which has been formulated by the Church of England, and which is naturally supported by the Nonconformists, in spite of their fear and hatred of the Establishment. Dr. John Clifford, like a little pope, sends a circular letter to the newspapers, pointing out the merits of this Bill, and calling upon Dissenters to support it, if only on the ground that the Church party is in power, and that the Drink Traffic cannot be tackled without its assistance. The Rev. Hugh Price Hughes takes the same line in the *Methodist Times*. This gentleman rejoices over the prospect of closing every refreshment house in England on Sunday. The people will then have to get their refreshment at Methodist gospel-shops, or at similar establishments belonging to other

firms. Methodism will not bag *all* the customers, but it will have its share in the scramble. Glorious opportunity! Yet a bitter taste comes into the mouth of the apostle of religious privilege. Perhaps the people will not stand the most drastic legislation! They may develop a will of their own and kick their tyrants into limbo. It is necessary, therefore, to treat them with some consideration; not on principle, but merely on grounds of prudence. Sunday closing is to be the law in England, as it is already the law in Scotland, Ireland, and Wales; but, alas, the Englishman is either drier, or has a cursed inclination to decide for himself whether he is thirsty, and a slight allowance must be made for his unfortunate temper. "In view of the fact," says the Methodist oracle, "that England is on this subject more degraded and servile [poor England!] than any other part of the United Kingdom, it might be necessary to tolerate the opening of public-houses, especially in large cities, for one hour at noon, and for one hour later in the day, where the inhabitants desired it."

One hour at noon! Just in time to give the people a drink going home from church. How thoughtful! It reminds us of the old row in Glasgow over the first proposal to run tram-cars on the Sabbath. The religious party found it necessary to come to a compromise, and it was decided that the cars should run in time to take people to kirk and take them home again.

The one hour later in the day should, of course, be immediately after evening service. Upon this point we hardly expect a serious difference of opinion. It is so eminently just and reasonable. And what is the use of legislating if you cannot put in a clause for your own convenience?

Perhaps the Church and Chapel men of God will kindly tell us why public-houses should be closed on *Sunday*. If drinking a glass of beer is *wrong*, it is *wrong every day*. It cannot be wrong on one day and right on another. Let the men of God try to be logical. We know it will be a severe strain on their intellects, but they should really make the attempt. Let them explain why they pitch upon Sunday as the day for interdicting what they permit on every other day in the week.

That publicans and their servants require a day of rest may be perfectly true; but why do the clergy espouse their grievance, and leave the rest of the overworked population to find their own remedy? It may be alleged that, Sunday being a day of leisure, the people have more opportunities for drinking, and that the occasion is favorable for giving them a lesson in sobriety. But this is sheer nonsense. Sunday drinking is not exceptionally heavy in England. The leisure which gives a chance of exercise and fresh air does not minister to intemperance; on the contrary, it produces a natural flow of good spirits, which does away with the craving for stimulants.

The men of God do not really care for sobriety. That is only their pretence. They have no wish to lift the people out of the slough of a dull and deadly Sunday, such as is now the opprobrium of our towns and cities. They

clamor for the closing of public-houses, but they also oppose the opening of public museums, libraries, and art galleries. In this respect the Wesleyan Conference is at one with the Convocation of Canterbury. And this fact is absolutely decisive. It demonstrates the purely professional motives of these clerical reformers. Whether the indulgence be moral or immoral, elevating or degrading, they are equally opposed to it as trenching on their privileges. We tell them plainly, and without the slightest hesitation, that they are wretched and miserable hypocrites. They are fighting for religion under the mask of morality. They are animated by motives which they dare not confess. Their sole desire in this matter is to enforce the old order to "remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." God never said that. The priests said it for him. And they say it still, and for the very same reason.

G. W. FOOTE.

### FOLK-LORE RESEARCHES.—II.\*

THE importance of the serious study of folk-lore—*i.e.*, the traditional tales, games, sayings, customs, and superstitions of the peasantry—as an item of historical, pre-historical, and anthropological research, has only been discerned since the labors of the brothers Grimm in the early part of this century. The Folk-Lore Society, which has spread its name and its methods through Europe and America, itself only dates from 1878, when, thanks to the labors of Darwin, Tylor, Spencer, Huxley and others, the evolutionary methods of study had made their way to the front. Dr. Tylor, in particular, had shown the importance of collecting and comparing the survivals of archaic beliefs, customs, and traditions found among savages and the less advanced of civilised peoples. The work of collection is going on, though, perhaps, not as rapidly as might be desired, in view of the extension of civilisation, fast obliterating its own earlier stages. The task of interpretation needs a more thorough outfit. There have long been recorders of customs, tales, and traditions; but the person who shows their place in the evolution of human culture is more than a collector of relics of the unrecorded past. He is a scientist, dealing with one of the most intricate branches of anthropology, and needs a sound training in psychology and in archæology; familiarity with the workings of the human mind as well as with the records of the past.

What, then, are the results of folk-lore scientific research? They are nowhere more fully or more modestly set forth than in Mr. Hartland's volumes. Briefly, the study of folk-tales, customs, and traditional beliefs entirely confirms the evidence from other departments of anthropology, that man, instead of being the degenerate descendant of ancestors created perfect, has developed from a condition of utter savagery, in which imagination has a strong and reason a minor place, and all objects animate and even inanimate are endowed with life and personality. Early man is infantile in faith, and finds nothing incredible in children born without fathers, or men ascending into the sky, or being transformed into other modes of life. The very beginnings of human science and philosophy are magical omens and spells. As Mr. Hartland observes, no substantial distinction is drawn between the physical and the spiritual:—

"The abstract entity we call a soul has no existence for them: it is a philosophical speculation, whereof they have no conception. The soul, to them, is but another body which quits at times in life this visible frame, as a man quits his dwelling, on errands of business or pleasure, and forsakes it finally at death, as a corpse is carried out of doors. It is but a fragment of the man. It may take a fresh form, become a new whole, new but the same; for it will differ only in form, if indeed it will differ so much as in form. And the conception of divinity current in the lower culture corresponds with that of the soul. The god is precisely 'a magnified, non-natural man,' though not always in

human shape, corporeal and subject to all corporeal wants and infirmities, but endowed with potencies and privileges far beyond those of ordinary men: potencies and privileges, however, the like of which are attained sometimes with much fasting and striving and patience by the greatest shamans. This corporeal nature of the god enables man to enter into communion with him, to put and keep himself in touch with him, to become united with him."

Such methods of communion are those used to cement the tie of kindred, such as eating together, and especially blood covenanting, a portion being offered to the common gods or ancestors. Sacrifices are thus essentially sacramental.

The whole circle of human ideas is influenced by social conditions. What, then, does folk-lore tell us as to the social conditions of yore? It reveals an age when the family is the unit. Early man can no more be understood apart from his brotherhood than can a foxhound apart from his pack. The Bible takes us back to a time of joint tribal responsibility, and of the institution of a *goel*, or blood avenger, as a means of maintaining the family; and folk-lore takes us still further. Mr. Hartland holds that the South Australian savage, who looks on the universe as the Great Tribe to one of which divisions he himself belongs, is only in a stage through which there is reason to believe every other people in the world has passed or is passing; so many and so widely scattered are its traces, and so deeply impressed are they upon human institutions and beliefs. Funeral and marriage rites alike display the importance of union with the clan, the latter showing forms of sacramental admission, similar to those of blood covenanting, often with an acknowledgment of the rights of the whole kin over the bride, and sometimes with indications of her capture.

From an examination of bridal customs, Mr. Hartland concludes that the ancestors of the European nations must have passed through a stage of society wherein group marriage was the rule. This was the conclusion drawn by Mr. Lewis H. Morgan from his investigations of systems of kinship among savage tribes.\* When purchase replaced capture, the help of clansmen was equally called in. But the community thus established was quite distinct from absolute promiscuity,† and would be modified by individual appropriation. The proofs of the early solidarity of the family group, as afterwards of the village community, cannot fail to modify the conclusions of modern sociologists, and deserve study alike by Socialists and Individualists.

Mr. Hartland writes as the mere recorder of facts illustrative of human evolution, and holds no brief for any side. But facts are bound to have their weight, and I confess that to me the importance of folk-lore researches is their bearings upon religion and sociology. Apart, however, from any such conclusions, the work of Mr. Hartland is crowded with interesting illustrations of early thought, custom, and superstition. If its circulation is commensurate with its merits, the author should be well recompensed for the pains he has taken.

J. M. WHEELER.

### THE FALLACY OF ALLEGED CHRISTIAN EVIDENCES.

THAT a radical change has taken place within the last few years in the method of defending Christianity is, no doubt, obvious to most observers of Christian propaganda. It may, therefore, be interesting to ascertain if the new plan that has been adopted is of greater evidential value than was the old. We think it is not, inasmuch as it is based upon assumption; and, further, it is in itself an endeavor to achieve what is extremely improbable. The new method, like the old, assumes that Christianity contains nothing but undoubted truths, and that it is unique in its origin, nature, and influence, which certainly is not the case.

What are Christian evidences intended to prove?

\* The Grimm Library, vols. ii. and iii., *The Legend of Perseus*. I.—The Supernatural Birth. II.—The Life Token. By E. Sydney Hartland, F.S.A. (London: David Nutt, Strand.) 1895.

† *Ancient Society*. This conclusion I supported in the first edition of my *Footsteps of the Past*, published ten years ago. † In the instructive story of Tamar (Genesis xxxviii.) we see that she only became as a *Kadesh* to make Judah perform his tribal duty.

Principally that Christianity is a Divine system, and that its teachings are unique and superior to all others as a regenerating force. Now, if by the term "divine" is meant a supernatural power, we allege that no one has any knowledge of what such a power really is; hence we fail to see that there can be any evidence to prove its connection with mundane affairs. Moreover, as we are not aware of any nation or community where the "unique" teachings of Christianity are in operation, no opportunity is afforded whereby we can fairly test their regenerating value. Certain it is that what are called Christian truths are not self-evident, for if they were there would be no necessity to attempt to prove their veracity. Besides, the very fact that so many divergent opinions exist as to the nature of these assumed Christian truths shows that their true meaning is not manifest and uniform. Throughout the Christian era there have always existed different views as to what Christianity really means; and the same disagreement is prevalent at the present time. Of course, this obscure and contradictory phase of New Testament teachings may not affect their utility so far as they can be made useful; but it renders the consistent defence of any one particular view exceedingly difficult.

In former times either miracles, prophecies, Bible inspiration, or the divinity of Christ was deemed sufficient to prove the orthodox claims for Christianity. But Free-thought criticism has demonstrated the fallacy of this notion, for either or all of the above "evidences" may be conceded, and then the contention that the teachings of Christ are compatible with a progressive state of society would not be established. It is not now contended that the belief in miracles and prophecies is confined to Christianity. As to miracles, the Bible frequently asserts that they were the result of human agencies. As thought became more advanced the old theory of Bible inspiration was given up, while even many Christians no longer argued for the original theological conception of the divinity of Christ. Thus new ground had to be selected, and among the latest statements of the new departure is one furnished by Dr. Alexander Stewart, "Professor of Systematic Theology in the University of Aberdeen." In his "Handbook of Christian Evidences," after dealing with many other lines of defence, he comes to what he terms "the cumulative effect of the Christian evidences," which, he says, "may be taken as one of the chief grounds of its [Christianity's] acceptance by men of ordinary capacities, opportunities, and education." He gives the following "points," which he considers "contribute to the formation of such a cumulative argument: (1) The preparation for Christ in Israel. (2) The appearance of Christ at the time when Messianic expectation was at its height. (3) That the religion of Christ is co-extensive with the civilisation of the world. (4) The unity of plan and spirit in the books of the Bible. (5) The confirmation of Scripture by memorial ordinances and institutions, as the Lord's Supper and the Church itself. (6) The evidence of Christianity, with which all others will stand or fall, is the impression produced by the personality of Jesus Christ. All others must be regarded as subsidiary and supplementary to this."

