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The Freethinker

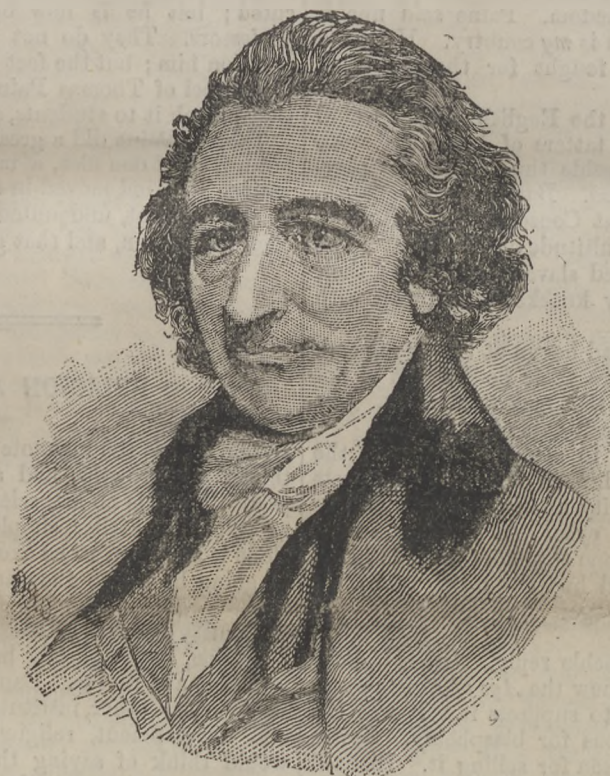
Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

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PRICE TWOPENCE.



THOMAS PAINE.

THE above portrait of Thomas Paine shows a fine intellectual face, lit up with imagination, and further characterised by what Carlyle would call "strong executive faculty." The possessor of such a face could not be a common man. It belonged—to use Paine's own phrase—to one of nature's aristocracy. That face alone is a sufficient refutation of the slanders circulated against him by fanatical Christians.

Happily the fame of Thomas Paine is emerging securely through clouds of detraction. His vindication has always been complete enough in Freethought literature, but the general public is now being disabused. Mr. Conway's "Life of Thomas Paine," in two handsome volumes, published by a "respectable" firm, has compelled the principal organs of public opinion to admit that he was not only one of our greatest political writers, but a man of sterling integrity and devotion to principle; in fact, that his real crime was being a hundred years in advance of his generation. He was a light-bearer of the vanguard of the army of human liberation, and was naturally hated, and therefore maligned, by the superstitionists and oppressors who flourished in the darkness.

Thomas Paine was not, in the strict sense of the word, a scholar. Certainly he was not one of those pedantic nincompoops, of whom Buckle said that their erudition only ministers to their ignorance, and the more they read the less they know. He was not steeped in the fallacies of the schools. He looked upon the world with a fresh eye. He saw things as they were, and he reflected upon them himself. His point of view was that of common sense. He refused to be deceived by the glamor around ancient false-

hoods. He tore away the mask from venerable impostures, though their very dupes cried "Shame!" He wanted the unsophisticated truth, the plain reality. And when he took the pen in his hand he wrote in the same spirit. His style, perhaps, owes something to Bolingbroke, but it is essentially his own. He is always vivid and vigorous; he is naturally eloquent; his periods flow along with the ease of a full and rapid stream. Yet he never falls into the eloquent man's danger. He is never diffuse or turgid. He is always as perspicuous as mountain air in sunlight.

Cobbett, another self-taught man, and in his mature life one of Paine's admirers, was also a great writer. Sir Arthur Helps—no mean authority—said that no one ever wrote English with greater force and accuracy. Cobbett, however, was less graceful than Paine. His ear seems to have been defective. There is a certain music in Paine's sentences. They will bear reading aloud. And a great French writer, Flaubert, gave this as one of the tests of style.

Paine's lucid writing was one of his offences. Had he written Republicanism like Harrington, or Freethought like Lord Herbert, he would not have become the bogey of Church and State. Common people could understand him. His very illustrations were all within the range of their experience. His criticism of Monarchy was perfectly intelligible to field laborers, and "the man in the street" could catch every point of his attack on the Bible. Paine believed that principles can be understood by common people who are looked down upon as "uneducated" by those who attach a foolish importance to mere bookishness. He acted upon that belief, and gained an immense audience. The result was that he was tried for treason and cast out of "decent" society.

Paine's first important writing was *Common Sense*, and the title was characteristic of the man. During the recent ridiculous quarrel between England and the United States, Mr. Gladstone telegraphed that "common sense is all that is required." Paine thought so a hundred and thirty years ago. He asked the Americans why they allowed King George to rule them like a lot of slaves from the other side of the Atlantic. He suggested that they should govern themselves. His voice rang like a clarion over the tumult. It roused the Americans, and they took his advice. King George was kicked out, and was succeeded by the first President of the United States. Thomas Paine was one of the chief founders of the great Western Republic. He spoke the word that fired men's hearts and led on to victory.

Having helped to establish one Republic, Paine returned to England with the hope of assisting in the establishment of another. Some cosmopolites said that their country existed wherever they found freedom. Paine said finely, "Wherever freedom is not, there is my country." He was a born fighter, and he always fought for the rights of others.

Paine could not believe that the English people would go on worshipping the rags and tatters of Monarchy. He thought they would soon cast aside the rattles and playthings of their political childhood. But he was mistaken. He did not understand the great Conservative instinct to which Burke appealed. The multitude did not want "The Rights of Man." They preferred slavery, and hated their intended liberator; indeed, they knocked him down with their chains.

This satisfied Paine that he had begun at the wrong end. Men's minds must be freed before their bodies. It is not the fetter, but the slavish mind, that makes the slave. The Age of Reason must precede the Rights of Man.

Paine saw it was necessary to attack Priestcraft, the corrupter and enslaver of the human mind. The priests based their teaching and authority upon the Bible, and he pulled it to pieces before their eyes. At the end of his task he told them that he had gone through the Bible like a woodman through a forest, and had cut down tree after tree. You may stick them up again, said Paine, but you will never make them grow.

Bishop Watson published a feeble reply. Other bishops preferred persecution. They knew the *Age of Reason* could not be answered, so they tried to suppress it. It was the subject of uncounted prosecutions for blasphemy. Scores of men and women went to prison for selling it. Richard Carlile spent more than nine years in English gaols for publishing that book. Brave man! It takes some courage to go to gaol again and again. It requires a strong conviction to do what you know will incur a sentence of three years' imprisonment. To borrow a phrase of Paine's, those were the times that tried men's souls. Richard Carlile was a hero. And when superfine Agnostics, who profit by his heroism, and lie snug and safe because he faced the howling storm; when these sniff at his "coarse self-confidence," it is enough to reply that a man needs a good deal of obstinate belief in himself to face the daily prospect of imprisonment for his convictions. The martyr is rude to superior persons who would not risk the singeing of a whisker.

It is said that Paine's *Age of Reason* has done its work. What if it has? How many books have a hundred years of usefulness? But this book has not done its work. It makes Freethinkers to-day.

Paine's work is carried on now by the descendants of his persecutors. All he said about the Bible is being said in substance by orthodox divines from chairs of theology. Canon Driver's *Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* confirms Paine at every point. The perceptions of common sense are corroborated by the slow conclusions of scholarship. It is now admitted that most of the Old Testament books were not written by the men whose names they bear, and in many cases not for hundreds of years afterwards.

This truth, which Paine demonstrated a hundred years ago, is gradually creeping down from the "Higher Critics" to the common clergy. Father Ignatius may denounce it as much as he pleases, and call these "Higher Critics" mere "infidels," who take the Church's bread and do the work of her enemies. But he is a voice crying in the wilderness. No one heeds him. Even when he attends a Church Congress, they respect his honesty, but smile at his simplicity.

The "Higher Critics"—divines like Canon Driver, Dr. Bruce, and Professor Sanday—admit the facts. Where they fail, from timidity or personal prudence, is in the admission of the meaning of the facts. Moses did not write the Pentateuch; David did not write the Psalms; Solomon did not write Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, or the Canticles; Daniel did not write the book of Daniel; Jonah did not go as a missionary to Nineveh, he never took a three days' trip in a whale's belly, and the book bearing his name was written hundreds of years after his supposed time. Nevertheless, all those books are inspired. Whoever wrote them, whenever they were written, and whether their contents be true or false—they are still the Word of God.

Such a position is an absurdity. It was Thomas Paine's merit that he accepted the truth with his whole heart. He scorned the artifices of cowardice and insincerity. He attacked the fetish-book of Christianity with logic, eloquence, and wit. He was derided, insulted, and persecuted; but he is now being vindicated by theological professors. They do not praise him, they do not even mention him; but the fact remains that they are preaching the gospel of Thomas Paine. The great difference is that they preach it to students, and he preached it to the people.

Thomas Paine did a great work in many fields. He was not a man of one idea, a monomaniac. His interests were varied, his mind moved in many directions. But above all he was a bright, undaunted soldier of freedom. That is his chief distinction, and that gives him his immortality.

G. W. FOOTE.

RELIGION AND PROGRESS.

EVOLUTION is the key-note of the thought of the age. All things are growths, and are studied in relation to their past. There is no art, science, or institution which cannot be traced to earlier, simpler, and ruder forms. Religion alone is supposed to be exempt. No one would ever think of going back two thousand years for their astronomy; but, for religion, the proper thing to do is to search out the musty records of the past, not for light on religious evolution, but implicitly believing the ancient dogmas are infallible and divine. Can any rational person credit that, while every other institution has been subject to change and development, religion alone is permanent? Who would think of saying that for all instruction in art or science we must go back to the ancient Hebrews? Why, then, in religion or morals, should we stop at Jesus, any more than at Moses, Buddha, or Confucius?

The temporary character of Christianity sufficiently appears from its endorsement of the Old Testament, which Professor Goldwin Smith now writes of as the millstone around its neck. It cannot disengage itself. The New Testament is built on the alleged prophecies of the Old. Jesus says, "Moses wrote of me," and that "One jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." He even endorses the forgery of Daniel and the tale of Jonah in the whale's body. Beyond this, he regarded diseases as the work of evil spirits, and promised the end of the world and his own return in the lifetime of that generation. If mistaken on such points, why should he be supposed infallible in others?

Modern progress owes little to religion save the hardihood which comes from opposition. Religion has inculcated faith. Progress has come by scepticism and free inquiry. Its increase depends on the diffusion of reason and intelligence. As surely as dirt induces disease will superstition foster corruption, and wherever religion deals with the unverifiable, superstition and priestcraft are sure to enter.

Despite its pretences to be divine, infallible, and "once for all," Christianity has been constantly changing. It had to. It set out by proclaiming the speedy advent of the end of the world. But the world obstinately refused to wind up its affairs and make its exit, and Jesus Christ has never put in an appearance. His faith had to accommodate itself to Paganism, and was so undivine that, for the largest part of its existence, it was represented by forged and false creeds, and by a Church that has borne evil fruit instead of good.

As a matter of fact, the religion of to-day is not what it was half a century ago. It is constantly shifting its attitude, striving to accommodate itself to modern thought. The

men of God do not dare to preach the old creeds. Even to read from the pulpit the once-admired sermons of such Protestant theologians as Jonathan Edwards would result in the desertion of the pews by the *élite* of the congregation. Hell has cooled wonderfully within the present century. If preached at all, it is blurred over with a dodging indefiniteness of outline. The New Testament teaches eternal torments, but the modern Christian says, with the dying Trilby: "*Il y aura amnistie générale.*" Satan, once omnipresent, is now superannuated, and even his celestial antagonist is veiled in vague vapors of incomprehensibility.