Before further noticing these five "points," let us consider some of the reasons that the Professor offers in support of the "cumulative argument." He says: "Much obviously depends on the date of the Gospel narratives and their relation to each other, as well as to the other writings of the New Testament; and all this is proper matter of evidence. Then there is the great subject of prophecy, the correspondence of prediction with event." We grant that much of the value of what is put forth as Christian evidences depends upon "the date of the Gospel narratives and their relation to each other." And it is just here where the defect of the evidences is manifest. Who can tell the exact date when the Gospel narratives were written? The higher criticism of recent years has shown the uncertainty surrounding this event. Even the pious Hartwell Horne, who wrote some years ago in favour of Christianity, noticing the diversity of opinion among eminent critics as to the period when the Gospels first appeared, says: "In this conflict of opinions it is difficult to decide. The accounts left us by the ecclesiastical writers of antiquity concerning the times when the Gospels were written or published are so vague, confused, and discordant that they lead us to no solid or certain determination." The same uncertainty exists as to the date of fixing the canon of the New

Testament, for, according to Dr. Samuel Davidson, one of the most eminent Biblical scholars the Christians have at the present day, it is clear that no fixed canon of the Gospels existed before the latter half of the second century ("The Canon of the Bible," pp. 114 and 144). He also admits that "it cannot be said that the canon was fixed in the second century, but merely the incipient efforts to bring it about" (*ibid.*, p. 144).

Now, we submit that this Christian testimony shows that we have no trustworthy evidence as to the period when the Gospels were written and received as canonical. Supposing, therefore, that Christ really said and did what is ascribed to him, it is, to say the least, most improbable that we have a faithful account thereof. And evidently Dr. Davidson's statements support this view, for he writes that "legend and myth speedily surrounded" the person of Jesus. And he adds: "That the life of the great Founder should be overlaid with extraneous materials is special matter for regret. However conscientious and truth-loving they may have been, the reporters were unequal to their work. It is also remarkable that so many of them should be unknown; productions being attached to names of repute to give them greater currency" (*ibid.*, pp. 109-10). Thus, as Dean Alford affirms: "These Gospels, so important to the Church, have not come to us in one undisputed form. We have no authorised copy of them in their original language, so that we may know in what precise words they were originally written" ("How to Study the New Testament," p. 18).

In reference to the alleged relation of the Gospel narratives to each other, surely Professor Stewart has overlooked, not only the many contradictions existing in the Synoptics, but—what is far more damaging to his theory—the pronounced difference in tone and character between the Gospel ascribed to John and those bearing the names of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. We say "ascribed" advisedly, because Dr. Davidson distinctly observes: "The Johannine authorship [of the fourth Gospel] has receded before the tide of modern criticism; and, though this tide is arbitrary at times, it is here irresistible" ("Canon of Bible," p. 127). Mackay, in his "Rise and Progress of Christianity" (p. 184), says: "Many critics, Baur especially, have shown at length the impossibility of considering the fourth Gospel historical, or as anything but the Christianised logos theory in narrative form." The omissions in this Gospel are also remarkable. For instance, some of the principal incidents regarding the life of Jesus as recorded in the first three Gospels are absent in the fourth. Here we have no genealogy, no record of infancy, no sojourn in Galilee, no temptation, no transfiguration, no Jewish Passover, no agony in the garden, no cry of anguish from the Cross, no development of Messianic doctrine, no second advent, and no earthly kingdom. As Greg remarks, "the whole tone of the delineations, the tenor of the discourses, and the general course of the narrative are utterly different from those contained in the synoptical Gospels." From these facts it will be seen that the "relation" between the Gospels is not of a very near character.

CHARLES WATTS.

(To be continued.)

## JOHN THE BAPTIST.

In the third gospel John the Baptist and Jesus are represented as cousins, their mothers being kinswomen (Luke i. 36). The character of their respective sons, and the work devolving upon each, appear in the same gospel to have been well known and the subject of conversation among them. Matthew iii. 14, in like manner, makes the divinity of Jesus known to John before the baptism; it is precisely this knowledge which makes him hesitate to perform the rite, saying: "I have need to be baptised of thee."

It is a very difficult matter, however, to reconcile this synoptic view of the relationship of the two men with the language attributed to the Baptist in John i. 29-34, where he expressly declares (1) that before the baptism he knew him not; (2) that his purpose in baptising was that the Messiah should be revealed; and (3) that the pre-arranged sign by which he should know him was, that he should see the spirit descending and abiding upon him.

To avoid the contradiction between the two accounts, it has been suggested that John means, not that he did not know Jesus, but that he did not know him to be the Messiah; which is still in contradiction to Matthew iii. 14. Moreover, if this be the meaning, it follows (1) that, although both Mary and Elizabeth knew the facts, they had never revealed them to their sons, but had kept the miraculous incidents preceding and attending their birth a profound secret for thirty years; or (2) that, if John had heard the stories, he did not believe them. The upholders of the traditional belief may be left to choose that horn of the dilemma which they may prefer. The former supposition is seemingly inconceivable, and the latter is fatal to the credit of the miracles involved.

It follows that we have no historical grounds for believing that John was only six months older than Jesus, or that there was any kindred between the two families, or an intimacy between the two mothers. It is even a matter of doubt whether the Baptist ever at any time acknowledged the Messiahship of Jesus. Our narratives of the baptism are unhistorical (see baptism). John, confined in the prison from which he never came forth alive, sent messengers to inquire whether Jesus was the Messiah (Matthew xi. 2-6; Luke vii. 19-23); but there is no evidence that he was convinced by the reply, which, if the events at Cæsarea Philippi are to be credited (see Cæsarea Philippi), can hardly be authentic in its present form. May it not be assumed that John, had he been convinced, would have instructed his disciples henceforth to follow Jesus? But in Acts xix. 2-4 we have clear indications that he did not do so, and that he never told them that he who was to baptise with the Holy Ghost had actually come:—

“And he said unto them, Did ye receive the Holy Ghost when ye believed? And they said unto him, Nay, we did not so much as hear whether the Holy Ghost was given. And he said, Into what were ye baptised? And they said, Into John's baptism. And Paul said, John baptised with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people that they should believe on him which should come after him—that is, on Jesus.”

It is to be noted that the words, “that is, on Jesus,” are Paul's, not John's. If John had told his disciples to believe on Jesus, would not Paul have quoted his words to that effect, instead of resting the whole case on a questionable interpretation of his own?

The supposition is favored by Scripture (Matthew xix. 14; Mark ii. 18; Luke xi. 1; John iii. 25-30), and, indeed, is generally allowed, that John did not turn his followers over to Jesus, but that they continued to exist as a separate body till long after the spread of Christianity. John's failure to instruct his disciples concerning Jesus may, indeed, be accounted for on the supposition that he was dead when the messengers returned; but he cannot then be cited as a witness to the Messiahship of Jesus.

A sect still exists in Persia, in the country around Bassorah, sometimes known as the “Christians of St. John,” professing to be the Baptist's disciples. Doctrinally they may have little in common with John, yet we cannot but note the fact that they respect Jesus as an impostor.

It may be regarded as certain that the tyranny of the Roman oppression led to fresh hopes, as the oppression of Antiochus Epiphanes had done before (see Daniel), that the time must be near when God would deliver his people. This, and not divine inspiration, was the source of the Baptist's idea.

John was executed by Herod, according to Matthew xiv. 1-12 and Mark vi. 17-29, for rebuking sin in high places; but there is little doubt that he was moved to the deed in part by his fear of a political uprising in which John's Messianic doctrine seemed likely to culminate. Many years after, the knowledge on the part of Christian believers that their master was among the number of those whom John had baptised made it necessary to represent John as admitting his own inferiority to Jesus; and, this ground-work being obtained, the existing narratives were readily developed with the gradual formation of Christian theology.

—Independent Pulpit.

C. L. ABBOTT.

God proposes, but man disposes.—Benjamin Constant.

## ATHEISM NOT AGNOSTICISM.

MR. OTTO WETTSTEIN is a German American Atheist, who scorns the name of Agnostic, and desires to put Atheism on a demonstrable basis. This is how he sets about it in the pages of the *Twentieth Century*:—

“In law and equity the affirmative is obliged to prove its case. If, then, a proposition is self-evidently absurd, unnatural, and absolutely impossible, why concede to those affirming, without a shadow of proof, that their belief is equally rational with our unbelief, that ‘it may be so,’ ‘I don't know,’ etc.

“There is a universe that excludes anything else of like character—two infinities being an absurdity.

“The universe (nature) is here and there and everywhere. This proves that God cannot be here and there and everywhere.

“Two bodies cannot occupy the same space at the same time. Matter (implying energy and force) monopolising every point of space, nothing else can occupy it in addition.

“The universe exists now. Something cannot come from nothing, therefore the universe has always existed.

“Being eternal and infinite, this excludes anything anterior, exterior, or superior to it.

“Is God in the universe, or the universe in God? If there is a God, either of these propositions must be true, yet both are glaringly absurd.

“Can an engineer drive a locomotive and be a locomotive at the same time? If not, how can a God manipulate an infinite universe and be infinite ‘Himself’?”

“Yet the universe, *outside of a God*, is an absolute reality, as much so as a locomotive is a reality outside of the engineer. The world is a reality, our planets, the sun, all the countless millions of stars within reach of our telescopes, and the infinitude of stars and systems beyond the reach of our strongest lenses, which science infers to exist—all these are a reality, and all these, yes, every object of knowledge is a reality, and all these are *not God!* How, then, in the name of reason, I ask, can a God, of whom we know absolutely nothing, be infinite, when an infinite number of material objects—not God—fill all space?”

“But does the universe exist *in God*? If we but imagine for a moment the aspect of the universe to resemble a huge machine of infinite proportions, eternally active in all its vast proportions, the idea of the universe existing within a God will appear equally childish and simple.

“All phenomena are the results of energy co-existent and inseparable from matter. All cosmic motion, change, and life may be traced to this physical and chemical energy pervading all nature—*never to a God.*

“Mind—the so-called infinite as well as finite—implies limit, localisation, conditions, etc. This fact tends to prove that while God, perchance, might concentrate his mind on the world or some particular sect or individual, considering their exhortations, the rest of the world and the universe for the time being would be Godless!”

“From a late scientific authority I quote in proof: ‘It is impossible for a person's mind to be in two places at the same time.’ Noted chess-players may play twenty games simultaneously, but it is done by speedy transfer of thoughts from one game to another, and not by considering two moves at once.

“Thus ‘Omniscience’ is impossible.

“Again! Mind implies limit and necessitates organism, brain, nervous force, etc. This, again, makes impossible a God. Let the Church demonstrate *how a God without a brain can be a God and all it implies, or how a God with a brain can be infinite*, and I will kneel down and worship with them.”

From the sixth to the tenth century there were not in all Europe more than three or four men who dared to think for themselves; and even then they were obliged to veil their meaning in obscure and mystical language. The remains part of society was during these four centuries sunk in the most degrading ignorance. Under these circumstances, the few who were able to read confined their studies to works which encouraged and strengthened their superstition, such as the legends of the saints and the homilies of the fathers. From these sources they drew those lying and impudent fables of which the theology of the time is principally composed.—H. T. Buckle.

## A SERMON.

*(Concluded from page 708.)*

I HAVE been told—but I don't vouch for its truth—that, if you feed a young puppy with whiskey till you get him drunk, it will stop its growth, and he will always remain a puppy. That is exactly the way revelation acts upon these gospel babes. Once get them fuddled upon one of these pretended revelations, and they never make any more progress, but remain intellectual dwarfs, as long as they live, unless by some fortunate chance they happen to meet with the scientific antidote to the religious microbe; but even then they will carry the effects of the disease to the end of their lives. Millions of these besotted babes, these undeveloped men and women, are sorrowfully wearing out their lives trying to save their imaginary souls by bowing down to an entirely imaginary God, while they totally neglect the real good and true things that pertain to their genuine and temporal salvation. So besotted are they that they consider themselves superior to the wise and prudent, and look down with scorn upon those who refuse to swallow the poisonous dose that they call revelation, and who offer to them relief from the disease that degrades them. They are like the drugged puppies with their eyes still shut and afraid to open them to the light of day, for fear that something awful and entirely imaginary should happen to disturb the dreams that they try to persuade themselves are essential to their happiness.

As has been said, the pretenders to revelation and concoctors of religions have been numbered by thousands, and the religious history of the world is but the long record of the struggles of these conflicting religions for supremacy. The wise and prudent have always been in the minority in all communities, and, therefore, all these systems have been adapted to the capacity of the babes, such being the great majority and the easiest to be fooled. A few of these religions have survived; and the wrecks of those that have gone down in the struggle and disappeared strew the bottom of the ocean of time.

If mankind had been all of one race, but one would have survived, and the degradation of all would have been complete and hopeless. Superstition enforced by priestly rule would dominate all classes, and the wise and prudent minority would be crushed out by fire and sword. Fortunately, the different characters of the different races and peoples of the world inclined each one to adopt a different religion from the others—one more in harmony with the feeling and character of the people. Thus, among the peaceful and moral people of Eastern Asia, Buddhism most strongly appealed to their sense of right and justice; and 500 years of Christian mission work have made no impression upon this peaceful, moral, and tolerant form of faith.

On the other hand, the Aryan race, the most arrogant, aggressive, and intolerant of all races of mankind, found in the Christian religion and in the character of the Christian God the reflex of their own cruel and bloodthirsty dispositions; and so this worst of all religions became the dominant one of Europe and America.

But there is one trait in the character of the Aryan that goes far to redeem him from his faults. That is his love of liberty and ambition to investigate whatever he sees going on about him, to find out its causes and results, and thus put himself in the ranks of the wise and prudent; and then, when he reaches that desirable position, he shakes off the shackles of superstition, and the priest has no further use for him, or he for the priests.

With the Aryan race rests the hope of the world for redemption from babyism. Babes are all right, and everybody who has a heart loves them; we cherish them for their potency of development into reasonable men and women; but the world has no use for those who always remain babes in intellect, and go through life taking their religion upon trust, without as much thought as an ordinary domestic animal. The time is coming for the rule of the wise and prudent, and believers in revelation will be on a par with believers in Santa Claus.

J. P. RICHARDSON.

*—Independent Pulpit.*

The Church is at rest only when she has everything her own way, or is able, without let or hindrance, to trouble the tranquility of others.—*Voltaire.*

## A GODLY MYSTERY.

“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh.”—1 TIMOTHY III. 16.

“GREAT God, on what a slender thread You've hung eternal things,” sung the pious and ever-lamented Dr. Isaac Watts. In this verse the Deity of Jesus Christ is hung on so slender a thread that we must handle the subject delicately, lest it snap, and the Godhead of our blessed Lord and Savior dissolve into thin air. The momentous question is, *Who* was manifest in the flesh? Our Authorised Version says God. But our Revised Version says: “The word *God*, in place of *He who*, rests on no sufficient ancient evidence. Some ancient authorities read *which*.” Is the Greek *o*, *os*, or *theos*? Learned critics have demonstrated how easily *o*, delicately handled, might develop into *os*, or *os* degenerate into *o*. The Codex Sinaiticus reads clearly *os—who*. So does the Ephrem MS. The Alexandrian probably has the same, though some say they see, or fancy they see, a stroke over the *os*, which delicate handling would convert it into *Theos*, and give us “God,” instead of “godliness manifest in the flesh.” The Vatican manuscript is mutilated at this passage. Some swear it should read *os*, others *Theos*. Whether these things occurred by accident or design is a delicate question we need not enter upon; but students of theology are usually trained to look for design in godly matters. The Rev. T. S. Green allows that Chrysostom's citation of this passage, 1 Timothy iii. 16, has been tampered with. When it only needed a delicate stroke to introduce a Deity, a scribe's self-restraint must have been sorely tempted. Great without controversy is the mystery of godliness, and nothing godly is without controversy except its great mystery. The reader who spends his days and nights in seeing all that can be said for *o*, *os*, or *theos*, will probably conclude, as I have begun, by using the words of the inspired Watts, “Great God, on what a slender thread You've hung eternal things.”

LUCIANUS.

## TWO EPITAPHS.

PRICE HUGHES (*prospective*).

HERE lies Hugh Price Hughes, who did earnestly try  
To write what he thought wouldn't pass for a lie;  
His candor was such that, when *truth* wouldn't do,  
He wrote what he really thought *ought* to be true.

HUXLEY.

In spite of spooks from Palestine,  
Who books inspired as well as swine,  
And left them “all at sea,”  
He worked till death, from days of youth,  
At searching for, and finding, *truth*,  
His motive, aim, and fee;  
He worked as only good men do,  
He worked for Truth *because 'twas true!*  
O well for you and me.

G. L. MACKENZIE.

## God Visiting Bradford-on-Avon.

Mr. Goulter Wood writes as follows of an incident which occurred at Bradford-on-Avon, near Bath, in 1805. The bishop visited the town, and the parish clerk said: “Let us zing to the praaze an' glawry o' God dree vusses o' the hundurd an' vourteenth Zaam, a varsion specully 'dapted to the 'casion by myself:—

Why hop ye zo, ye little, little hills?  
An' what var de 'e skip?  
Is it a 'cos yu'm proud to see  
His graco, the Lard Bishop?

Why skip ye zo, ye little, little hills?  
An' whar var de 'e hop?  
Is it a 'cos to preach to we  
Is com'd the Lard Bishop?

Yese; he is com'd to preach to we,  
Then let us aal strik' up,  
An' zing a glawrious zong o' praaize,  
An' bless the Lard Bishop.”

## A Pious Villain.

When pious villains are gibbeted in our pages, Christians are apt to exclaim, "Oh, that is only in the *Freethinker*." We, therefore, reprint the following article from the *Daily Telegraph* of October 30:—

"A really remarkable story of religious professions used as a cloak for crime has been revealed in the trial of a man named Hart, who has just been sentenced to five years' penal servitude for defrauding customers to his Birmingham pawnshop. Mr. Hart for some years has led what is generally called a 'double life'; he 'boasted two soul-sides,' a feat described by Browning to be more common than is generally supposed. One of his characters was that of churchwarden of St. Mark's Church, a pious Churchman of extremely charitable proclivities, with a penchant for reading the lessons when allowed to do so. On the other side of his nature he was a thief and a swindler, if nothing worse. Being agent for a burglary insurance company, Hart naturally insured his own shop, and it was a somewhat curious coincidence that on three separate occasions robbers should have broken into his place of business, thereby enabling him to put in as many claims for compensation. His business flourished, and he moved from Birmingham to Olton, where he soon established a reputation for uprightness and philanthropy. Had the vicar only permitted him to read the lessons there, he was prepared to make a present to the whole congregation of new prayer and hymn-books; out, as the vicar declined the pious transaction, the gift was never made. Last year his wife was discovered shot through the head; it was supposed that she had been cleaning a gun, as a duster was in her hand, and that she did not know that the weapon was loaded; a verdict of 'accidental death' was therefore recorded. Only Hart and one young child were in the house at the time of the death. It is said that for many years the Birmingham police knew Hart to be a dangerous thief, but had no definite legal proof against him. Various complaints, however, were made of swindles perpetrated by this upright Christian in the course of his pawnbroking business, one of his tricks being the substitution of paste for real diamonds in articles of jewelry pledged with him. A gold eighteen-carat chain, worth a large sum, was mysteriously transformed, whilst in his keeping, into a hollow nine-carat worth only a pound or two. He preferred, if he could, to swindle women who were unaccustomed to pawnbrokers' shops. One widow forgot to take her pawn-ticket away after depositing a gold watch; Hart accordingly stole the ticket, and appropriated the watch, pretending that it had been handed to a stranger who had presented the ticket. He frightened another poor widow, who pawned a sewing machine, by enlarging on the awful legal consequences of some technical slip she had made, so that she fled from his shop, leaving the machine behind. He promptly took it to a sale-room and disposed of it. He is said to have been engaged to a young woman of considerable possessions, to whom he gave a valuable engagement ring which he had stolen. This plausible scamp was on his way to church when arrested, and he had the impudence to threaten the police with an action for unlawful arrest. The learned Recorder seemed staggered at the prisoner's cool effrontery, and remarked that in his judicial experience he had never met with a similar case. Fortunately for society, there are not many persons capable of the hypocrisy and cunning which this man exhibited; and upon the whole it is as well that his term of office as churchwarden should have ended, and that his tenancy of a convict's cell should have begun."

## Bible Morals.

BUT, although the wilful homicide of a Hebrew was punished with death, the beating to death of a slave is to be punished only if the slave die under the master's hand (Exodus xxi.); a circumstance in which the Hebrew law compares very favorably with the Egyptian regulation. The barbarous *lex talionis* is fully enforced, and the regulations as to compensation for injuries sustained by the "pushing" of oxen remind us more of the ingenuity of a Kafir chief than of a divine law-giver. The killing of the thief caught in the act is an ordinary regulation of primitive societies, and the making of restitution shows that the immorality of the act was not considered, but only the loss which it occasioned. Death was, as we should expect, inflicted for adultery; but the lying with a woman who was not the property of another, either as wife or betrothed, has the same want of immorality as among the peoples of antiquity in general.—*C. S. Wake, "Evolution of Morality," vol. ii., p. 60.*

An event cannot be at once historical and supernatural, for history is only possible on the presupposition of the absolute continuity and homogeneity of experience; and that presupposition is uprooted and annihilated by the presupposition of revelation.—*F. Macan, "Hibbert Essay on the Resurrection," p. 116*

## ACID DROPS.

BULGARIA is a Christian country, and we are not surprised that murder and piety go very well there together. After the brutal assassination of the country's foremost, if not its only statesman, the nation is in a state of intense agitation over the religion of a baby lying in his cradle. He doesn't know anything about it, but that doesn't matter; for, if his religion is to be decided for him, the same is done for most of the babies on this planet. Prince Boris would be baptised as a Catholic in the ordinary course of things; but the Russian party, which is now the dominant one in Bulgaria, clamors for his baptism in the Greek Church. Could there be a more striking illustration of the truth that religion always follows the line of temporal power? Instead of moulding empires, it is moulded by them, though it takes credit for the whole performance afterwards.

What a change has taken place since the poor first Salvation Army began its operations in Jerusalem, under the command of General Peter, the rocky gentleman on whom Jesus Christ promised to build his Church. The Church of Christ is now in a close confederacy with wealth and power. Its only care for the multitude is to bamboozle them. New countries, like America, are just as bad as old countries, like England, in this respect. Just look at the reports of the marriage of the Duke of Marlborough (rank) and Miss Vanderbilt (money). St. Thomas's Church, in Upper Fifth Avenue, New York, was lavishly decorated throughout with the costliest flowers, and the sacred edifice was filled by nearly two thousand of the snobocracy of the city. Gold and jewels gleamed and flashed everywhere. We read that the bride had a two-hundred-pound handkerchief to wipe her nose with, or to sop up her perfunctory tears; and that her wedding presents are worth hundreds of thousands of dollars. It actually took two bishops and a rector to marry this portentous couple. And while the ceremony was being performed myriads of poor wretches in New York, male and female, were slaving to earn a paltry pittance, which can hardly be said to keep them alive, but just to keep them out of the grave. Hurrah for English and American civilisation! Three cheers for the blessed influence of Christianity!