Christianity has only a Sunday existence. Huxley has well said: "The phraseology of supernaturalism may remain on men's lips, but in practice they are naturalists. The magistrate who listens with devout attention to the precept, 'Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live,' on Sunday, on Monday dismisses, as intrinsically absurd, a charge of bewitching a cow brought against some old woman; the superintendent of a lunatic asylum who substituted exorcism for rational modes of treatment would have but a short tenure of office; even parish clerks doubt the utility of prayers for rain, so long as the wind is in the east; and an outbreak of pestilence sends men, not to the churches, but to the drains."

We Freethinkers ask that creed shall square with conduct; that facts shall be honestly admitted; and that humanity, instead of persistently facing the twilight dimness of the past, shall look forward to the dawn. We stand for intellectual truth, honesty, and plain dealing, as alone consistent with human dignity. We do not antagonise anything that is tender, poetic, humane, and lovable in the old faiths, but rather seek to absorb and assimilate anything of worth they may possess. Morality is none the less essential because a growth of earth, not a revealed will from heaven. We do not deny that morality has been associated with religion; we only deny that religion possesses the exclusive monopoly of morality, and contend that right conduct will have more play when disengaged from dogmas which people only pretend that they believe.

Concentration is the secret of all success. To leave our sphere and rush into the skies results only in disaster. In the wondrous and wide field of realism is sufficient scope for all our energies. Were but the attention and organisation bestowed on salvation from imaginary disasters in an imagined hereafter concentrated on the amelioration of the present, the most glaring blots upon our civilisation would speedily be effaced, and we could confidently look forward to a time when the masses of mankind would be above the fear of poverty and degradation. Let us, then, calmly work for "one world at a time."

Let us abandon the false pretences of following guides whose real teachings we have discarded, or so modified and accommodated them to modern ideas that the original teachers would not recognise them. Let us not put the new wine of science into the old bottles of theology, but frankly accept the teachings of evolution; and if we cannot look forward to any miraculous millennium, we may at least work and hope for the amelioration and improved happiness of our race in this its earthly home.

J. M. WHEELER.

NECESSITY AND UTILITY OF FREETHOUGHT.

IN sincerely wishing our readers "A Happy New Year," it may be well to consider the present position and the future prospects of the great Freethought movement in this country. It has often been to us a pleasing duty to expatiate upon the nature of Freethought, and to indicate its potent influence in promoting the personal and general welfare of the community. Mental freedom is the very foundation of that Secular philosophy which is now so rapidly permeating all sections of society. While much practical work remains to be done, we cannot overlook the fact that during the past quarter of a century immense strides have been made towards the goal of intellectual liberty. The seeds sown by the Secular martyrs of earlier days have developed and blossomed forth in the labors and writings of such able and brave men as Mill, Buckle, Darwin, Tyndall, Huxley, Spencer, and other exponents of Freethought. Their work was not merely destructive, for they established a scientific and philosophic method of

thought that has imparted a practicability to the conduct of modern times which had been hitherto unknown. It may be true that, before the results of the efforts of those mighty minds are fully realised, we, who are humbly following in the path they made, will have to do much more destructive work, for the pinnacle of mental freedom can never be reached until the nightmare of priestly domination is destroyed. As Colonel Ingersoll says, "the storm and tempest of thought must purify the calm of ignorance and faith." So long as men and women are held in cruel bondage by the superstitions of the Church, and offered as victims on the altars of fear, so long will the work of destruction be necessary. If theologians will keep up a senseless imposition, shall we not render society a service in exposing such a fraud and deception?

It is hardly possible to over-estimate the necessity of Freethought when we glance even at the present condition of society. Among the leaders of theological thought we fail to discover a rational and philosophic conception of human rights, so far as the entertaining and expounding of heretical opinions are concerned. The earnest believers in "the faith once delivered to the saints" have no real sympathy for those who are not of their household of faith. It does not appear to have suggested itself to orthodox enthusiasts that the liberty to hold one's own opinion unmolested involves the application of the principle to all members of the community, irrespective of the nature of the views professed. The very use of the degrading word "toleration," which is so frequently employed in religious circles, is a proof that those who use the term have narrow ideas as to what constitutes real mental freedom. We require no "toleration," but justice—which is, that all persons shall be free to think according to the dictates of their own judgment, without any apprehension of social ostracism in this world or of punishment in any other. The work of Freethought is to create among all classes of society a condition of mind in which this principle shall be put into practice. The Church has made such professions of liberty, but its members have not consistently carried them out when dealing with those who differed from them.

The work of Freethought, as began at the Reformation of the sixteenth century, and subsequently advanced by the inauguration of the Deistical movement, has to be continued until the human intellect is free to secure its highest possible development in every department of rational inquiry after truth. The Deistical struggle was too localised to exert any great and permanent national influence upon general thought, and the leaders of the Reformation were inconsistent in their conflict with error. Having won certain freedom for themselves, they cared not to aid others who were struggling to reach the same goal by a different road. Luther and his colleagues, having overcome their persecutors, became bitter persecutors themselves of those who were not of their faith. Thus the Church has ever been the enemy of man, fettering human thought and impeding human progress. The aim of our Freethought propaganda is to destroy its power for mischief, and, where we are unable to do this, to lessen its degenerating influence. As Ingersoll truly remarks, the Church "has done harm enough. It has covered the world with blood. It has filled the asylums for the insane. It has cast a shadow in the heart, in the sunlight of every good, tender man and woman. I say, Let us rid the heavens of this monster, and write upon the dome 'Liberty, Love, and Law.'"

Besides the reactionary party in the Protestant Church, there is Roman Catholicism, which is rapidly growing in our midst, and which, as Freethinkers, we must confront with all earnestness. Churches, where this blighting and mind-destroying faith is taught, are increasing to an alarming extent. Can we reasonably suppose that this growing power will ever be upon the side of liberty? Let its dark and blood-stained history answer the question. If there were no other fact than that this demon of darkness is overshadowing the intellects of thousands of the rising generation, we should be amply justified in increasing our Freethought activity. The battle against the encroachments of this Church of delusion and devastation must be maintained with persistent vigor, for the final conflict in civilised and progressive communities will be between Rationalism and Roman Catholicism—that is, between adherence to forced authority and trust in cultivated reason.

While we may congratulate ourselves upon the Free-thought progress already achieved, we must not forget that the final victory over traditional error and theological usurpation has yet to be won. Bigotry still reigns, prompting its adherents to seek to re-enact the barbarous laws of a rude age; religious zeal still urges its devotees to persecute those who do not accept the prevailing faith; fanaticism is still in our midst, impelling its victims to denounce the "infidel" as one unworthy the fellowship of general society. The growth of our national system of education is still retarded through impertinent theological interference; the rational use of Sunday is still denied by the selfish conduct of the supporters of the Church; we are still deprived by the professors of Christianity of legacies left to Secular Societies; and the Statute Book of England still contains "Acts against blasphemy" and enactments against free speech, which, if they dared be enforced, would imprison those who write or speak against the truth of the Christian religion.

Now, in the face of these facts, is it not imperative upon all who value Freethought to do their best in aiding its extension? In our opinion, Secular organisation and Free-thought advocacy should command our first attention. Of course, the circulation of our literature is of vast importance; but it is only by wise, organised propaganda that any new system, any innovation, can be made general and rendered permanent. In proof of this statement it is only necessary to refer to the origin, the progress, and the development of the Christian Church, to the growth of monasticism, and to the remarkable advance made in Great Britain by Freethought since it first took definite form and shaped itself into a homogeneous societarian body. It is as true now as ever it was that, as a rule, people cannot be induced to stir except the impulse be given them. More especially is this the case with Free-thinkers, whose views are regarded by so many with pious horror and sanctimonious bigotry. An isolated Freethinker is almost certain, if he run counter to the prejudices of his neighbors, to incur their dislike and to suffer loss and detriment. Yet, to their honor be it recorded, there are scattered throughout all parts of the country isolated men and women who do not fear to avow their unbelief in theology, and who unhesitatingly profess that unbelief in the very teeth of a creed which is only too prone to persecute and to enforce social ostracism. These noble witnesses, who, in their humble way, are no less heroic than were Vanini and Bruno, give a powerful impetus to the cause of freedom. All honor to those who are true to their convictions, who are firm in withstanding the blandishments, and even the threats, of their neighbors, and who will not, for the sake of quietness and worldly advantage, bow the knee to the idol of public fashion.

Writing from practical experience, we have great faith in Mr. Foote's "Lecture Scheme," as being a most efficient plan of extending a knowledge of our principles, and of consolidating the forces of our organisation. Those who can join us in the work should do so, while those who cannot, or who prefer not to do so, and who have sufficient means, should render financial assistance. The task which Mr. Foote has set himself is a heavy one, but it needed to be undertaken, and if all who sympathise will help in the enterprise 1896 will be a memorable year in the history of Freethought. Wealthy Secularists have ever been generous in their financial support, and there is no reason to doubt that they will continue their benevolence in supporting a scheme which cannot but further the cause they have at heart.

In again wishing our friends "A Happy New Year," we desire not only their welfare, but also the success of the Cause. We have briefly pointed out what we deem the work nearest hand, and we trust the year that has just dawned may be more fruitful than its predecessors in all that will tend to promote the happiness of mundane existence. In our opinion,

What suits the gods above
Only the gods can know;
What the people want is sense
How best to live below.

CHARLES WATTS.

Elder Berry—"What is your idea of faith?" Joblots—"Putting a nickel on the plate and expecting a crown of pure gold."

MISSIONARY WORK.

To visit twenty towns, deliver thirty-three lectures, hold a two-nights' discussion, and travel about 1,500 miles may be regarded as a fair amount of work for one to get through within the brief compass of thirty-three days; and a short account of my recent tour may not be without interest to members and friends of the Freethought party.

Leaving London on November 16, I made my first halt at Bradford, in the neighborhood of which town a ten-days' crusade had been arranged by Mr. J. W. Gott.

Bingley, Heckmondwike, Stanningley, Todmorden, Leeds, Huddersfield, Halifax, and Keighley were visited in turn—towns where, for many reasons, Secular lectures had of late been lamentably absent. At each of these places I was pleased at finding that fresh interest was awakened in the cause. An assurance was received that a more energetic propaganda should be carried on in the future, and at five out of the eight places visited new Branches were formed.

At Leeds, despite the fearful weather that prevailed during the whole of the evening, the meeting was a complete success. A splendid gathering assembled; a lengthy discussion followed the lecture; the meeting lasted about three hours; and, in the end, a new Branch was opened, and about twenty-five members enrolled. I have since heard from the secretary that fresh applications for membership have been received, and that a vigorous campaign is contemplated for the new year.

One incident that occurred during the time allotted for discussion is worthy of note, as illustrating the tactics of a certain section of the religious world. One of my opponents, who commenced his speech by paying a tribute to his own love of truth and general manliness, proceeded to read, or pretended to read, from the Objects and Principles of the N.S.S., the statement that "we believe in the abolition of the marriage law." A more deliberate and villainous lie it would be impossible for anyone to utter; and I at once rose to a point of order, and requested the chairman to read the Principles. But the immediate exposure of such a cold-blooded falsehood did not seem to lower the speaker in the estimation of his followers, nor did either of the other speakers feel called upon to repudiate such conduct. No; the majority of Christians present seemed to feel that, if that statement was not among the Objects of the N.S.S., at least it ought to have been, and "If my lie hath abounded unto God's glory, why am I then judged a sinner?"