Special funds are being raised this year for missions to the heathen. At the same time we note the statement in the *Methodist Times* that there are 343,000 people in Glasgow without any church connection.

The Rev. Stewart Headlam says he has no power as a citizen to say what sort of sermons the Rev. Price Hughes should preach, and he wants to know what power Mr. Hughes should have to determine what kind of play or dance he should go to see. Mr. Hughes replies that he only interferes in the interest of morality. But there is only one part of morality that Mr. Hughes seems to care about, and it is the very part which decent people treat with judicious reticence. Swift's definition of "nice people" was "people with nasty ideas."

The West-end gentleman who cures fat people continues his expensive advertisements in Christian journals. A big one appeared last week in a Christian journal which is very strong on "temperance" and "purity." No doubt the enterprising advertiser knows his public. For our part, we agree with Kant that gluttony is a worse vice than drinking, being more intensely selfish and bestial. The drinker stimulates his brain, the glutton loads his stomach; the one may be a madman, but the other is an idiot.

E. J. Smith and Co., the publishers of *A Business Diary*, which gives a page with church lessons on Sunday, must be a very pious firm. When an order was given them from the Leek Publishing Co., a reply was received: "We do not recognise you as in the trade. Want nothing to do with Freethinkers or Socialists." The business firms who are desirous of thus restricting their custom must be few in number, and deserve to have their wishes advertised.

The American papers report an outbreak of religion in its old undiluted strength at Texacapa, in Mexico. The local judge ordered ten heretics to be burnt alive. He declared this was carrying out the will of God as revealed to him in a vision. When the news reached Mollango, the chief town in the district, the mayor, with an armed escort, proceeded to the scene of the outrage, and found the people in the public square dancing like maniacs round the ruins of the jails in honor of the Virgin Mary.

It appears that the *auto da fé* took place on the occasion of the quinquennial celebration of the Coronation of Our Lady of Guadalupe, a festival which always evokes religious fervor in Mexico. The judge quite coolly justified his conduct on the ground that he had simply obeyed the

Divine command. In a vision a saint had told him what to do, and God had wrought miracles to confirm the instructions. He had ordered the constables what to do with the "sinners," who were dragged from their beds and conveyed to jail, which was then set on fire. The "heretics," he said, "were filled with fear, and shouted for mercy; but heaven's will had to be done, and they were consumed to bones, and the vengeance of heaven was averted from our community."

This Lady of Guadeloupe is a perfect vampire to Mexico. An immense proportion of its wealth flows to her shrine, which is furnished with a solid silver railing weighing sixty tons.

A few years ago an individual in an ecclesiastical costume used to cross the frontier from Switzerland into France every morning with a large breviary in his hand. He was a man of dignified aspect, and received every mark of deference from the Customs officials, who sometimes accompanied him part of the way in his daily stroll. At last a letter put the authorities on the alert, and the presumed priest was found to be a professional smuggler, who had contrived to introduce into France at least a thousand watches in his breviary, which, on examination, proved to be a tin box.—*Daily Telegraph*, Nov. 9.

Quakers are popularly supposed to speak only when the spirit moves them. The spirit in the old days used to talk gibberish (see 1 Cor. xiv.), and even the Quaker deems it necessary to regulate the spirit's proceedings. It is noticed that, in the program of arrangements for the Conference of the Society of Friends at Manchester, "a time limit will probably have to be imposed." We wonder they are not reminded of the text, "Quench not the spirit."

The Rev. Silas Hocking, lecturing on "John Bull in his Best Clothes," the title apparently a plagiarism of Max O'Rell's famous lectures, wound up by saying: "Lastly, John Bull believed in the Sabbath. Infidelity had tried to root itself in English soil, but had not succeeded, and would not succeed. He earnestly looked forward to the day when not only the bread shops, but the liquor shops, would be closed on Sunday." If Mr. S. Hocking fancies that John Bull is going to let the parsons have the permanent monopoly of Sunday, we think he must be very credulous himself, as well as an inculcator of credulity in others.

Sir Claude Macdonald, in his report on the Niger Coast Protectorate, says that he has seen more drunkenness on one Fast-day in godly Glasgow than he has during his thirteen years' experience of Africa.

It is pointed out that, while the Archbishop of Canterbury's Church Patronage Bill would put an end to the sale of the cure of souls by public auction, it would only increase the private traffic carried on through the medium of the *Church Patronage Gazette*. The sin and shame of the iniquitous traffic does not affect the Archbishop, but only its publicity.

The Rev. G. S. Reaney, who deserted Congregationalism for a better billet in the Church, asks for more public money for church schools. His own school at Christchurch, Greenwich, already takes from Government £555 13s. 8d. The school pence and an endowment bring the sum up to £684 3s. 3d., while the whole amount donated by the church and voluntary subscriptions is £88 15s. 7d. Thus nine-tenths of the income is derived apart from the people who have sole control of the schools.

A number of public men in the United States were appealed to by the American Humane Association for their opinions on vivisection. The majority of them have expressed their disgust at the practice, but Father Tyrell, of the Society of Jesus, boldly says animals "have no rights," and they have no rights because they have "no radical capacity for pure reason." But—your Jesuit always has a but—"animals are the property of their Maker, who lends them to us for our use." "We should take reasonable, but not anxious, care for their well-being and freedom from suffering. Anxious care is unreasonable if the anxiety arises from the false imagination that we are dealing with a person, and, so far, an equal." Compare this balanced inhumanity with the simple words of the Freethinker Bentham: "The question is not Can they reason? but Can they suffer?"

The *Echo* says: "We are on the eve of a very important struggle on the re-marriage of divorcees question. The facts are said to be these. An English lady was recently married a third time in a West-end church by episcopal licence. She had been divorced by her first husband, had married the co-respondent, and had in turn divorced him in America on grounds which would not have entitled her to a divorce here. Archbishop Benson will be immediately petitioned to cite certain dignitaries before him, in order that the whole question of jurisdiction may be threshed out."

The *Church Patronage Gazette* gives particulars of about 400 advowsons and next presentations to more or less desirable livings in the Established Church, which are offered for sale by private bargain through the medium of an eminent firm of ecclesiastical agents. For good livings when the incumbent is old about ten years' purchase is required. Thus, a Hampshire rectory with a net income of about £600, which, we are assured, is one of the choicest livings in the South of England—price £6,000, and another in Somersetshire—net income £700, for which six thousand guineas are asked. The additional words "or offer" probably mean that less would be accepted. The word "Sold" conspicuously stamped across the announcement warns us that we are too late for a snug little Durham Rectory, price £3,000. The net income is here £340, from glebe, endowment, etc. It is observable that the population is always stated where it happens to be very small. Careful examination of the list has failed to reveal any such remark as "Population poor and large; great opportunities of useful work." On the other hand, "Society, both lay and clerical, extremely good," is an oft-recurring notification, together with "Healthy and pleasant neighborhood," "Kitchen garden," "Charming scenery," "Golf links in neighborhood," "Good river fishing," and so forth.

The Nonconformist Conscience is up in arms again. Under the chairmanship of the Rev. F. Herbert Stead—brother of the *great Stead*—a meeting of Nonconformists took place at the Robert Browning Hall, West Newington, and resolutions were passed against Earl Russell and Mr. W. M. Thompson for voting as County Councillors in favor of the Empire license. Earl Russell replies sarcastically that the worst thing about the professed defenders of morality is "the violence of their language and the questionable nature of their methods." Mr. Thompson replies that the purity zealots are doing their best to wreck the Progressive cause in London, and reminds his critics that "the gloomy tyranny of the Puritans was followed by the unspeakable excesses of the Restoration."

It is very funny to see Mr. Stead and the rest of those Nonconformist zealots fulminating from the Robert Browning Hall. Robert Browning would laugh at them if he could only behold their antics. He loved good cheer, good wine, and good recreations. There was nothing sour about him, and he would have been the last man in the world to legislate against his neighbor's amusements.

Mrs. Chant's crusade against the Empire really made matters worse. The drinking and talking promenaders, instead of having a circle to themselves, were simply crowded into a smaller space, to the annoyance of quieter persons who occupied seats in front of them. Zeal is all very well, but it is a dreadful thing without sense.

*Monk's Herald*, an Isle of Man paper, is down on the local Bishop, who has been evincing a disinclination to acknowledge that Church debts ought to be paid. "We have heard of consciences," it says, "being seared as with a hot iron. Would his Lordship dare to try this process with his? It would be worth sixpence to see him make the attempt."

The pious Chief Constable of Walsall is on the war path. His business is to keep the peace and catch criminals. But that is too prosaic a view for *him* to take of his duties. He regards the godliness of the town as under his special protection. Accordingly he is prosecuting tradesmen who do a little bit of legitimate business on Sunday. One of these is Mr. Card, who used to be well known in connection with our movement in Birmingham. Mr. Card says he will not give in, and the Chief Constable is bent on ruining him if he doesn't. The papers are full of the matter, and Walsall is in an uproar. What a ridiculous fuss over a few packets of sweetstuff! It would be all right if Mr. Card sold pills.

Miraculous visions still occur in rural parts of Italy. At Petriguano, in the district of Assisi, one Giovannino, little Johnny, probably "the natural" of the district, saw the Holy Family on September 20, and conversed with the Virgin. A little cabin chapel was erected on the sacred spot, like the germs of the great shrines and pilgrimages began. But the new cult has been nipped in the bud. The authorities, knowing these tales are always got up by the priests for their own benefit, had the chapel demolished on the night of October 31, which was dark and stormy. The Blessed Virgin has not as yet made any remonstrance against this sacrilege.

Emperor William has had himself painted as the Archangel Michael, calling on the nations of Europe, symbolised by females, to rouse themselves in defence of religion and morality. Of course the Cross figures in this wonderful picture. Those who have more money than sense can buy an engraving of the picture for six shillings.

Professor Marcus Dods, who was *not* turned out of the Free Church of Scotland for heresy, writes in the *Sunday School Chronicle* on the way in which the Bible should be taught in the light of the "Higher Criticism." Dr. Dods thinks the children will not esteem the Bible any the less for being told that it contains mistakes. But he advises that they should be told so in a very judicious manner. Yarns like that of the talking serpent in Eden should be explained to children as "stories with a meaning." Very pretty, no doubt; but the trouble only thickens with this advice. For what is the "meaning" of that story? How on earth could its priapic significance be explained to Sunday-school children? We pity the teacher who follows Dr. Dods and finds himself in a very nasty trap.

What a Mississippi of falsehood is history. Here is Father Gerard, of the Society of Jesus, "a descendant," says the *Western Mail*, "of the famous Father Gerard, of Gunpowder Plot fame" (it does not say if he descends in a direct line), in a lecture on November 5, telling us that our history of the attempt to blow up Parliament in 1605 is altogether wrong. The harmless, innocent Roman Catholics had nothing to do with it. It was Cecil, the King's Minister (an ancestor of Lord Salisbury), who, "if he did not actually originate the plot, at least knew of it long before the pretended discovery, and worked it for its own ends." If national events alleged to have happened less than three hundred years ago can thus be questioned, how questionable must be supernatural ones related of a country much further off, and at a far more distant time?

Noticing Canon Tristram's *Rambles in Japan*, the *Athenæum* says: "Of the effect generally of Christianity upon the different classes of the people, of its results, political and social, achieved and likely to be achieved, we know nothing. Against Buddhism it seems to make little way, while it may be doubted whether Christianity has ever, either in Japan or China, produced any impression upon intelligent Confucianists." The truth is that wherever Christianity goes it only succeeds with uneducated populations, who are in what may be called the devil-worshipping stage of culture.