The incident, however, is instructive as showing the depths of scurrility to which champions of the faith will sink, and the need of active propaganda upon our part in order to counteract such disgraceful tactics. Five years' experience upon the Secular platform has convinced me that a large part of the public opposition to Secularism arises from sheer ignorance of its teachings; and, although apologists on the platform and in the pulpit usually confine themselves to vague insinuations rather than direct charges, the above may be regarded as merely an extreme instance of that general policy of slander against which Freethought has always had to fight.

I must not take my leave of Yorkshire without thanking Mr. Gott, both in my own name and in that of the party, for his exertions in arranging the above course of lectures. All were arranged through him, and several by him; and it is largely owing to his efforts that the crusade was brought to such a successful issue.

As a set-off to the moral success of the crusade in Yorkshire, I have to chronicle a loss of a little over ten pounds—a loss that will be borne by the fund inaugurated by Mr. Foote. But the money is well spent. In future each of the places I have visited will be in a position to take upon itself the full responsibilities of lectures, and even to assist others in their immediate locality.

Leaving Bradford on November 30, I made my way to the far North, and, on December 1, delivered my first lecture to a Scotch audience. I had heard so much of the coldness of Scotch audiences that I was rather curious as to the treatment I should experience. But I had no reason to complain; far otherwise. My lectures were followed closely and intelligently, were received enthusiastically, and, personally, I was accorded everywhere the greatest heartiness and hospitality. At Edinburgh, Dundee, Glasgow, and Paisley I met with the same experience—a warm reception, and a hearty invitation to return at an early date.

On the whole, with the exception of nearly breaking my neck on Arthur's Seat—a circumstance which I need not dwell upon, as not being part of my ordinary duties as lecturer—my first trip to Scotland passed off very pleasantly, and I trust to see much more of our Northern friends in the near future.

From Glasgow I made my way to Newcastle, where I was booked for a two-nights' discussion with the Rev. A. J. Waldron. The meeting was well attended, the audience behaved in a most exemplary way, and the discussion passed off in a fairly satisfactory manner.

Working my way homewards, I lectured on the 14th at Todmorden—one of the places mentioned above; on the 15th and 17th at Blackburn, where the propaganda is making splendid headway; on the 16th at Darwen; 19th Barnsley, and finished up by paying a first visit to Derby on the 20th, reaching London on the following day.

Taken altogether, I am fairly well satisfied with the result of my tour. Towns where Secularism had been unknown for many a day have been visited, Branches started, literature disseminated, and fresh interest in the movement aroused. And that these new Branches mean business is shown by the fact that I have already received from them applications for more lectures; while some of them have volunteered to open up the work in fresh towns, and bear part of the expenses, if the remaining portion can be borne by Mr. Foote's fund. Out of the thirty-five lectures delivered during my tour eighteen of them were delivered under our President's plan—I was booked for twenty, but halls were not obtainable; and it must be borne in mind that the majority of these would never have been given but for that scheme. "What do you think of Mr. Foote's scheme?" is a question put to me with unfailing regularity. Well, there can be but one answer to that question. It is bound to do good, provided that funds are forthcoming. Organising a movement throughout the country is largely a question of finance, and if the scheme receives the support it deserves, there can be little doubt that it will be the means of permanently benefiting the Secular movement in Great Britain. It is impossible to open out the movement in strange towns, where Secularism is unknown, without funds; and it is ridiculous, from a party point of view, that the dissemination of Secular principles should be permitted to depend upon the inclination or ability of one or two individuals to arrange for lectures in their particular localities.

One of my last meetings in Yorkshire, with the exception of Leeds, took place in a town where we did not even know anyone who would act as chairman, and on that occasion Mr. Gott became a veritable Poohbah in the number of offices he was called upon to discharge. Now, it is certain that, had we waited until someone in that town had arranged a meeting, there would have been no lecture; and it is equally clear that, if other towns in the same condition are to be visited, some such scheme as at present exists is indispensable. Individuals have not always the inclination, the ability, or the time to arrange for lectures in the towns in which they are living, nor have speakers always the funds that will enable them to stand the loss consequent upon visiting new places, and for these reasons the work has been more backward of late than it should have been.* Another method by which the work might be helped is by the dissemination of leaflets or literature generally. Where halls cannot be obtained the town should be flooded with advanced literature, which would help to break down the bigotry that closes public halls to Freethought speakers. It appears to me that this part of the work is at present sadly neglected, and if its neglect is unavoidable owing to the absence of funds, I trust that this reason will grow weaker as time passes.

I find no lack of interest in Secularism; on the contrary, I find growing audiences and more sympathetic listeners. In towns where a few months ago I addressed audiences of twenty or thirty people, I now have several hundreds. I find but one thing wanting—organisation—and that should be remedied speedily if Freethinkers do but carry out their duty. Secularism appears to me to have now taken its place as one of the settled institutions of the country, to be regarded as a power to be reckoned with upon all occasions. The increased attention paid by the clergy to secular matters; the strenuous efforts made to prevent the

spread of Secularism, as well as the respect paid to its advocates, all show this. Now, more even than in the fiery and exciting days of Charles Bradlaugh, is the time for serious organising work. It remains to be seen whether Secularists will permit the golden opportunity to slip by, or whether, sinking all petty jealousies and differences, they will, with an undaunted and united front, press forward to certain victory.

C. COHEN.

INGERSOLL UNCONVERTED.

COLONEL ROBERT G. INGERSOLL found a heavy mail from the Christian Endeavorers, who have been praying for him in convention, when he returned home from his Western trip, and he said, last night, to the *Sun* reporter: "No, I have not been converted by their prayers, I am glad to say, and there is no occasion for taking a 'before and after' picture of me."

"Why glad?" asked the *Sun* reporter.

"I want to finish my days without the consolation of a hell," said the Colonel, looking very solemn, though there is nothing in his appearance to indicate that his days are likely to be finished for half a century more.

"Did it annoy you to have the Endeavorers take such a public interest in your conversion?"

"Dear me, no," said Colonel Ingersoll. "They meant it kindly, and for my good. The only difference of opinion that we have is that I believe that this world is natural, and they believe that it is supernatural—something that was constructed by sleight of hand, by someone up in the clouds. That is all." And Colonel Ingersoll settled back comfortably in his chair, as if the difference of opinion were too trifling to discuss.

"But what if you should be converted?" suggested the *Sun* reporter. An expression of mock terror spread over the Colonel's rosy cheeks as he replied:—

"That would be a dreadful misfortune, and I should be unhappy all the rest of my life."

"If you had absolute faith in the Christian religion, would it make you unhappy?"

"It certainly would. How could it be otherwise? A man of intelligence who is a Christian, and who has imagination, couldn't help but be unhappy. Just think of the hell that it holds out. If he is a Christian, he must believe that the people whom he knows and loves on earth are to be separated in death, and some are to go to hell and some are to go to heaven, and they are to stay there forever. It would make me very unhappy to believe that. This is to be for eternity. I have asked many Christian people, 'What are you going to do in heaven?' and they reply that they are going to be happy there. 'But how are you going to be happy?' I ask. Are they just going to do nothing and be happy, or are they going to get their happiness from playing on golden harps all the time? Are they going to be happy knowing that some of those whom they loved here are suffering eternal tortures in hell? I couldn't be happy under those circumstances."

"Admitting the truth of the Christian religion, wouldn't you wish to be converted?"

"Why, if there is someone up in the clouds to whom these people who pray give advice and instruction how things should be run down here, I certainly want to know about it. But, you see, I don't believe that there is. I should very much dislike to accept the Christian religion, and all that it holds out, even to those who believe it and live by it."

Colonel Ingersoll hadn't time to read all of the hundred or more letters that were waiting for him, and the two or three that he had opened struck him as being very foolish. One writer made a violent attack on the Colonel, and another wrote in a kindly, argumentative way. Neither produced any effect, however.

—*New York Sun*.

Each man in whom dissatisfaction is aroused by institutions which have survived from a less civilised past, or whose sympathies make certain evils repugnant to him, must regard his feelings thus excited as units in the aggregate of forces by which progress is to be brought about; and is called on to expend his feelings in appropriate deeds,—*Herbert Spencer*.

* The present scheme will at least do something towards remedying this condition of affairs.

THE SUPERNATURAL "NATURAL"; OR, LEGITIMATE ILLEGITIMACY.

REJOICE, O bastards! shout and sing!
Nor longer envy babes of marriage;
Your charter from the East I bring,
All free of charge, including carriage.

Arise! too long you've been despised!
And celebrate your ban's removal;
For God the Lord has patronised
Your caste, and stamped it with approval.

Jehovah, whom the Christians name
The Holy One, came down and tarried
A while on earth, and then became
A "dad"; but ne'er his partner married.

So, thus you see the Savior's Pa—
Whom Christians ne'er will call a dastard—
Declined to wed his youngster's ma;
And wished his boy to be a bastard.

But Christians—Christ's most deadly friends—
Look down on illegitimation;
And so, perforce, their scorn extends
To God and Christ, by implication.

An honest priest—unless an ass—
Must think that God was most erratic;
And that he should have "spliced" the lass,
At least in manner morganatic.

If God, as *Son*, came down to stay,
He should, as *Father*, first have tarried,
And treated in a proper way
The girl he ne'er, but should have, married.

But no; his ways with ours conflict,
And His are right; hence this illation:
That priests blaspheme who interdict
The state of "illegitimation."

So, therefore, bastards all be glad!
For those who "naturals" disparage
Contemn their Savior and his Dad,
Who honored *you*, and slighted marriage.

G. L. MACKENZIE.

ACID DROPS.

WE have received a circular full of Armenian Atrocities, which Mr. Percy Bunting, editor of the *Contemporary Review*, and J. B. Paton, D.D., beg us to insert. We decline to do anything of the kind. There is absolutely nothing to be gained by multiplying narratives of murder, rapine, and outrage. We beg to tell these two Christian gentlemen that the Christianity of Europe is to be blamed for the present situation. If the Christian powers did not hate each other—if there were any reality in their Christmas talk of peace and goodwill—they would soon bring the Turk to his senses. The simple truth is that Armenians are being slaughtered, and Armenian women worse than slaughtered, because of the ignoble jealousies of the Christian nations. If Europe were full of Freethinkers, the Armenian Atrocities would be stopped in five minutes.

Just look at this wretched situation. If England tried to help the Armenians against their murderers, Russia would fight England; and if Russia tried it, England would fight Russia. France, Germany, Austria, and Italy would take sides, and the result would be the most awful war in history. Christian "goodwill" has brought us to this pass, that we cannot stop wholesale murder and rape, because we hate each other more than we hate the criminals. No, no, Messrs. Bunting and Paton! You have sent your circular to the wrong quarter.

Christian hypocrisy is positively sickening. All the sky-pilots in England and the United States have been cackling about "Peace," and a superficial observer might believe in their sincerity. But the fact is, the men of God simply saw that war between England and the United States wouldn't

pay. It would be a devilish ugly business, with certain loss to both sides, and gain to nobody—not even to the Churches. For this reason the men of God cried "Peace!" But who hears them cry "Peace!" on behalf of the poor Ashantees? They are black heathen, and we can lick them easily, and lay our grip on their land, and dig out its gold. On, then, Christian England! Mow down the wretches who stand between you and gain! And don't for a moment apprehend so much as a whisper of denunciation from the pulpits of your Bethels.

Patrick Morley, the Batley wife murderer, has been executed at Leeds Gaol. He felt sure he was forgiven, and was full of hope as regarded the next world; in fact, the ministrations of Father Heassing and the prison chaplain had filled him with comfort. It does not appear, however, that this comfortable murderer was at all anxious about his poor victim. "How make *my own* salvation sure" is the sublime aspiration of a true Christian.

Winstanley, the Wigan murderer, who was executed at Liverpool, stated beforehand that "he was now prepared to meet his God." The trouble is that all the good people in heaven must be prepared to meet Winstanley.

It is comforting this cold weather to come across a parson who actually preaches the good old doctrine of eternal hell-fire—the Rev. J. Pearce, as reported in the *Barrow News*. "Where, in the whole compass of the Bible, is it expressly set down that souls which have had a chance here, and have made nothing of the chance, will have a chance of being saved?" There is nothing in Scripture to indicate this, but the eternity of hell is put in juxtaposition with that of heaven. But, then, some people say: "If the Bible teaches eternal punishment, so much the worse for the Bible."

One of the choristers at St. Tudor's Church, Cefu, Merthyr Tydvil, has been fined for throwing kisses to the ladies in the church. He seems to have been overcome by the spirit.

David L. Pearson, living near New Buffalo, Iowa, was driven insane, as the result of his belief that the recent earthquake heralded the end of the world, and is now confined in an asylum. His daughter, aged eighteen, has also been adjudged of unsound mind, her father's peculiar hallucination having also affected her reason.

Hudson Tuttle computes that in the 1,405 convents in the United States there is probably an average of sixty inmates, or 84,300 nuns, who are kept in more abject slavery than ever befell the negro of the South, and are more closely guarded prisoners than the most depraved convicts in the penitentiary.

Mr. Tuttle says: "The supreme law of the land cannot hold a single individual in prison for an hour without assumption of a just cause, and here a power, that ought to be subject to the government, holds 84,300 persons in inaccessible bastiles." Nothing so strongly displays the power of religion as the crimes that can be perpetrated in its name.

The *Christian Advocate*, a New York Methodist organ, has made a discovery. It has found out that Thomas Paine denied being an Atheist, and says: "If he ever avowed himself an Atheist, or hesitated to declare that he believed in one God, we should like to have some reader who is in possession of the proof communicate with us." The *C. A.* will not receive the proof; but assertions that Paine was an Atheist can easily be discovered from Christian sources.

In a communication to the Boston *Transcript* C. R. Grinstead says: "No people on the face of the earth are more priest-ridden than the Southern negroes, or contribute to a more unworthy cause, it being undeniable that the plantations of the South swarm with 'churches' and 'preachers' of every known denomination, very few of whom can read a word; hence their teachings are anything but scriptural, their 'religion' generally a grotesque mixture of dreams, visions, and physical manifestations, their examples anything but moral; yet it seems to suit a class of people in the South, brought up in the ignorance and vices of slavery, scarcely removed from the heathen customs and superstitions of Africa. Such preaching draws the crowd by pandering to their ignorance and defending their vices and immoralities as not incompatible with religion."

Dr. W. F. Cobb, assistant secretary of the English Church Union, writes to the *Isle of Wight County Press* denying that the E.C.U. is a Romanising body, or prepared to give entire submission to Rome. But "all true Christians desire union," etc. Mr. Cobb's letter reminds one of the saying, "*Qui s'excuse s'accuse.*"

Christ Schlatter has gone to Santa Fé, in New Mexico. In the City of the Holy Faith he is among a population steeped in faith in the miraculous, and may be expected to increase by thousands the numbers of those who hail him as a new Messiah. Schlatter's reputation will soon outdo that of Sequah.

The vicar of a certain parish in Monmouthshire is a queer character. He sits up late at night and gets up late in the afternoon, unless he is obliged to deviate from this practice. His church was tastefully decorated for Christmas Day, and the congregation had long been awaiting him with impatience when he arrived. For some cause or other, he failed to read the lessons and prayers without much blundering and confusion; and at length he called for a light, although it was morning service and broad day. Perhaps he was blessed (or troubled) with spiritual vision.

George Macdonald remarks in the *Truthseeker*: "The unconversion of Ingersoll fails to prove that God does not always answer prayer. We are informed by a no less distinguished theologian than the Rev. Dr. Ward, editor of the *Independent*, that when God omits to grant our petitions it shows that he has chosen to respond in the negative! Nobody can deny this, because it is equally true of great wooden gods, medium-sized brass gods, and little tin gods on wheels."

The *Christian Advocate* gives the following as a form of prayer for the conversion of Ingersoll: "O Lord, we have an arch-enemy who is travelling over the country. He is working against Thee. He is working against us. He is endeavoring to injure the cause. We have all faith in Thee. We believe that Thou canst do this thing. Thou hast answered our prayers before, and we believe that Thou wilt do it now. O Lord, Thou hast everything, and canst do everything. Save this enemy. Make a friend, a co-worker of him. O God, Thou art all-powerful, and holdest everything in Thy hands. Answer this our prayer." God made no response, and the *C. A.* says it is because "the wicked through the pride of countenance will not seek after God."

The *Toledo Blade* has a suggestive query on this business. It says: "Either the prayers put up will result in Ingersoll's conversion, or he will remain an Agnostic still. In the former case, the efficacy of prayer will be unerringly demonstrated; in the latter, —?"

The *New York Evening Post* says of these prayers for the arch-enemy: "Compared with Calvin's eager desire to get his hands on Servetus, or Luther's amiable wish that a hook might be put in the snouts of his enemies, this implies a change to call for Colonel Newcome's single and gratified Latin quotation about *emollit mores*. Indeed, the change seems greatest of all when one goes back only forty years to the time when the prayers for Theodore Parker delicately hinted that his 'removal' would please as well as his conversion to the truth. His biographer records that Parker's early death was considered an answer to these petitions."

The *Chicago Evening Post* says: "Dr. John Henry Barrows discontinued his evening services in the First Presbyterian Church because he did not want to preach to empty pews. He predicts the ultimate failure of the evening service, on the ground that the American people are beginning to recognise more and more Sunday evenings should be devoted to the home. Dr. Barrows' experience is a common one with pastors all over the city."

Dr. Jane Elizabeth Hotchkiss recently advocated prayer before retiring to sleep, as a means "for decomposing the muscular tension and inducing a complete relaxation of the nervous system." So, without expecting any answers to prayer, it might nevertheless be retained as a cheaper night-cap than toddy. The lady doctor is, however, outdone by the Muslim, Dr. Ahmed Djeyhoun, who, in the *Islamic World*, contends that Muslim prayer five times a day, being accompanied with regular movements of different parts of the body, inclination, genuflection, the elevation of the arms, etc., replaces other gymnastics.

Dr. Djeyhoun says: "The Muslim prayer becomes then a moderate and regular exercise, developing the muscular system, regulating the circulation of the blood and respiration, strengthening the constitution, modifying in a happy manner the temperament, stimulating the appetite, favoring digestion and the assimilation of the food, preserving the body from many maladies and weaknesses; as also the recitation of the Koran and other books of piety strengthens and regulates the vocal organs."

Our Muslim doctor, of course, finds a good deal to say about the hygienic effects of temperance and ablutions prescribed by Mohammed. Even the monthly fast of Ramazin; he declares, "gives a very necessary rest to the

digestive organs," while the pilgrimage to Mecca "gives the traveller a change of air, which, from a medical point of view, is very important." It is notable how all religions are now seeking to defend themselves on the ground of their secular utility.

Another evidence of the spread of modern views among Muslims appears in the same number of the *Islamic World*, in a letter from an orthodox Muslim dated from Calcutta. This gentleman laments that among the English-speaking Muslims of India religion is falling in abeyance from attempts being made to reconcile it with science. He says ninety per cent. of these Muslims do not pray, forty per cent. at least do not keep the fast, and ninety-seven or ninety-eight per cent. do not know Arabic. Those who have not received English education are the only ones who can be relied on to preserve the old faith and formulas of Islam.

The *Crescent* (December 25) contains a letter from Mr. C. Kroll Laporte on "The Progress of Islam." As a traveller in Africa, Mr. Laporte says: "During the last fifteen years the Mohammedans have steadily progressed in Dahomey, as well as in other parts of Africa. At Porto Novo alone there are about 10,000. They are on good terms with the Fetichists. No religious strife has occurred thus far. The followers of Mohammed are known by the name of Halloufas, and are much liked by all who come in contact with them. During my residence I admired none so much as the Mohammedans."

Mr. Laporte holds with his friend, Winwood Reade, that the Mohammedans will be the real regenerators of the inhabitants of inner Africa. With regard to Christian enterprise he says: "The natives on the seaboard have been completely ruined by degenerate white men, who bring with them badly-translated Bibles, rifles, adulterated spirits, syphilis, and the gallows."

In the *Sunday Magazine* Dean Farrar writes on "The Legendary Infancy of Jesus Christ," and gives the well-worn platitudes about the superiority of the canonical to the apocryphal gospels. He does not see that this very superiority indicates that the received gospels are later. He accepts Mark as the oldest, and there the wonder-working Christ is most evident. The very absurdity of the stories told of the infant Christ shows their antiquity.

The world sometimes forgets that during the largest portion of the Christian era the immense mass of Christians had no books at all. Preaching, mystery plays, and mumming puppet-shows were their sources of instruction in religion, and during all this period the stories of the apocryphal gospels were even more devoutly believed than the canonical gospels are now.

The Rev. Joseph Bilcher, who has been ordered to pay 5s. a week for the support of the child of Mrs. Hobbs, who lived with him three years, is a Roman Catholic priest of some eminence in the Church.

It is a good thing to notice that Christmas charity is not decreasing, but, better still, to note that it is passing into the agency of other hands than those of the clergy. While so many gifts are in the paws of the priests, their recipients tend to become hypocritical and degraded. The donors naturally preach charity instead of justice, since they can dispense the one without any advance towards the other, and parish doles and charities are unblushingly made buttresses of the Church. Such a gift as the Christmas hampers to cripples, through the medium of the *Daily Telegraph*, was free from the usual objection to such charities.

A person officially connected with Board schools once expressed the opinion that religious lessons helped to make the children Freethinkers; for, if they used their minds at all, they could not but contrast the nature of the subjects taught from the Bible with that learnt in other departments. But the very purpose of religious teaching is to inculcate a spirit of submissive reverence to authority, which stands in the way of such exercise of judgment by children. If Bible teaching resulted generally in making Freethinkers, it would not be appropriate in public buildings paid for by all; and if the precious time now devoted to this subject were given up, elementary science could be taught, which would delight and elevate the scholars.

That Scotland has ceased to stand where she did in the matter of Sabbatarianism is sufficiently evinced by the voting of the Edinburgh Burgess Golfing Society, who resolved by 108 to 96 to keep the links open for the playing of golf on Sunday. Dr. Begg, in heaven above, must look down with disgust at the sight of auld Reekie adopting a rational Sunday.

According to the statement of a prominent clergyman, "Nothing is impossible in this world." Then why has the Church given up trying to convert infidels by argument?