T. C. Hayllar, writing in the *Nineteenth Century*, says: "I think we ourselves would find it much more difficult to justify our treatment of China by anything to be found within the four covers of the New Testament than the Chinese would to find a sanction for their dealings with us from the teachings of their sacred books. The simple fact is that there do not exist any reasons for the Christianisation of China except from the standpoint of the missionaries themselves."

*Public Opinion* (November 8) reports that in one of the central departments of France a young woman recently gave birth to a child whose eyes were placed on the top of its head. Evidently this is another case of design, and the infant, who is said to be doing well, should be educated for an astronomer.

Mr. Justice Hawkins, at the Cambridge Assizes, remarking on the question addressed to a child of seven whether she understood the oath, said he did "not believe that one witness sworn that day could explain it."

We are disappointed in the Rev. A. J. Waldron, and if he does not mend his ways we shall have to advise Freethinkers to disregard him and his meetings. He sent us a lame letter about the slanders he was reported to have uttered at New Brompton against Colonel Ingersoll. His explanation is that he did not stand sponsor for the slanders himself; he merely mentioned them, and said that he had nothing to do with them. But why mention them? How would Mr. Waldron like us to say, "We have heard it said that he is a very questionable character, but we have nothing to do with that, as we have to discuss principles, not personalities"? Would he not think our conduct very mean and contemptible?

Mr. Wheeler has shown the utter falsity of Mr. Waldron's statements—probably picked up at second-hand—about Lloyd Garrison and slavery; while his reference to Charles Bradlaugh, in this connection, was not only false, but in the worst possible taste, seeing that "Iconoclast" is no longer alive to defend himself.

Mr. Andrew Shiel, writing to us from Hartford Colliery, Cramlington, Northumberland, informs us that Mr. Waldron, in a lecture at Shankhouse, on November 2, stated, in proof of the evil teachings of Secularism, that the *Freethinker* had inserted an advertisement of a League for registering prostitution. Mr. Shiel asked him, at the close of the lecture, what the advertisement really was. Mr. Waldron replied that he would send it to Mr. Shiel. He did so, and it was the advertisement of the Legitimation League. We inserted that advertisement, in common with several other London journals, in the ordinary way of business. We have nothing

whatever to do with the League, and are in no way responsible for its principles or its policy. However, we have read its program, and we have no hesitation in saying that Mr. Waldron's statement about it is an outrage on common decency.

Mr. Shiel wrote to Mr. Waldron, saying that he had looked through the advertisement and found nothing in it to justify the statement that it was a League for "registering prostitution," and expressing a hope that the reverend gentleman would see his way to withdraw the statement. It is a matter of indifference to us whether he does so or not, for some of the utterances of Mr. Waldron that have been reported to us are such as we do not care to print, and it is really his affair, not ours, if he sinks down to the common dirty level of Christian Evidence advocates.

Roman Catholicism is, after all, the most flourishing branch of the Christian Church. The present Pope has established the new Patriarchate, that of the East Indies, 29 new archbishoprics, 85 bishoprics, 2 abbeys, 59 vicariates, 2 apostolic delegations, and 22 prefectures apostolic. Altogether 194 new titles attest the old inclination of the Catholic hierarchy to subdue the world.

According to the latest returns, there were 107 School Boards which teach the children that nonsensical forgery, the Apostles' Creed. These have just been added to by the Wolstanton School Board, who have decided to teach it by a majority of 6 to 5. As the teachings of the Creed, which is a distinct infraction of the spirit of the Education Act, is sure to lead to controversy, its adoption may not be an unmixed evil.

An eminent theologian has recently announced that the real "function of religion is to preserve and to enrich life, and not to insure the soul." If that is the case, it is evident that there is a good ground for action against the horde of clerical actuaries who have been realising large commissions out of their post-mortem insurance policies. Securing money under false pretences will be the charge, and before an impartial jury it will undoubtedly go hard with the defendants. A just decision will result in a large decline in business for the New Jerusalem Soul Assurance Co., Limited, and an assignment will surely follow in a short time.—*Boston Investigator*.

*Tidings of Life and Peace* is the title of an evangelical journal emanating from Derby. The editor has only bad tidings. He says: "We are living in truly serious times. The popular leaders of religious thought are unblushingly renouncing the very foundation truths of Christianity. The total ruin of man, the absolute necessity of the new birth, salvation by the grace of God, and cleansing by the blood of Christ, have all become (in their estimation) only old-fashioned theories." So Mr. G. Cutting comes to the rescue with the rare old tidings of life and peace for himself and friends, and hell-fire for the majority of the world's inhabitants.

Reviewing P. Hume Brown's *John Knox*, the *Athenæum* says of the attitude of Knox to Queen Mary: "The real explanation is Knox's intense belief in God and intense belief in himself—beliefs practically identical, for his God was simply himself, John Knox, writ large, omnipotent as he would fain have been, and omniscient as he was or claimed to be. He seemed to himself God's oracle, a very prophet, and to stand towards Mary as Elijah had stood towards Jezebel." This explanation will suffice for the attitude of many men of God besides John Knox.

The Jews in the Army are wanting some attention paid to their religious requirements. It is considered an excuse for not granting this that some who did not enter the army as Jews might proclaim themselves as of that race to have an extra holiday on Saturday. Needless to say, all Freethinkers in the army require is exemption from the duty of attending the ministrations of other people's religion.

A minister who has recently returned from Johannesburg says: "A week before I arrived a hundred black boys were 'run in' and whipped for the crime (?) of walking on the pavement." Why did not this Christian minister protest against the barbarity on the part of his fellow-Christians at the time, and on the spot where it occurred?

One of the speakers at the recent half-yearly meeting of the London Congregational Union quoted the statement of the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes that London is the wealthiest and most sinful city in the world. Perhaps it is. We are not as great an authority on "sin" as the reverend gentleman. But we venture to remark that London is the most church-and-chapely capital in the world. Perhaps this has something to do with the large quantity of "sin" to the square yard.



### Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, November 17, Leicester Secular Hall, Humberstone-gate:—11, "The Use and Abuse of the Bible"; 6.30, "Huxley and Agnosticism."

November 24, Foresters' Hall.

December 1, Bradford; 8, Foresters' Hall; 15, Newcastle; 22, Manchester.

### TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—November 17, Liverpool; 21, Blackburn; 22, Bolton; 24, Manchester; 25, Derby; 27, Ipswich. December 1, Wood Green; 8, South Shields; 15 and 22, Foresters' Hall, Clerkenwell.—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.

F. MORGAN.—There are several books of Humorous Recitations in the market. We have not examined any of them, but Bell's has a good reputation.

THOMAS MAY.—Your letter is no reply to Mr. Collinson.

E. G. TAYLOR.—Thanks. See paragraph.

F. P.—Obviously not insertable.

E. PINDER and A. J. HOOPER.—Clearly a mistake, but too late now for useful correction.

A. S. COLEMAN.—We will see if the suggestion can be carried out.

ADMIRER (South Shields).—Thanks for your encouraging letter. Only an active propaganda (as you say) will enable Freethought to reach the millions.

E. CAWLEY.—Obliged. See paragraph.

H. JONES.—Glad to hear of the success of Mr. Cohen's week-night lectures at Blackburn under the President's new lecture scheme.

E. B.—It was probably refused by the shop boy.

G. E. MACDONALD (New York).—Many thanks. Mr. Wheeler will write. Hearty greetings.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND (£100 for the year to provide expenses).—Already acknowledged £71 18s. 3d. Miss Vance now acknowledges the following: H. Barrett, 1s.; A. Cayford, 1s.; E. Self, 2s. 6d.; F. W. Smith, 10s.; W. Mortimer, 5s.; Dr. Nichols, 10s. 6d.

S. M. PEACOCK.—Mr. Watts informs us that you wrote to us respecting his North Shields lecture, and expressing approval of our lecture scheme. Your letter did not reach us, or we should have noticed it as a valuable testimony.

W. CLOGG.—Thanks for your letter and the trouble you have taken.

C. OSBOURN, who has read our *Bible and Beer* with "the greatest pleasure," writes: "Although a Freethinker of some years' standing, I have been familiar only with the Agnostic advocates, and only recently seen your organ and efforts. If my opinion is worth anything, I will say that your journal does you great credit, and must do the cause great good. With such a Trinity as Foote, Watts, and Wheeler, you ought to redeem the world."

S. A. BENDIT.—Thanks for cuttings.

H. C.—Cuttings always welcome.

W. BABRINGTON.—Your letters in the local press must do good. It is a distinct advance, as you say, when such opinions can be ventilated in ordinary newspapers. We are glad to know that you have derived so much profit from our articles.

W. DYSON.—Our compliments to the Barnsley friends. Keep pecking away, as Lincoln said.

S. ELLIOTT.—The London School Board elections took place last November. We never heard before of the Northampton "infidel" called "Noodles" who has been "converted" at Northampton. Perhaps "Noodles" converted him.

H. W. JONES.—The new edition of Mr. Holyoake's book on Public Speaking and Debate is published at 3s. 6d.

G. GLANCY.—We share your hope that the new lecture scheme will revive the Huddersfield as well as other Branches. Let us know the result of Mr. Cohen's visit. It is our intention to press forward. After all, it is what is done that tells; and we believe the Freethought party, in the main, prefers action to paper resolutions and pious opinions.

R. W. PARSONS, P. WOODWARD, and J. R. BARNES.—Transferred, according to your letters to Miss Vance. Thanks.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Truthseeker—Secular Thought—Freidenker—Echo—Für Unsere Jugend—Die Freire Gessellschaft—Mona's Herald—Freedom—Pioneer—Liberator—Isle of Man Times—Leek Times—Liberty—Birmingham Daily Post—Two Worlds—Weekly Bulletin—Progressive Thinker—Boston Investigator—Scottish American—Philosophical Journal—Open Court—New York World.

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

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

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

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

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.

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.

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.

### SHILLING MONTH.

#### SUBSCRIPTIONS RECEIVED.

(Where merely the name is given the amount is one shilling.)

W. Fowler, 2s. 6d.; H. A. Huxley, 2s. 6d.; S. Elliott; E. Broughton; A. J. Hooper; H. W. Swisham; E. B., 2s. 6d.; Admirer (South Shields), 2s. 6d.; Pendlebury Friends, per J. Yates, 6s.

Per Miss Vance:—C. Harwood; Edinburgh Branch: McLeash, 2s.; McGregor; Cohen; Brown; Robertson; J. F. Dewar, 4s.

### SUGAR PLUMS.

MR. FOOTE delivered three lectures for the Birmingham Branch on Sunday, in the Alexandra Hall, which they have taken permanently. It is rather too far from the centre of the town for special lectures, especially when the weather is what it was on Sunday. How it did rain, to be sure! It was quite spiteful in its incessant vehemence. As a consequence, the morning and afternoon meetings were somewhat thinned, though the hall was crowded in the evening with a deeply-interested and most enthusiastic audience. The Branch means business at Alexandra Hall, and has arranged for an active propaganda throughout the winter. The committee are all poor men, but they are earnest workers, and they have an invaluable secretary in Mr. J. Partridge, a quiet, modest man, who does his work with great thoroughness.

Mr. Daniel Baker, the oldest but one of the N.S.S. vice-presidents, attended two of the three meetings. His friends in all parts of the country will be happy to know that he has recovered from his bad attack of influenza, and is now enjoying a fair measure of health. His aged wife, as true and brave a Freethinker as himself, is feeble in body, but her mind is still clear and bright.

Mr. Foote lectures to-day (Nov. 17), morning and evening, in the Secular Hall, Leicester. His subjects are both new, and will doubtless attract large audiences.