It appears that the chaplain of the American Senate went in for peaceable prayers, while the chaplain of the House of Representatives took the opposite tack, and asked God to uphold the American flag and protect the country from insults. This gives point to a recent joke in the *Judge*, as under: First Senator (in Fifty-fifth Congress)—"Do you think our minority can talk for two weeks longer?" Second Senator—"Yes. The new senator who stammers will consume one week, and after that the chaplain has promised to make filibustering prayers."

The same number of the *North American Review* which contains Professor Goldwin Smith's article on "Christianity's Millstone" has a paper on "Cranks and Crazes," by Mrs. Lynn Linton. Mrs. Linton deals some heavy blows at religious crazes. The belief in the Millennium, she says, is on a par with the reappearance of popular dead heroes. Theosophy and Spiritualism are classed as crazes, having *Credo quia impossibile* as their motto. The missionary craze is noticed as a dangerous one, often inciting to war, and with no respect for ultimates "beyond that doubtful gain of inducing a Chinaman to repeat the Apostles' Creed, instead of chin-chinning Joss; of substituting for the Brahmin's belief in the genesis of man from the body of God, the story of the clay figure and the abstracted rib." Then she deals with the cranks who want to play the part of Providence and trounce the Turk for his dealing with his Christian subjects.

Yet another article in this same review, speaking of the things that make for war and peace, says, incidentally: "The Old Testament is one of the worst offenders in this praise of battle."

A new sect has been started in Howard County, Indiana. The members are known as the Amish, and found their religion mainly on the Old Testament. They answer "Yea" and "Nay," and will not take an oath. Like Abraham and his descendants, they believe in close interbreeding, and they have been indicted for incest and marrying without licences, for the maltreatment of children, and other offences, which they claim are not crimes according to their religion. The Amish represent a reversion to old Bible practices which will hardly be tolerated in the present day.

Forgiveness is supposed to be essentially a Christian virtue. Yet, says Herbert Spencer, in his *Principles of Ethics*, sec. 137, "if we seek a case in which the virtue supposed to be especially Christian is practised, we must seek it among the non-Christians. Certain peaceful tribes of the Indian hills are characterised by it, as witness this account of the Lepchas: 'They are wonderfully honest, theft being scarcely known among them; they rarely quarrel among themselves. . . . They are singularly forgiving of injuries, when time is given them after hasty loss of temper.'"

In the cash accounts of the Stationers' Company for Yuletide, 1510, is the following item: "Item paid to the preacher, vi.s.; item paid to the minstrel, xii.s.; item paid to the coke, xv.s." These items represent the relative importance of religion, music, and cookery at the old festival.

"Peter Lombard" tells in the *Church Times* of a ceremony which still takes place year by year at Poschiavo, at the foot of the Bernina Pass. After the Christmas Eve service in the church, the "Vigil of the Christmas Rose" is held at one or other of the houses in the village. The mistress of the house places on the table lighted candles and the best glass she possesses, which is filled with water, in which floats a dried plant, probably a specimen of the well-known "Rose of Jericho." The company surround the table-singing psalms and hymns and watch the flower, which, loosened by the water, gradually spreads its fibres and opens its calyx. Then, saying, "the Christmas Rose has opened," they begin a new hymn of rejoicing, and from the church tower the bells carry the message up and down the valley.

Mr. Wheeler tells in his "Notes on the Calendar," in the *Secular Almanack* for 1896, a funny story about a sprig from the Glastonbury thorn which blossomed at Christmas, and refused, for a while, to adopt the New Style. Possibly such legends, as well as the old custom of wassailing orchards, may be traced to that worship of the tree-spirit of which Mr. Frazer tells in his *Golden Bough*.

The New York *Sun* (Dec. 15) devotes a column and a half to another prayer test, reported in the *Galveston Daily News*. When Mr. J. R. Charlesworth, the Freethought lecturer, was

in Dallas, Texas, at the close of one of his meetings, Mrs. S. J. Sweeney, a lady at the head of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union in that State, challenged him to allow himself to be prayed for and state the result. He consented, with the proviso of giving God a time limit of three months, and that the lady should also make the result as public as her challenge. The time is up and the Freethinker unconverted.

At the expiry of the time Mr. Charlesworth stated in public that he had experienced no change in his attitude towards the Christian or any other religion. He invited the lady to be present, but she declined. She, however, sent a letter, in which she said: "Your name has been so continuously on my thought and prayer that, when the time limit was out, I found myself very loth to believe that God had not revealed himself to you, and yet I find my faith stronger in Him than ever." Mrs. Sweeney is apparently a sentimental lady whose faith grows by want of nourishment.

Most of our readers have heard of that "strumpet," as the Christian advocates call her, who personated the Goddess of Reason during the French Revolution. She was a beautiful actress, and apparently a woman of quite blameless character. But the Church has always hated the Stage, and when an actress personated Reason in opposition to Faith, amidst the plaudits of the multitude, there was a double cause for detestation. So the clericals called her a strumpet, and in the course of time they added that she displayed herself stark naked. This made two lies instead of one, but the Church was always rich in falsehood, and could spend freely without fear of becoming bankrupt.

It is not always safe, however, to libel living actresses. They are apt to be women of spirit, and may make it warm for their traducers, as the Rev. Dr. Pullman, of Bridgeport, Connecticut, has found to his cost. This man of God's bile was stirred up by Mdle. Jane May, a most delightful comedienne, whose pantomime performance in *L'Enfant Prodigieux* was such a hit in London. Mdle. May is touring in the United States, and the Rev. Dr. Pullman denounced her from the pulpit as an unchaste woman. As the lady is a good wife and mother, and as such superior to any man who preaches lies for a living, she decided to give this man of God a lesson. She had him arrested, and though he is out on bail he has to face an action for slander, involving a claim of \$25,000 damages. We hope the court will make him shell out.

Voltaire, if he had lived now, would say of England, not one hundred, but three hundred, religions, and but one sauce. The number of religious denominations given in *Whittaker's Almanack* for 1896 is two hundred and ninety-three. The seeker after religious truth must be considerably embarrassed if he attempts to investigate all religions fairly. Life would probably be too short for the task.

Cardinal Vaughan has got from Rome a grant of arms for his so-called See of Westminster. The arms granted are the same as those of the Archbishop of Canterbury, except that a red ground is substituted for blue, "in memory of the martyrs." This change makes them like the arms of the Primate of York. The *Church Times* says: "In trying to pose as a successor to St. Augustine, he has only succeeded in making himself a pseudo-Archbishop of York."

Science.

What knowledge is of most worth? The uniform reply is—science. This is the verdict on all counts. For direct self-preservation, or the maintenance of life and health, the all-important knowledge is—science. For that indirect self-preservation which we call gaining a livelihood, the knowledge of greatest value is—science. For the due discharge of parental functions the proper guidance is to be found only in—science. For that interpretation of national life, past and present, without which the citizen cannot rightly regulate his conduct, the indispensable key is—science. Alike for the most perfect production and present enjoyment of art in all its forms, the needful preparation is still science; and for the purposes of discipline—intellectual, moral, religious—the most efficient study is, once more, science.—*Herbert Spencer*.

MAN can never be so sufficiently assured of the course of his thoughts as to swear fidelity to this or that system, which for some time being he may regard as the true one. All that he can do is to consecrate himself to the service of Truth, whatever she may be, and to incline his heart to follow her wherever he thinks that she sees her, and this though at the cost of the most painful sacrifices.—*Ernest Renan, Letter to Cognat*.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, January 5, North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road, Camberwell:—7.30, "What has Become of the Devil?"

January 12, 19, and 26, St. James's Hall, Piccadilly.

February 2, Liverpool; 9, Glasgow.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—January 5 and 6, Birmingham; 8, Hammersmith; 12 and 13, Bolton; 14, Blackburn; 19, Glasgow; 26, Edinburgh; 29, Dinner of the N.S.S. February 2, Athenæum Hall, Tottenham Court-road, London; 3 and 4, Ipswich; 16, Athenæum Hall, London; 23, Manchester. March 15, Leicester; 16 and 17, debate with the Rev. James Hyde at Derby.—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.

CAPTAIN OTTO THOMSON (Stockholm).—A Happy New Year to you. We were pleased to hear your American admirers had presented you with Mr. Putnam's *Four Hundred Years of Freethought*. Papers shall be sent as desired.

W. V. S. COCKSON (Engobo, S. Africa).—Papers always welcome.

WELL-WISHER (Brighton).—R. Harrison & Son, 40 New England-road, supply the *Freethinker*.

ONWARD.—Thank. See answer to "Well-Wisher."

MR. FOOTE'S LECTURE SCHEME.—B. (Manchester), £1; Mrs. Jackson, 10s. Per Miss Vance: A. Marks, 10s. 6d.

N. S. S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss E. M. Vance acknowledges: A. Tripp, £1 ls.; A. Marks, £1 ls.; R. Axelby, 1s.

J. RICHARDS.—You shall have a date.

E. HOWARD.—See paragraph. You are doing a good work at Failsforth. We wish you all success.

CHARLES E. MOORE, editor of the *Blue Grass Blade*, one of whose articles was lately reproduced in the *Freethinker*, informs us that he has changed his address to 9 Murdock-building, Longworth-street, Cincinnati, Ohio. We take this opportunity of shaking hands (in spirit) with Mr. Moore.

ROCKINGHAM.—(1) Your state of mind is quite natural. Christianity lingers in your feelings after it has been rejected by your intelligence. This is the result of early training. In the course of time, as your feelings adjust themselves to the truth, you will find relief. (2) When the Christians talk to you about their prospects after death, they forget to mention hell, where most people go, according to the New Testament. Surely an everlasting sleep is better than everlasting torture. Weigh a small chance of heaven against the great chance of hell, and then judge whether the Christian's prospect is, after all, so rosy. (3) With respect to a future life, independently of heaven and hell—if there be such a life, it cannot be destroyed by want of belief; and if there be no such life, belief cannot create it. What is, is; and what will be, will be—in spite of all wishes and opinions.

H. R. COLTON.—Your lecture notice arrived too late for insertion last week. We notified that we should go to press early, in consequence of the holidays.

J. PARTRIDGE.—See paragraph.

J. JONES.—Pleased to hear from you, and glad to know you have such a high opinion of the *Freethinker*. Your letter to the local paper is excellent.

A. MITCHELL.—Not without merit, but you require practice in versification, with close attention to good models, before your efforts will be fit for publication.

ALPHA.—We have remitted the matter to the Benevolent Fund Committee.

F. W. SWAIN.—Mr. Foote hopes to see you all at Derby in February.

VERAX.—We do not quite agree with your diagnosis, but we refrain from political discussions in this journal.

A. WYLLAM-STAVERS.—Thanks for your good wishes.

T. WILMOT.—We cannot waste time on such a lying braggart. Let him cadge, if he can, from Christian fools.

GEORGE ANDERSON, 35a Great George-street, Westminster, writes: "I have recently read a very able pamphlet by Charles Watts—*The Claims of Christianity*, 52 pages, price 6d. I am desirous to circulate this work. It is agreeable reading to those who have thrown off the trammels of Christianity, and is especially useful to those who want arguments for their own justification or in answering opponents. I am willing to send six copies, post free, to any Branch of the N.S.S. that will send me eighteen penny stamps."