Mr. Charles Watts had three enthusiastic meetings last Sunday at Newcastle-on-Tyne. In the evening a heavy storm came on, the rain coming down in torrents, and the wind blowing a hurricane. This, of course, interfered with the meeting at night. An interesting discussion took place after the evening lecture. Mr. Watts speaks highly of the members of the local branch, and also of the new hall they have engaged for Sunday lectures.

On Monday evening Mr. Watts lectured at Stockton-on-Tees under the President's new lecture scheme. Of course the admission was free, and the hall was crowded, even the standing room being occupied. The lecture was well received and heartily applauded, several persons confessing that they had entertained false ideas of Secularism. An old member rose and said that the President's lecture scheme seemed to him the best thing that had yet been done for the party. It is worth mentioning that the collection just covered the local expenses.

Mr. Watts lectures to-day (Sunday), November 17, three times at Liverpool, and during the following week he lectures under Mr. Foote's Lecturing Scheme at Blackburn on November 21, and at Bolton on November 22.

The Prince's Theatre, Bradford, has been refused for Mr. Foote's lectures on December 1, the lessee stating that the trustees will not allow it. An effort is being made to obtain the use of another theatre. We hope it will be successful.

Mr. Foote's *Shadow of the Sword*, a new edition of which is just issued by the Humanitarian League, was the subject of the first leading article in last week's *Reynold's Newspaper*. Our contemporary says that Mr. Foote has "summarised

the arguments against war with great skill, ability, and picturesque force."

"Slaughter and Christianity," says *Reynolds*, "seem two very familiar chums in this land. For centuries they have been the closest bedfellows, and our self-righteous people have felt no scruple whatever at the illicit intercourse."

Mr. C. Cohen lectured to a good audience at Foresters' Hall on Sunday evening, and met with a most gratifying reception. He was very loudly cheered at the close of his address. This evening (Nov. 17) the Foresters' Hall platform will be occupied by Mr. James Rowney, who will discuss the question, "Was Jesus a Reformer?" Mr. Rowney has done excellent and ungrudging work in the open-air lecture field, and we hope our friends will rally round him on this occasion.

Mr. Cohen has recently delivered nine lectures under the President's new lecture scheme, with good results in every case. He tells us that fresh interest is thus excited in our movement; people come to hear, members are enrolled, and literature is circulated. Mr. Cohen lectures at Bradford today (Nov. 17), and during the week he speaks (under the lecture scheme) at Huddersfield (Monday), Halifax (Tuesday), Heckmondwike (Wednesday), Stanningley (Thursday), and Todmorden (Saturday). Other fixtures are being made for the following week.

The New York *Truthseeker* of November 2 contains a report of the Annual Congress of the American Secular Union. President Putnam delivered an eloquent address on "Rome or Reason?" Of course he was re-elected. Mrs. Freeman, who resigned the secretaryship, is succeeded by Mr. E. C. Reichwald. Mr. Otto Wettstein is treasurer. The vice-presidents are C. B. Waite, T. B. Wakeman, J. E. Remsburg, and Franklin Steiner. Many subjects of practical interest were discussed, and letters were read from G. W. Foote and Charles Watts "amidst great enthusiasm." It was resolved—"That this Congress recognises the cordial sympathy of our comrades of Great Britain and other countries, and recognises the generous manner in which they have welcomed our official representative, and in the spirit of like fraternity we invite George W. Foote, President of the British Secular Society, and Charles Watts, vice-president, to visit our shores, and we assure them a hearty and universal reception by the Freethinkers of America. It is hoped they will be present with us at the national Congress of 1896."

Mr. George E. Macdonald writes informing our sub that the meetings of the Congress of Freethinkers at New York were "a distinct and unmistakable success." He says: "Tell Mr. Foote that his letter to our Congress was accepted with a shout which he might have mistaken for an English cheer if he had heard it, and the remark should be repeated of the letter from Mr. Watts."

Mr. Macdonald, speaking of Mr. Wheeler's article on "Garrison," says: "Nearly all the veteran infidels of this country were anti-slavery agitators, in so far as they were able to do any agitating at all. Your Christian evidence-monger has been deceived by our Christian history-monger, Johnson; but, being a Christian, he should have known better than to trust any other Christian in matters of this kind. Johnson made a Christian out of Abraham Lincoln, and was obliged to unmake him."

The *Scotsman* (November 4) hails the Rev. Alexander Robinson's book, *The Saviour in the Newer Light*, as "a remarkable sign of the times." The author, who is the parish minister at Kilmun, Argyleshire, gives up all the miracles of the gospels, including the supernatural birth and the resurrection. He holds Jesus up simply as a great moral teacher sent by God. The fourth gospel he declares to be most untrustworthy, and says it is "hurled down irrevocably from the high pedestal on which piety used to place it." All this is very gratifying. It shows that Freethought is penetrating the very churches. In the course of time it will be seen by all that Jesus is not even a great moral teacher, but the figurehead of a mythical system.

The following letter, which reaches us from the far north of Scotland, will interest many of our readers: "It may be of some interest for you to hear of how things move beyond the Grampians. I am not in ordinary eligible as a juror, but last week, through some inadvertence, summoned, I attended without demur. I claimed to affirm, and the claim was duly admitted, without objection or remark. On the same day two witnesses made similar claims. One entered into some lengthy disquisition around some conscientious scruples, amidst which the judge checked him, and asked him to affirm if he wished, which he duly did. The second simply asked to affirm, and thereupon was duly affirmed. I was elected by my fellow-jurors as foreman, to deliver their verdict. I am in the midst of a priest-ridden population,

and the incident is only noteworthy in so far as it shows that we do move.—W. DUNCAN."

The Rationalist Press Committee has just issued a very useful pamphlet (6d.) by Mr. Charles Watts on "The Claims of Christianity." Our colleague takes the recent "Hand-book of Christian Evidences," by Dr. Alexander Stewart, as his starting-point. He goes over the whole ground with great care and thoroughness, giving telling extracts from all sorts of authorities as he goes along. His writing is firm but temperate, and is calculated to set open-minded people thinking. We sincerely hope the pamphlet will have (as it deserves) a wide circulation.

The Congress of the French Federation de la Libre-Pensée was attended by delegates from a majority of the 260 groups of which the Federation is composed. The question of education largely occupied the attention of the Congress, provincial delegates representing that owing to clerical domination there were parts where the law for compulsory education of 1882 was virtually a dead letter. Municipalities were called on to provide secular education for girls as well as boys, and resolutions in favor of the suppression of the *budget des cultes* and of the judicial oath were passed.

Mr. E. G. Taylor lectured for the Independent Labor Party at Manchester on the Blasphemy Laws, and the following resolution was adopted unanimously: "That this meeting of the South Manchester Branch of the I.L.P. pledges itself to adopt measures to influence Parliament to remove all laws from the Statute Book imposing disabilities on account of opinion by recommending the Executive of the I.L.P. to advocate and support the Liberty of Bequest and Religious Prosecutions Abolition Bills, and that these two Bills should be included in the program of the I.L.P." A sub-committee was appointed to see to the carrying out of this resolution.

*The Secular Almanack*, issued by the National Secular Society, and edited by G. W. Foote and J. M. Wheeler, is on sale. By resolution of the Executive it is now published at threepence. Of course it is slightly diminished in size, but it contains a great deal of information which is useful and interesting to Secularists, who should all obtain a copy, especially as any profit accruing from the sale goes into the Society's exchequer, to be spent on the propaganda of Freethought.

Mr. Sydney Gimson writes to us from Leicester, under date November 11: "I notice that in 'Sugar Plums,' in yesterday's *Freethinker*, you announce that Mr. Moncure D. Conway was to lecture at South Place Chapel yesterday, on the 'Centenary of Paine's *Age of Reason*.' I believe this mistake was owing to an error in the South Place lecture list. As a matter of fact, Mr. Conway lectured twice in the Leicester Secular Hall yesterday (as announced in our list and in your Guide to Provincial Lectures)—in the morning on 'Babeuf, and the Centenary of Socialism,' and in the evening on 'How Jesus Sank into the Tomb of Lazarus.' He had two very good audiences, who listened with the closest attention to the lectures. This was Mr. Conway's first visit to the Leicester Secular Society, but we hope it will not be his last. His lectures have given great pleasure, and the information given out by such an original thinker must bear fruit in thoughtful minds. Our Society is honored when we receive such men on to our platform, and from them we get the encouragement to persevere in the none too smooth paths of Freethought work."

An American committee has been formed for the purpose of erecting a memorial to Professor Huxley.

The *Bulletin Mensuel*, of the French Freethought Federation, reports the proceedings at the unveiling of a monument at Pontoise to Maria Deraismes, the first woman who was made a Freemason. Many of the leading French Freethinkers were present. The monument, which consists of a granite pyramid and a bust, is erected at a circus in the Rue Maria-Deraismes.

*Public Opinion*, of New York, gives every week careful extracts on religious, as well as other, topics. Occasionally it makes an extract from the *Freethinker*, and in the latest number before us gives the following striking extract from Alexander von Humboldt: "All positive religions contain three distinct parts. First, a code of morals very fine and nearly the same in all. Second, a geological dream. And third, a myth or historical novelette."

Ella E. Gibson, a well-known American Freethinker, now in her seventy-fifth year, writing to us from Barre, Massachusetts, says: "In my opinion yours is the best Freethought publication I read. I think you in England are ahead of us in America. The way you beat parson Hughes delighted me." During the Atheist Shoemaker controversy some

Christian wretch in London sent an infamous letter to this aged lady, his pious malignity being perhaps excited by the fact that her name was Gibson. What a beautiful religion it is that prompts a devotee to commit such a gratuitous outrage! We should like to have five minutes with the scoundrel. The interview should take place near a hospital.

Mr. Foote has engaged St. James's Hall again for three Sunday evening lectures in January (12, 19, and 26). He will probably work the West-End, in conjunction with Mr. Watts and perhaps other colleagues, during the rest of the winter. He is also arranging for courses of week-night free lectures in various parts of London during January and February. One lecture of each course will be taken by himself; the others will be taken by Messrs. Watts, Parris, Cohen, Moss, Heaford, etc.

## THE FOUNDATIONS OF FAITH.

COLONEL INGERSOLL'S NEW LECTURE.

ROBERT G. INGERSOLL talked for nearly an hour and three-quarters in the Boston Theatre, on "The Foundations of Faith." He had an immense audience, an enthusiastic reception, and a more than sympathetic hearing. The orator began his new lecture with an account of the way in which scepticism regarding Holy Writ arose in the minds of men. For many centuries, said he, the books of Christianity were accepted as facts. For many centuries the Church had absolute power. Very few questioned its authority; if they did, they ceased to be a part of the population.

A very few denied the dogmas, and most of them were satisfied with a consummation of eternal pain. When now and then somebody had a new idea about some particular passage, he was denounced as a heretic. Still, the heretics multiplied, until there came to be many kinds of Christians, and until all of the various kinds of Christians accepted what they called the fundamental truths—that is to say, the falsehoods at the foundation. Now and then some one went so far as to doubt even the existence of the Infinite Master which humanity had put above the clouds. Such a man was answered with the scaffold, though he generally admitted before he died that he was mistaken. But now and then a man stood by his reason, and was martyred; and all such should be remembered with gratitude by every free man and free woman in the world.

In spite of it all, there was intellectual advance. Doubt continued to spread; somebody looked at the stars, and found that this earth was not the centre of the universe, but was a mere grain of sand on the infinite shore of existence. Then men began to examine the earth, and found it to be more than six thousand years old. Then the Church came, and called these men infidels and rascals. But the objections became so great that the Church had to answer them, and it said that the Bible meant by the six days of creation six epochs, or long whiles. Yet the epoch or long-while theory could not be applied to the age of man on the earth.