W. SIMONS.—The document is healthy, but it does not appear to call for special notice.

C. E. HILL.—Mr. Conway's *Life of Thomas Paine* is published in two volumes at 12s. 6d. each. Your suggestion is a good one, if it can be carried out. Certainly the N.S.S. member's certificate might be improved; it was not, we believe, specially designed.

ITALICUS.—(1) George Bishop is really a poor creature. We cannot devote more space to his views on any subject. (2) The Puritans were not polygamists. The statement is absurd. That they were persecutors is beyond question. (3) We cannot discuss Capital Punishment in this column.

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

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Blue Grass Blade—Progressive Thinker—Two Worlds—Freethought Magazine—Freidenker—Der Arme Teufel—Boston Investigator—Arbeiter Freund—Crescent—Isle of Man Times—Islamic World—New York Sun—New York Public Opinion—Umtata Herald—Pretoria Government Gazette—Ourselves—Secular Thought—Truthseeker—Liberty—East Anglia Daily Times—Figaro.

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.

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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.

SPECIAL.

I HAVE terminated, for the present, the tenancy of the Foresters' Hall, Clerkenwell, where Freethought lectures have been given since the first Sunday in September. We were unable to charge for admission, and the collections have naturally not yielded enough to defray expenses. The deficit has been met under my Lecture Scheme.

For two Sunday evenings I am lecturing at Camberwell. The Secular Hall there has not been doing so well lately, and I hope to visit it a little more frequently, as the President's attendance seems to give fresh inspiration to the gallant workers.

My next effort in London is in the West-end, which I intend to work—not alone, but with other lecturers—during the rest of the winter. I have engaged St. James's Hall (Banqueting Room) for three more Sunday evening lectures on January 12, 19, and 26. My subjects will be found in an advertisement on another page of the *Freethinker*. They are fresh, and should be attractive. Of course, the expenses at St. James's Hall are very heavy, and I appeal to the London Freethinkers to make these meetings successful. I hope to get some notice of the lectures in the Radical press, and the attendance will be of the nature of a demonstration. Anyone who can distribute handbills, or exhibit a placard, should obtain the same of Miss Vance at 28 Stonecutter-street. A post-card will suffice in application.

After the St. James's Hall meetings there will be Sunday evening lectures in February, by Messrs. Watts and Parris, at the Athenæum, in Tottenham-court-road. During nearly the whole of that month I shall be on tour in the provinces. I hope to spend March in London, and to devote the whole of April to another provincial tour.

G. W. FOOTE.

SUGAR PLUMS.

THE Christmas season told on Mr. Foote's meetings at Manchester. The morning and afternoon audiences were small, but the hall was crowded to the door in the evening. Before the lecture Mr. Foote gave a reading of Tennyson's "Rizpah," which was highly appreciated. The lecture itself was delivered amidst a running fire of laughter and applause. During the day a collection was taken on behalf of the General Fund of the National Secular Society.

On Sunday evening last Mr. Foote lectured in the Secular Hall, Camberwell, to a large and enthusiastic audience. Mr. A. B. Moss, who came to listen, was pressed into taking the chair. "How and Why was Jesus Born?" was the subject, and the laughter which greeted the "How" part was equalled by the applause which greeted the "Why" as the lecturer illustrated the failure of Christianity. It is gratifying to know that the ovation at the close of the lecture was not mere barren sound, for new members were afterwards enrolled by the secretary.

Mr. Foote lectures again at Camberwell this evening, his subject being, "What has Become of the Devil?" Christians themselves ought to be interested in the disappearance of this personage.

Mr. Charles Watts lectures to-day, Sunday, January 5, and to-morrow (Monday), at Birmingham. Arrangements are being made for him to lecture in the district on following evenings under Mr. Foote's scheme. We hope our Midland friends will rally in good force at all the meetings.

Friends in the Midlands are reminded of the Conference to be held at the Alexandra Hall, Hope-street, Birmingham, this Sunday, January 5, at 2.30, which Mr. Watts will attend. The object of this Conference is to promote co-operation amongst the said Branches. We hope there will be a good gathering, and we shall be glad to receive a brief report of the proceedings.

Colonel Ingersoll is not only unconverted, but lecturing as much as ever. On December 29 he was at Jersey City, New Jersey; on January 5 he lectures at Detroit, Michigan; and on January 12 at Toledo, Ohio. The gospel of Freethought is being well spread over the States, and the prayers of the Christian Endeavorers are helping to spread it.

The *Literary Guide* for January contains a well-written and interesting interview with Mr. J. Allanson Picton, the writer being Mr. F. J. Gould. Mr. Picton, who has always been a stalwart Radical, describes the Nonconformists' support of Bible-reading in Board schools as "one of the greatest inconsistencies and treacheries to principle that the history of parties can show." Being reminded that Huxley advocated the retention of the Bible, Mr. Picton replied: "Yes, but he did not do so out of any truckling to public opinion. I sat on the School Board with him. His motive, I am sure, was thoroughly genuine. He looked upon the Bible as a great classic, and he believed its stories formed a useful means of conveying moral instruction to children. He had no idea that it would be used as it has been. He told me afterwards, in the course of conversation, that he was disappointed with the result, and that he was inclined to think my point of view was the right one."

The State Superintendent of Public Instruction in Minnesota has decided that opening school with prayer is illegal, as in violation of Sec. 16 of the State Constitution, which provides that no person shall be compelled to attend any service of religious worship.

The Ryhope Branch had a well-attended social gathering on Christmas Eve. The first toast of the evening was "The President of the N.S.S. and success to his lecture scheme." The next toast was "The memory of Charles Bradlaugh." Speeches were delivered by Messrs. Weightman and Hutchinson. The Ryhope friends are looking forward to a visit from Mr. Foote in February.

The Bristol Branch held a successful concert and dance on Boxing night, in spite of the wind and sleet. We understand that this Branch intends to carry on an active propaganda during the rest of the winter.

Christmas Day was celebrated by the Failsforth Secular Sunday School with an annual tea. Nearly three hundred scholars, parents, and friends sat down to the repast, which was followed by singing, recitations, and games. Mr. W. Jones, the president, distributed the prizes, and congratulated the school on its continued progress. The annual public party and entertainment takes place on January 4, when *The Honeymoon* will be played. Tickets for the tea and entertainment, on shilling.

Captain Otto Thomson sends us "tidings of great joy"—the advent of a talented lady Freethought orator on the platform of the Freethought Federation in Stockholm. The lady's name is Miss Ellen Key, and she is already well known in Liberal circles in Sweden. From the report of her lecture sent to us it is evident the lady has a good grip on religious and social questions. She will prove an acquisition to the Freethought party, and, we trust, help to rally its forces together.

We have received a letter from Mr. G. Gilette, one of our readers at Newcastle, Natal, South Africa, in the course of which he says: "Let me know when my subscription falls due, but on no account stop the paper, as I should feel lost without it. It is the best appetiser and digestion-promoter I ever tackled. If I read it before meals, it disperses all worries from my head, and enables me to enjoy my food; if after meals, for the same reason I digest my food. It is the most sensible paper I read. I have recommended it to several of my friends, and keep lending it right and left. I believe if you had an agent here he would sell any quantity." Mr. Gilette hopes Mr. G. L. Mackenzie will publish his

satirical verses in pamphlet form. He says he has distributed a lot of our tract, "The Parson's Idol."

An American physician writes to us from Mount Sterling, Illinois. He says that he went to church and heard a sermon on Thomas Paine's deathbed. "Upon coming home," he continues, "I recollected that I had kept a number of your publications, obtained while in England attending your hospitals; and, looking through them, I found *Infidel Death-Beds*, to my mind one of the most valuable reference books in Secular literature, and one that should be at the elbow of every thinker, as it saves so much time and bother." This correspondent adds: "I trust the good work in England continues, as I know it will as long as G. W. Foote and the *Freethinker* live."

The *Hereford Times* prints a long and able letter from "A Farmer" in support of Secular Education. It is a good sign of the times to see such a letter in an ordinary newspaper. "A Farmer" speaks very plainly about the superstitions of the New Testament.

London Freethinkers will remember the Annual Dinner at the Holborn Restaurant on Wednesday, January 29 (Thomas Paine's birthday). Mr. Foote, who presides, will be supported by Mr. Charles Watts and other well-known Freethinkers. The tickets are at the usual price, 4s., and can be obtained at 28 Stonecutter-street, or from any London Branch secretary.

WHY DON'T HE LEND A HAND?

You say there is a God
Above the boundless sky,
A wise and wondrous deity
Whose strength none can defy.
You say that he is seated
Upon a throne most grand,
Millions of angels at his beck—
Why don't he lend a hand?

See how the earth is groaning,
What countless tears are shed;
See how the plague stalks forward,
And brave and sweet lie dead.
Homes burn and hearts are breaking,
Grim murder stains the land;
You say he is omnipotent—
Why don't he lend a hand?

Behold, injustice conquers;
Pain curses every hour;
The good and true and beautiful
Are trampled like the flower.
You say he is our father,
That what he wills doth stand;
If he is thus almighty,
Why don't he lend a hand?

What is this monarch doing
Upon his golden throne,
To right the wrong stupendous,
Give joy instead of moan?
With his resistless majesty,
Each force at his command,
Each law his own creation—
Why don't he lend a hand?

Alas! I fear he's sleeping,
Or is himself a dream,
A bubble on thought's ocean,
Our fancy's fading gleam.
We look in vain to find him
Upon his throne so grand,
Then turn your vision earthward—
'Tis we must lend a hand.

'Tis we must grasp the lightning,
And plough the rugged soil;
'Tis we must beat back suffering,
And plague and murder foil;
'Tis we must build the paradise
And bravely right the wrong;
The god above us faileth,
The god *within* is strong.

—S. P. Putnam.

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*.

PROFESSOR GOLDWIN SMITH ON THE BIBLE.

"CHRISTIANITY'S MILLSTONE" is the title of a very significant article by Dr. Goldwin Smith in the *North American Review*. The millstone which Dr. Smith desires to see cast off is neither more nor less than what during the palmy days of Christianity was considered its very basis—viz., belief in the historical character of the Bible. He begins his article by citing the admission of Professor Bonney, Canon of Manchester, "that the increase of scientific knowledge has deprived parts of the earlier books of the Bible of the historical value which was generally attributed to them by our forefathers. The story of the creation in Genesis, unless we play fast and loose either with words or with science, cannot be brought into harmony with what we have learned from geology. Its ethnological statements are imperfect, if not sometimes inaccurate. The stories of the flood and of the Tower of Babel are incredible in their present form. Some historical element may underlie many of the traditions in the first eleven chapters of that book, but this we cannot hope to recover."

Dr. Smith then refers to such admissions of *Lux Mundi* as that "very little of the early record can be securely traced to a period near the events." He tells how he himself, as a student at college, attended the lectures of Dr. Buckland, a pioneer in geology; and he remembers the desperate shifts to which the lecturer was driven in his efforts to reconcile the facts of his science with the Mosaic cosmogony, the literal truth of which he did not venture to impugn. By a "day," Dr. Buckland said, Moses meant a geological period, though the text says that each day was made up of a morning and an evening; while the Decalogue fixes the sense by enjoining the observance of the seventh day as that on which the Creator rested after six days' labor.

The following passage brings forward an argument often urged in our own columns. It is significant by its source: "The history of every nation begins with myth. A primeval tribe keeps no record, and a nation in its maturity has no more recollection of what happened in its infancy than a man of what happened to him in his cradle. It is needless to say that the first book of Livy is a tissue of fable, though the Romans were great keepers of records and matter-of-fact as a people. When the age of reflection arrives, and the nation begins to speculate on its origin, it gives itself a mythical founder, a Theseus, a Romulus, or an Abraham, and ascribes to him its ancestral institutions or customs. In his history also are found the keys to immemorial names and the origin of mysterious or venerated objects. It is a rule of criticism that we cannot by any critical alembic extract materials for history out of fable. If the details of a story are fabulous, so is the whole. If the details of Abraham's story—the appearances of the Deity to him, so strangely anthropomorphic, the miraculous birth of his son when his wife was ninety years old, his adventures with Sarah in Egypt and afterwards in Gerar (evidently two versions of the same legend), the sacrifice of his son arrested by the angel, the episode of Lot, the destruction of the Cities of the Plain, and the turning of Lot's wife into a pillar of salt, are plainly unhistorical, the whole story must be relegated to the domain of tribal fancy. We cannot make a real personage out of unrealities, or fix a place for him in unrecorded time."

"That the alleged record is of a date posterior by many centuries to the events, and therefore no record at all, plainly appears from the mention of Kings of Israel in Genesis (xxxvi. 31). No reason has been shown for supposing that the passage is an interpolation, while the suggestion that it is prophetic is extravagant. It stamps the date of the book, like the mention of the death of Moses in Deuteronomy, to get rid of which efforts equally desperate are made."

The patriarchs, thinks Professor Smith, must be set down as mythical. Of efforts to identify the Pharaoh of the Exodus he asks: "What if the whole is mythical? There is a famine in Palestine. The Patriarch sends his ten sons, each with an ass and a sack, across the desert to buy food in Egypt. Provisions must have been furnished them for their journey, and of what they bought they must have consumed not a little on their journey home. This seems improbable, nor was it very likely that the ten should strike the exact place where their brother Joseph was in power."

He brings out the improbabilities of the whole story of Joseph; the evident fables of the plagues sent upon the helpless people of Egypt to make their ruler do that which Omnipotence might at once have done by its fiat; the extraordinary multiplication of the Hebrews, whose adult males, in spite of the destruction of their male children, amount to six hundred thousand, a number which implies a total population of at least two millions; their sudden appearance as an armed host, though they had just been represented as the unresisting bondsmen of the Egyptians; their wanderings for forty years within the narrow limits of the Sinaitic peninsula, where, though the region is desert, they find subsistence not only for themselves, but for their innumerable flocks and herds; their construction of a tabernacle where materials for it could not have been found; the plague of fiery serpents which was sent among them, and the brazen serpent by looking on which they were healed; the miraculous destruction of the impious opponents of an exclusive priesthood; the giants of Canaan; the victories gained over native tribes by the direct interposition of heaven; the strange episode of Balaam, and his colloquy with his ass; the stopping of the sun and moon that Israel might have time for the pursuit and slaughter of his enemies. This last incident alone seems enough to stamp the legendary character of the whole. In vain we attempt to reduce the miracle, which would imply a disturbance of the entire solar system, to a mere prolongation of the daylight. The Old Testament is altogether geocentric, and not merely in the phenomenal sense. The sun and moon are made "for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light on the earth," and with them is coupled the creation of the stars. The writer of the book of Joshua cites the book of Jasher as evidence of the miracle. Was the book of Jasher inspired? Could an inspired writer need or rest on the evidence of one who was uninspired?

Professor Goldwin Smith has, it will be noticed, got nearly to the length reached by Thomas Paine, in his *Age of Reason*, one hundred years ago. As we shall see next week, he goes so far that he is logically compelled to go very much further.

(To be concluded.)

FOOTSTEPS OF THE PAST.

POETRY and Science are not enemies. Shelley called them sisters. Both are necessary, and both are beneficent. Intellect can really do nothing great without Imagination. United they achieve wonders; divided, the one is barren, and the other anarchic. It is in the harmonious cultivation of these two faculties that our hope lies for the future of humanity.

A perception of this truth, I suppose, prompted my friend and colleague, Mr. J. M. Wheeler, to give the poetical title of *Footsteps of the Past* to a volume of scientific essays, which he has just published through Mr. Forder, and for which I bespeak readers, and of course purchasers, among the Freethought party. For the small sum of three shillings, the reader with moderate leisure and opportunity for study will here find the essence of what has been learnt by many investigators in the field of comparative religion. Mr. Wheeler does not waste his time in showing the mere doctrinal or ritual affinities of the great historic systems, like Christianity, Brahmanism, and Buddhism. He goes deeper, and shows how the religion of civilised nations is rooted in the superstition of savages, who are the living representatives of our own far-off ancestors. His book is full of facts, gathered from all points of the compass; and the writer's industry is well matched by his vivid insight, grasp of principles, and skilful presentation. Hundreds of the readers of this journal ought to buy Mr. Wheeler's book at once. They will find it immensely useful, and if they read it in the right spirit they will find it more interesting than any romance. Indeed, it is a romance; the romance of MAN on his upward way from darkness to light.

Mr. Wheeler writes an admirable preface to this volume. He declares that Christianity has outlived its possible usefulness, that the majority of educated persons have outgrown its teachings, that now it is mainly an organised hypocrisy, and that it is an iniquity to enforce its dogmas

on the minds of little children. In his introductory essay on "Early Religion" Mr. Wheeler points out that religion and morality grew up independently, that they had at first no sort of connection; and he agrees with Huxley that in their final evolution they will cease to have any connection for ever.

Mr. Wheeler's book will help on that evolution, and hasten that desirable consummation. All the more so if it finds its way into the hands of open-minded people who still call themselves Christians. For that reason, I ask those who possess themselves of a copy to lend it to their more orthodox friends.

I am a hater of "log-rolling." I detest anonymous puffs of books, written by the authors' personal friends. Frequent praise of one's colleagues, even when not anonymous, is in my judgment a thing to be guarded against. But there is a time and season for everything, and I take this opportunity of congratulating the Freethought party on having in its midst a writer of such industry, information, and judgment as Mr. Wheeler. I knew what I was about when I asked him, all those years ago, to join me in the conduct of the *Freethinker*. We are both sobered by age and experience, and little prone to hysterical language. It is the simple truth that I am proud to have my old friend at my side in the war against superstition, and that I trust we may fight together till Death strikes his dart at one of us and "the rest is silence." G. W. FOOTE.

NEW YEAR'S DAY.

Why do the parsons so furiously rage,
And the bishops take counsel together?
The sun, moon, and earth have thro' many an age
Decided the question of weather.

Not to mention those diamonds which hang in the sky
Shining nightly—"the stars in their courses,"
Their attraction is great; but to tell of them—why
'Twould o'ertax a poor rhymers' resources.

Why do not the civilised men of to-day
Celebrate the New Year at its birth?
They draw all their sustenance out of the clay;
They should also take time from the earth.

Our Old Mother Earth, with her orbit and axis,
Her winds, and her tides, and her seasons,
To dwell on her bosom we pay rent and taxes,
And hug her—for obvious reasons.

Why do I sully good paper with ink,
In this season, both cheery and drear?
Astronomy answers the question, I think—
'Tis to wish you a Happy New Year.

D. D.

Obituary.

Sergev Mikhailovitch Kravchinski "Stepniak" was a man whose memory will remain deeply impressed on the minds of all who knew him. His very appearance bespoke a man of no common order, but of vast energy, determination, and intelligence. Born in 1852, his parents were people of substance, who united White Russian and Ukrainian blood. He was educated at the Military Gymnasium, and, like Bakunin, the founder of Nihilism, his mental leader, he became an artillery officer. In the army he began his Nihilist propaganda, and it was to the army he looked for overthrowing Czarism. In 1874 he was arrested on suspicion, but contrived to make his escape, and threw himself into the movement of rival terrorism. The story of his operations as a conspirator is not yet fully known, but he was *capable de tout*. He organised the escape of Prince Krapotkin, and was party to many another daring deed. Russia was too hot to hold him, and his life-long friend, M. Tchaykovski, persuaded him to devote himself to the task of rousing the Western World to sympathy with the victims of despotism. This he effectively did by his works on *Underground Russia*, *The Russian Peasantry*, *Russia under the Czar*, etc. "Stepniak" had accustomed himself to work amid noise, and was frequently so absorbed in thought as not to hear what was going on around him. The result was that he was killed by an engine at a level railway crossing at Chiswick on December 23rd. His only religion was that of Humanity, and he was cremated at Woking on December 28, the funeral being attended by a great number of Socialist friends. Speeches were delivered by Volkhovski, Krapotkin, Morris, Burrows, Burns, Mrs. Aveling, and others.

"MR. DEVIL."

THE words of Jesus, "No man, when he has had the old, straightway desireth new wine; because he says the old is better," are as true to-day as ever they were. And yet I would modify the expression and make it read thus, "Few men," etc., for I believe there are some who are eager for the new wine.

I, for one, was delighted when I found that I might cease to believe in the Devil, or to believe that such a being existed. When I dared to think, "I do not believe there is such a being," and was not immediately struck dead by the power of God, I was indeed happy. To be able to realise that that dreadful being, who had filled my childhood with terror, lest at some dreadful moment he should seize me and drag me down to "hell"—who was ever waiting in dark rooms and secret corners, especially when I had been "naughty"; that dreadful being who made me do these naughty things so that he could obtain my soul when I died—I say, to be able to realise that no such being ever existed was to relieve me of the greatest burden of my life.

Distinctly do I remember one particular night, of awaking myself and the occupants of the bedchambers with a shriek of terror, for there, protruding from beneath my bed, was the dreadful head with its fiery eyes and terrible horns—the Devil!—come to take me to his abode.

O, how cruel! that parents should render their children's lives miserable, destroying their health and happiness, by such a hideous belief. And yet to this day many do so, and ministers of the Gospel (?) stand in the pulpits of our land and reiterate their belief in a "personal devil."

To show how utterly I believed in this awful being, I will relate a little anecdote of my own life.

For a long time I had been earnestly praying to God for some much-desired article—I fail to remember just what it was, but a childish toy, no doubt; and I had faithfully believed, for so I had been taught, and so I read in God's Holy Word, that it would surely come in some way.

Well, I at last gave up all hope of God answering my prayer, so I began to reason thus: According to my teaching, God is not running this earth at present. The Devil has got the upper hand of God, and so I will ask the Devil for this.

So I bowed myself beside my bed, and here I paused—I was about to perform a dreadful act—praying to the Devil. After a few moments I decided to go on and take the risks. Then another difficulty presented itself—how should I address this sovereign? It did not occur to me that, as he was temporarily ruling the sons of men, the usual O Lord! would be appropriate; so I began: "Mr. Devil."

I then told him how that I had been asking God for this, but that I had received nothing from him; and then made my request known.

It is needless to say that "Mr. Devil" seemed no more able to gratify my desire than "O Lord" was, and I never received an answer to my prayer.

I never think of this occurrence without smiling, and yet there is a sad side to it. The teaching children that God will give them that which they ask of him, if they are good children, is literally interpreted by them; as is also that other teaching, that if they are "bad," the "bad man" will get them.

I am glad that my dear boy's life has never been shadowed by such teaching. M. A. S.

PROFANE JOKES.

Clergyman—"Some people think I preach long sermons. Do you think so?" She—"Oh, no! they only seem long."

Grimaldi is said, when the "No Popery" cry was raised, to have put his head out of his window, and cried, with most comical grimaces: "Gentlemen, in dis house dere be no religion at all."