According to the Scriptures, man has been upon the earth for 5,899 years. Now, it is known that certain forms of life existed in Europe hundreds of thousands of years ago. In caves once inhabited by human beings there have been found implements, flints, and knives, hatchets and arrow heads, made by men; and in these same caves have been found the bones of hundreds and thousands of these extinct animals, and those that have been extinct for hundreds of thousands of years. Now, every bone witnesses that the Bible is false; every flint instrument testifies that the writers of the Bible were ignorant as to the origin of the human race.

It is certain that hundreds of thousands of years before Adam lived men, women, and children inhabited this earth of ours. I would like the clergy to answer that, and it is no answer to say that I am a bad man; I admit that. Therefore, I say that the Bible is not true, and if it is not true on that subject, why do they call it inspired? If God made this world and wrote this book, he ought to have some idea of when he did it.

Mr. Ingersoll gave what he termed further proofs of the antiquity of the earth, as drawn from historical and other records. He pointed to the lack of scientific knowledge shown by the writers of the Bible. These things, said he, show that the Bible is not to be relied upon. And

to me, he went on to say, the fact that it cannot be enough to fill the world with joy. I hate it with every drop of my blood. It has driven millions to insanity. It has been the enemy of human liberty.

If the Bible is incorrect on astronomy and geology, cannot we rely upon it for historical facts? is asked. The lecturer here instanced as grossly improbable or false such a statement as that about Jeroboam's army of 800,000 men, and Abijah's of 400,000; and the one telling of the raising by David of \$2,000,000,000 in silver, and \$45,000,000,000 in gold, to build a temple ninety feet long, forty-five feet high, and thirty feet wide. The Old Testament, said Mr. Ingersoll, must be given up. The Old Testament, as one of the foundation-stones of our faith, is crumbling; and it is no longer a guide for men of intelligence or courage who have not been possessed by superstition.

The New Testament is just as deceptive as the other. No one knows, for example, when Christ was born; yet Christians seized on the 25th of December, the date of the festival of the sun god, and said he was born on that day. The story of his birth is told in all sorts of ways by the disciples. Matthew knew nothing of the heavenly host; Luke knew nothing of the wise men; Matthew heard nothing of the shepherds, and Luke knew nothing of the murder of the babes by Herod, or of the flight into Egypt. Which of these accounts is true? Why, the genealogies of Christ given by the disciples differ to the extent of fourteen to fifteen generations.

Is there ingenuity in all the pulpits of the world enough to harmonise these palpable contradictions? Why, they do not even agree about Judas. Matthew says that he repented and took the money back. Peter says that he bought a field with it; Matthew says that he hung himself, and Peter says that he fell down and burst asunder. Now, I don't believe that anybody betrayed Christ. If it is true that he made a public entry into Jerusalem, that he went into the temple and discussed with teachers there, is it possible that they had to hire a man to point him out so that he could be arrested? Now, I say with absolute confidence that he was unknown in Jerusalem, had performed no miracles, and never made a triumphant entry into Jerusalem.

Why did not Christ defend himself before Pilate? Pilate wanted to acquit him, but he would not let him. He wanted to find him innocent, but Christ would not help him. Did Christ wish to be convicted? No. But Christians think that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins; and that doctrine comes from the heart of savagery.

The New Testament is not historically true. You tell me that there is a living God; but why does he permit slavery to exist? Why does he permit Siberia? Why does your God allow injustice to triumph? Why does he give success to brute force and fraud, while innocence and kindness are trampled under foot? What is your God doing—counting hairs? Ministers ask if it is possible for God to forgive man; but I ask if it is possible for man to forgive God.

Mr. Ingersoll here assailed the Christian idea of God, severely criticising the conception of the Trinity. No God, he said, has ever asked me to worship him, or to raise a temple to him; and I am going to wait until he asks me. If I were a God, I would succor the oppressed. If I had the power, no lash should ever have been applied to the back of a slave.

The God of the Christians must perish from the universe. He is of no use. He has never answered a prayer; he has never heard the chains of the prison clank. A God that will not protect his friends ought to get away, and some other potentate ought to take his place.

The lecturer here entered into a discussion of the Christian idea of Christ. He described the doctrine of the incarnation as beyond the reach of reason, as defying observation and being independent of experience. My purpose, he went on to say, is to rescue the reputation of Christ. The God must die that the man may live.

If we are to rightly conceive of the character of Christ, many of the sayings which he is alleged to have uttered were not by him. The New Testament is not inspired, because many of its statements are untrue. Orthodox religion itself has no foundation in truth; beneath its structure can be found no fact.

But someone will say: "Oh, you are trying to take our religion away." No, I am not. Superstition is not religion. Faith without facts is not religion. Well, what is religion?

To love justice, to long for the right, to love mercy, to pity the suffering, to succor the weak, to forget wrongs, to remember benefits, to love truth, to be sincere, to love liberty—these belong to true religion.

Mr. Ingersoll here uttered a scathing indictment against the Christian conception of hell, and brought his address to a close by describing the function of hope in the world. Hope, said he, is the consolation of mankind; and let us hope, if there is a God, that he is wise and good; let us hope, if there be another life, that it will bring peace and joy to all the children of men. And let us hope that this poor earth on which we live may be at last a perfect world, without a crime and without a tear.

—*Boston Herald.*

## DEATH OF V. E. LENNSTRAND.

WE have to record the death of Viktor Emmanuel Lennstrand, one of the founders and martyrs of organised Free-thought in Sweden. His imprisonment for blasphemy, and subsequent establishment of *Fritankaren*, appealed strongly to the sympathies of English Freethinkers. Viktor Lennstrand was born at Gefle on January 30, 1861, so was only in his thirty-fifth year. He was educated at Upsala University, where he became acquainted with the works of Darwin, Spencer, Mill, and other Freethinkers. With the courage of his convictions, he got into a conflict with the authorities by lecturing in Upsala against Christianity, in 1887. In March of the following year the Swedish Utilitarian Society was started. By May he was sentenced to a fine of 250 crowns for denying the truth of the Christian religion, and, as he continued his propaganda, on November 29 he was imprisoned for three months for the same offence. Mr. Lennstrand defended himself manfully, and challenged the prosecution to prove that what he said about the Bible God was false. These were the first prosecutions for blasphemy in Sweden since 1821, when Professor Erik Gustaf Geijer was indicted for his work on *The Protestant Creed*, and was acquitted. Having full information of the case from our veteran friend, Captain Otto Thomson, a subscription was started in England, and we had the mournful satisfaction of contributing towards the expenses of his imprisonment. Continuing his advocacy, Victor Lennstrand founded *Fritankaren* as a journal of Free-thought, and lectured throughout Sweden. During 1889 he was subject to no fewer than eight prosecutions for blasphemy, each time being acquitted when brought before a jury, and sentenced when brought before the official tribunals. His last prosecution was for a pamphlet on *The Idea of God*, which has been translated and published in English. Eventually he served two sentences of three months at Malmo, and one of six months at Stockholm. Of a delicate constitution, it is only too likely these imprisonments ruined and shortened his life, as, in the opinion of his friends, he was not the same man afterwards. Though he continued his active propaganda, he has been for some time past suffering from ill-health, and went back to his native place to die. Of an impetuous nature, it seems likely that the sword has worn out the sheath. In the *Social Demokrater* (November 2) Hjalmar Branting, the Socialist leader, and one of his former opponents, pays a tribute to him as an enthusiastic fighter and a distinguished propagandist. Lennstrand will be remembered for his sufferings and his efforts to arouse Sweden from her pietistic lethargy. We hope Sweden Freethinkers will unite over his grave to continue the work which he so valiantly began.

## Immortality.

It seems to me that the belief in immortality, and the belief in supernatural moral authority, are *secondary, incidental, and theoretical* beliefs, deriving their existence and their strength solely from the *primary, essential, and practical* certainties: firstly, that life is the first concern of living beings; secondly, that life is capable of being continually made safer, easier, and happier; thirdly, that the human will is an ulterior agency in improving human resources; and, fourthly, that a more satisfactory total of result is obtainable by the agency of wills set upon virtue than upon wills set only upon immediate self-service. Everything in the history of religious codes goes to show them at the mercy of any and every advance in social feeling. Religious sanctions have ever bent to moralities rather than moralities to them. This is increasingly the case, as social justifications for virtue emerge into recognition.—*Miss L. S. Bevington.*

## BOOK CHAT.

*Epicurean Science and Poetry, selected from Lucretius*, by Islay B. Muirhead, M.D. (J. Bale and Sons, 85 Great Titchfield-street, W.), is a little volume of translations from choice and important passages of the *De Rerum Natura* of the great Roman atheistic poet, prefaced by an essay on "The Genius and Influence of Lucretius." Within the compass of twenty pages Dr. Muirhead gives a very good account of the system of the great philosophic poet, and of its influence upon later and even the most modern thought.

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Lucretius has, indeed, an unique place among poets. He is the only one who has a cosmic philosophy. If of Sophocles it may be said he "saw life steadily and saw it whole," of Lucretius it may be said he saw it in relation to the surrounding universe. It is, indeed, a strong tribute to the atheistic view that it has produced the most philosophical of poems, and that, after nearly two thousand years, science, emerging from the slough of Christian superstition, has come round to the views of evolution propounded by Lucretius.

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It is curious what an attraction the Roman Atheist has for moderns, whether scientists or poets. His merits in popularising the atomic theory of Demokritos have been acknowledged by Lange, Tyndall, and Jenkin; while poets have united in praise of his poetry. Dryden, no less deserving regard as a critic than as a poet, speaks of his "sublime and daring genius." Tennyson has consecrated a poem to his thought and tragic end; and Mrs. Browning, holding the very antithesis of his philosophy, in her *Vision of Poets*, calls up

Lucretius, nobler than his mood,  
Who dropped his plummet down the broad,  
Deep universe, and said "No God"—

Finding no bottom, he denied  
Divinely the divine, and died  
Chief poet on the Tiber-side.

\* \* \*

Lucretius has not wanted for translators. In verse, Creech Good, Busby, and Baring; in prose, Watson and Munro, have all had their share of popularity. The version of Mr. H. A. J. Munro has the dignity of a classic, yet its merits are best appreciated by scholars familiar with the Latin text. For the popular reader there is still room for a good poetic version which shall combine easy flow of English rhythm with accurate translation of the author's text. As a specimen of Dr. Muirhead's version, we have only room for a few lines of the opening panegyric on Epicurus:—

When human life lay crushed full heavily  
Before all eyes, under the monstrous weight  
Of dark religion, which displayed her head  
From forth the heavenly regions, menacing  
Men with abhorred front, a Greek first dared  
To lift created eyes, and to withstand  
Her, face to face, unfrighted. Him nor tale  
Of gods, nor thunderbolt, nor the vexed heaven's  
Loud murmur quelled; but nerved with more resolve  
And courage to be first to break the bars  
Of nature's confines.

Dr. Muirhead has made, on the whole, a telling selection of passages. But he has not picked out all the plums, and what he offers us is good enough to make us wish for more.

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The catalogues of Mr. B. Dobell, 77 Charing Cross-road, always contain items of interest. No. 48, just issued, has, for instance, a work by Voltaire, with the bookplate of Hume; also the scarce work written by Marat when in England, and entitled *Philosophical Essay on Man*, being an attempt to investigate the principles and laws of the reciprocal influence of the soul on the body (two vols., 1773).

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Another and a new book in the same catalogue is the recently-published *Poems and Sonnets* of Herbert E. Clarke, who is saddened by the realisation of "what man has made of man," and his feelings find expression in vigorous rebel-songs, alike against kings and creeds.

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According to the *Daily News*, Mr. Johnston, the Orange M.P., has written a novel entitled *Nightshade*. Deadly nightshade it is, and the Rev. Mr. Werd, one of the characters, says: "It was only last week that a little Sunday scholar who had left Popery was placed on the heated bars of a grate, and lighted turf placed round him till he was almost burned to death." The "almost" happily marks Mr. Johnston's constitutional anxiety to be precise in matters of fact.

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The genius who tried to elevate himself by pulling at his bootstraps has found a follower in the Rev. Mr. Mileses

who writes on *Jesus as a Higher Critic*. Jesus certifies to Daniel and Moses, and therefore they must have written all ascribed to them. The Bible is all true because part of it affirms the authenticity of another part. Such is clerical logic.

\* \* \*

Mr. A. H. J. Greenidge, M.A., of Hertford College, Oxford, has put out a monograph on *Infamia: Its Place in Roman, Public, and Private Law*. It is curious, to say the least, that the work of Dr. Emil Reich, *Greco-Roman Institutions* (1890), in which he called attention to the importance of the doctrine of civil honor among the Romans, is not as much as mentioned by Mr. Greenidge.

\* \* \*

Mr. C. L. Abbott, of Austin, Texas, whose article on "John the Baptist" we reproduce in another column, is bringing out *An Agnostic Dictionary of the Bible*, which is to embody the results of the Higher Criticism.

## CORRESPONDENCE.

### THE WATTS-WALDRON DEBATE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In the last number of the *Freethinker*, Mr. John Wood, secretary *pro tem.* of the Christian Evidence Society (Newcastle Branch, I presume), has a letter of criticism *re* my report of above debate, and in fairness I trust you will make room for my reply.

When Mr. Waldron and his agent (the two witnesses referred to) called at my office, I showed them that my report, before being inserted, had been considerably "boiled down," and that in consequence of this process the word "practically" had been omitted after the words "arguments were." With this correction or addition I must adhere to my assertion, in spite of that I took no "written" notes the first night, only being requested the next day to send report; but, for Mr. Wood's information, permit me to say I took plenty of "mental" notes.

The deductions from ontology and psychology, which Mr. Waldron considered arguments, were but resorts to vocal pyrotechnics to blind his followers, or, as Mr. Watts said, "metaphysical problems" about atoms, etc., which had nothing to do with the subject of debate. To the rest of my report Mr. Waldron took no exception. Mr. Wood says I admitted Mr. Waldron "was certainly a good debater," and blames me for saying one thing and meaning something else. Mr. Wood has been misinformed. I never said so—it is absolutely untrue—and I meant it when I said that Mr. Waldron was certainly not a good debater. A prominent member of the C.E.S. opined that Mr. Waldron showed a great lack of perceptive power. Mr. Wood's experience differs entirely from mine. I, too, have seen a great number of Secularists, and not one differed from me on this point. Can the Secularists Mr. Wood refers to have spoken ironically, and Mr. Wood not noticed it? Mr. Wood draws the inference that Mr. Charles Watts must think otherwise. Oh, for the irony of fate! In the very same number of the *Freethinker* (p. 709) Mr. Watts thus refers to the debate: "In vain do we look for the successors of such disputants as Dr. Harrison, Dr. McCann, and Dr. Sexton.....they understood the art of debate..... Upon whom has their mantle fallen? I know not." Again, in the *Freethinker* (April 28, p. 261), Mr. Watts says: "The rev. gentleman was no match, intellectually for Mr. Foote. Debate is an art, and, in addition to a person having the gift to master it, practice is required. Now, it appeared to me that Mr. Waldron was deficient in each of these requisites.....as a philosophical debater he is not great. He seemed not only to fail to grasp the nature of his opponent's arguments, but also to possess a very limited supply of his own."

Entertaining great regard for Mr. Waldron as a gentleman, I regret having been forced into this correspondence.

CARL A. AARSTAD.

[We cannot insert any more letters on such a trivial and barren theme.—EDITOR.]

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## Christianity.

The fundamental theory of Christianity is false, and it is surrounded with a mesh of creeds and doctrines and theories varying from the monstrous to the ridiculous, and from the truthful to the unreasonable. Christianity, as such, never rose above persecution; toleration is not a Christian virtue. It is a low and debasing falsehood that man was perfect once, but is now bad by nature and lost without Christian salvation—a falsehood altogether mean and contemptible. The morally good and the bad are not equally lost forever. When this standard prevails, moral death is certain, and history proves it to the letter. Theological sophistry cannot permanently prevail over truth. Real, true men always have loved and always will love goodness, apart from theology and in spite of theology. And Christianity, founded upon the moral teachings of Christ, has lived, not because of its many theories and doctrines of salvation, but in spite of them. There is no more vital moral truth for mankind than this; not that we were once perfect, but that we are growing better.

The teaching of Christ is overlaid with creeds. Theology, insisting upon its rule and catechism, places a yoke upon our necks which we cannot and will not bear. When we are told that we cannot reason on God's wisdom, and that we must accept what we find or be outcast, we are mocked, though with never so honest intent. Our reason is all we have to guide us, and he who rejects it deserves nothing; he has thrown away his only talent.—*William P. Hale.*

### The Only True Fishing Story.

In connection with the fact that the Apostles were fishermen, I have said that there never was a fisherman who would not lie.

A Lexington man, leading his little son, stopped me not long ago, and the father said that the son had said that he had "a true fishing story that he wanted to tell Mr. Charley Moore." I asked what it was, and the boy said he had "been fishing a few days ago and never got a bite."

That's right; if I make a statement that is not absolutely true, I want to be corrected; but that is the first true fish story that I ever heard or read. The bigger the fish, the bigger the lie. The Jonah whale lie is the biggest one that was ever told, and I have no doubt that the fish lies in the Bible have much to do with the distinguished mendacity of the religion of this country.—*Blue Grass Blade.*

### Not Such an Easy Matter.

A Scotch chaplain was recently appointed to a prison in a certain town. He was a man who made the most of his office, and, entering one of the cells on his first round of inspection, he very pompously addressed the occupant, and the following passage occurred:—

Chaplain—"Well, sir, do you know who I am?"

Prisoner—"No, nor I dianna care."

Chaplain—"Well, I'm your prison chaplain."

Prisoner—"Oh, ye are; weel, I hae heard o' ye before."

Chaplain (letting his curiosity get the better of his dignity)—"And what did ye hear?"

Prisoner—"I heard the last two kirks ye were in ye preached them both empty; but ye'll no find it sic an easy matter tae dae the same wi' this ane."

### Pat Got Out of It.

Pat was on his way to church, and on the road met the priest.

"Good morning, Pat."

"Good morning, your riverince."

"Where are you going?"

"To mass, sor."

"Well, Pat, what is the meaning of mass?"

Now Pat did not know, but he was bound not to let the priest find it out.

"The loikes of you asking the loikes of me the meaning of mass!"

"Now, Pat, tell me, anyway."

"I don't like to tell you."

"But suppose a Protestant should ask you?"

"Oh, I could easily tell him."

"Well, I will be a Protestant, and meet you at the next corner."

So the priest walked away, and met Pat at the next corner.

"Good morning, Pat."

"Good morning, yer honor."

"Where are you going?"

"To mass, sor."

"What does mass mean?"

"Well, if you're a Protestant, it's none of your business."

## 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.

FORESTERS' HALL (Clerkenwell-road, E.C.): 7.30, James Rowney, "Was Jesus a Reformer?"

BRADLAUGH CLUB AND INSTITUTE (36 Newington Green-road, Balls Pond, N.): 7, Arthur B. Moss, "A New Age of Reason." Wednesday, at 8, public discussion, opened by R. Forder, "The Passage in Tacitus: Is it Genuine?"

BATTERSEA SECULAR HALL (back of Battersea Park Station): 7.45, J. T. Blanchard, "The New Secularism." Monday, at 8, entertainment. Tuesday, at 8, dancing class.

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, Robert Forder, "Pagan Symbols and Christian Imitations." Friday, at 8, free science classes.

PENTON HALL (81 Pentonville-road): 7, Joachim Kaspary, "Philosophy or Wisdom."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Westminster Town Hall, Caxton-street): 11.15, Dr. Stanton Colt, "Spiritual Dram-taking."

WEST HAM SECULAR ETHICAL SOCIETY (61 West Ham-lane): 7, C. E. Ford, "Science and the Bible."

WOOD GREEN (Masonic Hall, adjoining the Nightingale Hotel, High-street): 7.30, Touzeau Parris, "Man: Whence he Comes and How?"

### OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, Lucretius Keen, "Is Man a Free Agent?"

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30 and 3.30—lectures, weather permitting.

### COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM (Alexandra Hall, Hope-street): 11, Tom Groom, "What Socialism Is"; 7, "The Need of an Ideal in Life."

BLACKBURN (Venetian Hall, Darwen-street): Thursday, at 7.30, Charles Watts, "Secularism and Modern Thought."

BRISTOL (Shepherds' Hall, Old Market-street): 7, Mr. Dorné, "Rise and Decline of Christian Dogma."

CHATHAM SECULAR HALL (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday-school; 7, W. Heaford, "The Creed of an Unbeliever."

DUNDEE (Tally-street Hall): 2.30, discussion class; 6.30, D. F. Gloak, "The Decalogue."

GLASGOW (Brunswick Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): 12, discussion—J. Gilbert, "The Division of Labor"; 6.30, Anon, a lecture.

Huddersfield (Friendly and Trade Societies' Hall, Northumberland-street, No. 5 Room): Monday, at 7.45, "Is it Reasonable to Believe in God?"

HULL (Cobden Hall, Storey-street): 7, Mr. Fryer, "Fiction and Free-thought."

LEICESTER SECULAR HALL (Humberstone Gate): 11, G. W. Foote, "The Use and Abuse of the Bible"; 6.30, "Huxley and Agnosticism."

LIVERPOOL (Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street): 11, Charles Watts, "Theological Puzzles"; 3, "Christian Evidences a Fallacy"; 7, "Secularism in Modern Thought."

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, Ernest Newman, "The Common-sense of Atheism."

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE (Northumberland Hall, High Friar-street, near Grey's monument): 7, R. Mitchell, "The Christian and Secular View of Death."

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 3, F. H. Hart, "Some of the Country-folk of Thomas Hardy, the Novelist"; 7, "Yorkshire to Pennsylvania." Tea at 5.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, King-street): 7, music; D. Bow, "What Shall we Do with our Boys?"

STOCKTON-ON-TEES (32 Dovecote-street): 6.30, A. Cockcroft, "The Best Means of Furthering Freethought."

### Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 12 Merchant-street, Bow-road, London, E.—November 17 and 24, Bradford. December 1, 5, and 6, Edinburgh; 8, Glasgow; 15, Blackburn.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon-road, Rotherhithe, London.—Nov. 24, New Brompton. Dec. 22, Leicester.

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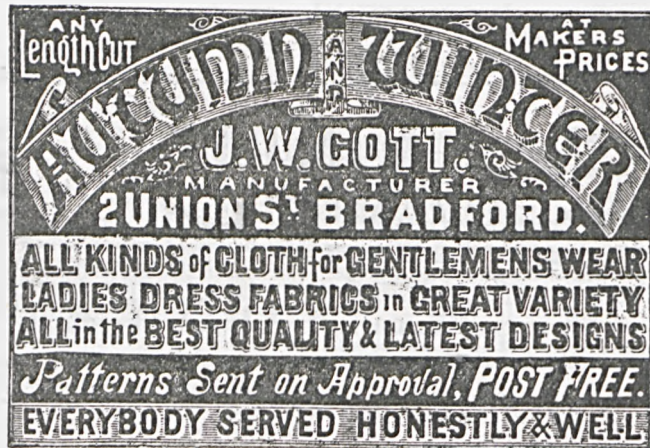
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