American Obituary—"The wife of the Rev. J. Dolittle listened to her husband's preaching on Sunday last, and died in convulsions the following Tuesday afternoon."

First Tramp—"What day of the week is it?" Second Tramp—"Sunday, I guess—everybody is going in the back door of that saloon over there."

Sunday-school Teacher—"What are we to understand by this passage: 'Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss'?" Precocious Boy—"Ought to ask a widow."

Numerous are the people who have "buildd better than they knew." A small boy in one of the public schools was asked to define a demi-god. "A demi-god," he said, "is a vessel that holds wine, gin, whisky, or any other liquor."

Mrs. H. (returning from church)—"You seemed to agree with all the parson said this morning." Mr. H.—"What makes you think so? I heard very little of it." Mrs. H.—"Well, you nodded at nearly every sentence."

BOOK CHAT.

The Buddhism of Tibet or Lamaism, with its mystic cults, symbolism, and mythology, and in its Relation to Indian Buddhism, by L. Austine Waddell, M.B. (W. H. Allen; 1895), is likely long to remain a standard work on the subject with which it deals. The only other treatise on the subject in English is that by E. Schlagintweit, published over thirty years ago. The author has personally studied Southern Buddhism in Burma and Ceylon, and Northern Buddhism in Sikkim, Bhotan, and Japan. He has visited Tibet and studied Lamaism from original sources with the aid of Buddhist priests, setting up a Lamaist temple with its fittings; and his work is profusely illustrated.

Buddhism in Tibet is hardly the philosophical cult one would expect to be patronised by Mahatmas. Sorcery and devil-worship underlie it as plainly as it did the fetishism of Central Africa. The deep yet simple faith of the Hindu reformer, Gautama Buddha, is in Tibet overgrown with a thick jungle of legends, superstitious rites, and charms. Prayers are found in their original form as spells to ward off evil spirits, or to convey the reciter to paradise. The celebrated invocation, Om ma-ni pad-me Hum (the jewel in the Lotus), is on some of the large prayer-wheels printed 100,000,000 times, and it does not even need to be articulated to be of efficacy.

Buddhism originally was a revolt against Brahmanical priestcraft. Yet in Tibet the Lama is rather a priest than a monk. He assigns himself an indispensable place, and has coined the current saying: "Without a Lama in front there is no (approach to) God." The Chinese Emperor, Yung-Chung, openly expressed his contempt for their mummery, saying in his edict: "If you neglect to burn paper in honor of Buddha, or to lay offerings on his altars, he will be displeased and let his judgment fall upon your heads. Your god Buddha, then, is a mean fellow. Take for your pattern the magistrate. Though you never pay court to him, he will none the less attend to you if you are honest; but if you transgress the law, it will be useless to try flattery."

Spiritual perfection is cultivated by the Lamas by "the meditative posture of the seven attitudes," which is part of the daily routine of the Lama to subjugate their senses. These attitudes are (1) sitting with legs flexed in the attitude of Buddha; (2) hands resting one above the other in the lap; (3) head bent forward; (4) eyes fixed on the tip of the nose; (5) shoulders expanded like the wings of a vulture; (6) spine erect and straight like an arrow; (7) tongue arching up to the palate like the curving petals of the lotus. One of the chief functionaries in Tibet is a State sorcerer, who, for a heavy consideration, works himself into a wildly ecstatic state, and gives truly ambiguous oracles.

The Buddhism of the Hindu Gautama proclaimed "Every man his own creator." It placed human duties before divine-worship. But in Tibet Buddhism is as low a superstition as Christianity is in Abyssinia. Worship is paid to a crowd of deities, demons, Buddhas, Bodhisats, gods, godlings, genii, and saints of all kinds. The pantheon of Lamaism is so numerous that no one has attempted to enumerate all the objects of worship. It naturally resolves itself into image-worship, and images of Napoleon and other European celebrities have found their way among Tibetan deities.

Of course a chief purpose of having gods is to give them, or their priests, something. There is no limit to the variety of things that are offered to the gods. Wealthy votaries offer art objects, rich tapestries, gold and silver vessels, jewels and the plunders of war, including weapons. Mr. Waddell also mentions American clocks, tins of jam, sardines, biscuits, and Birmingham umbrellas; and still more, incongruous objects as offered on Lamaist altars. All is fish that comes to the priestly net.

The January number of the *Free Review* has an excellent list of contents. Mr. B. Powell contributes a racy article on "Smith the Censor"—the great Smith of Westminster, now in heaven, who organised the railway-bookstall system, and applied the boycott to all advanced literature. Mr. J. M. Robertson begins an essay on "The Revival of Phrenology." Mr. Geoffrey Mortimer reviews *Jude the Obscure* with sympathy and insight. Mr. J. M. Wheeler has a capital article on "Buckle and Sociology." "A Rustic" writes mordantly on "The Provincialism of London." We wish this magazine the success it certainly deserves.

Daudet, who has another chance of a seat in the French Academy, refuses decidedly to take back what he wrote in *L'Immortel*, or to present himself in any way before the

Academicians. When solicited before, he was urged by Zola to become a candidate on the ground of the standing it would give to the new literature.

A new edition of the Bible has been printed which contains pictures of negro angels, and was gotten out by a shrewd Yankee at a cost of \$1.50 each. He sells them to the Southern negroes for \$8 a piece on the instalment plan, demanding \$2.50 on delivery.

Susan B. Anthony took no part in "The Woman's Bible," but she quite approves of it. She says: "Of course, people say these women are impious, presumptuous, and all sorts of things, for daring to interpret the Bible as they themselves see it. But I think the women have just as good a right to translate and twist the Bible to their own advantage as the men have to twist and turn it to their advantage, as they have done always. But now that these women have dared to do what the men have always done, they are called impious. Originally the orthodox women were to write their views and translations also, but when the time came they did not put in an appearance, and so only the opinions of the radical women were published."

CORRESPONDENCE.

NOT SATISFIED WITH DEATH.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I observe in your issue of December 22 a note on a slight criticism passed by the Paisley *Mirror* on the lecture recently delivered here by Mr. Cohen on Darwin. In that note you take this sentence from the *Mirror's* article, "Granting, for the moment, that it (i.e., the doctrine of Secularism *re* Immortality) is true, how can it be called satisfactory?" and you append the query, "Does the writer, then, find no satisfaction in truth, or is he only satisfied with illusions?"

That, Sir, is a mere quibble. I did not say, nor yet lead it to be understood, that I adhered to any other doctrine on the ground that it was "satisfactory," or that I discarded the Secularist's because it was not so. I meant simply to challenge Mr. Cohen's statement that there is satisfaction in thinking life ends for us here. The belief in immortality may be an illusion, and I don't undertake to prove that it is not. I simply fail to see why it should be satisfactory to believe that it is. If Mr. Cohen contemplates utter death with equanimity, he is not very closely akin to his fellows. Can he have read De Musset's *Pourquoi La Mort*, and yet fail to subscribe to the sentiment of it? Or take a writer Mr. Cohen may argue from more willingly. Take Hume, as he pauses to reflect on the dignity of human nature: "We see a creature whose thoughts are not limited by any narrow bounds, either of place or time; who carries his researches into the most distant regions of this globe, and beyond this globe, to the planets and heavenly bodies; looks back to consider the first origin, at least the history of the human race; casts his eye forward to see the influences of his actions upon posterity, and the judgments which will be formed of his character a hundred years hence; a creature who traces causes and their effects to great length and intricacy; extracts general principles from particular appearances; improves upon his discoveries; corrects his mistakes; and makes his very errors profitable." Now, there is nothing of rhetoric in that. It is a clear, calm statement of the greatness possible to man. Yet with Mr. Cohen we are to think that a creature with such capacities and their concomitant desires is to be content with the miserable littleness of attainment possible to one brief life.

Life piled on life were all too little.

Has Mr. Cohen no sympathy with the "Ulysses" of Tennyson?

That grey spirit yearning in desire
To follow knowledge like a sinking star
Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.

Has he never had a desire to live beyond the ordinary years of man, or to wake up from time to time throughout eternity to see how the world fared, and whether his hopes for mankind were being realised? Is he so satisfied as to the future that he has no anxieties about it? Would he not care to enjoy its happiness, or to sympathise with its afflictions?

True or not, mankind do not think with satisfaction of Death as the end-all. "Blank oblivion" is an "abyss abhorred." The simpler aspect of humanity to it is well put in the *Elegy*:—

For who, to dumb forgetfulness a prey,
This pleasing, anxious being e'er resigned,
Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,
Nor cast one longing, lingering look behind?

T. D. ROBB.

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.

BRADLAUGH CLUB AND INSTITUTE (36 Newington Green-road, Balls Pond, N.): 7, Touzeau Parris, "The Known Christ the Only True Christ." Tuesday, at 8.30, social gathering. Wednesday, at 8.30, R. Forder, "The Signs of the Zodiac."

BATTERSEA SECULAR HALL (back of Battersea Park Station): 7.30, members' general meeting—election of officers and other important business; 9.30, social party. Tuesday, at 8, dancing.

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "What has Become of the Devil?" Wednesday, at 8, C. Cohen, "Is the Belief in God Reasonable?"

EDMONTON (Assembly Rooms): Thursday, at 8, C. Cohen, "What is Secularism?"

KINGSLAND (Ridley-road): 12, Freethinkers' business meeting at the Bradlaugh Club and Institute, 36 Newington Green-road.

PENTON HALL (81 Pentonville-road—Humanitarian Society): 7, Joachim Kaspary, "Bible Superstitions and Immoralities."

WEST LONDON (Athenæum Hall, Godolphin-road, Shepherd's Bush): Wednesday, at 8, Charles Watts, "Secularism: its Principles and its Triumphs."

WEST HAM SECULAR ETHICAL SOCIETY (61 West Ham-lane): 7, Messrs. Scott, Carter, and others, "The Future of Religion."

WOOD GREEN (Club and Institute, 4 Lawn-villas, Stuart-crescent, opposite Wood Green Church): 7.30, C. Cohen, "The Scientific Basis of Morals."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 12, F. Haslam will lecture.

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

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM (Alexandra Hall, Hope-street): 11, Charles Watts, "The Perplexities of Christianity"; 7, "The Triumphs of Secularism in Modern Thought." 2.30, Conference of Midland Branches. Monday, at 8, at Bristol-street Board School, Charles Watts, "The Bible and Civilisation."

BLACKBURN: 3, members' meeting at secretary's house, 87 Penny-street.

BRISTOL (Shepherds' Hall, Old Market-street): at 7, Mr. Thatcher, "The Genesis of Life."

GLASGOW (Brunswick Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): closed for New Year's holidays.

HECKMONDWIKE (Lombard's Coffee Palace, Market-place): 2.30, meeting.

HULL (Cobden Hall, Storey-street): 2.30, Captain Monro, "What was Jesus Christ?" 7, members only—election of officers and other important business.

LIVERPOOL (Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street): 7, J. Roberts, "The Design Argument."

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 3, Lawrence Small, B.Sc., "Progress"; 6.30, "The Ethical Teachings of W. K. Clifford."

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE (Northumberland Hall, High Friar-street, near Grey's monument): 7, R. Mitchell, "Is the Bible Account of the Origin of Man Credible?—a Reply to the Rev. R. Zeitch."

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, readings and recitals.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, King-street): 7, business; 7.30, R. Chapman, "Ancient Philosophers—Zeno and Epicurus."

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