

The Free Thinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.

VOL. XVI.—No. 3.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 19, 1896.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

GOD'S OPPORTUNITY.

RELIGION lives upon the past. It is like our aristocracy ; it did great things—long ago. Its achievements are capitalised, and it now subsists on dividends. Here and there, in ignorant, sequestered parts of Europe, it still performs wonders ; but these, like Highland second-sight, disappear with the advance of civilisation. It is also alleged that great rogues are converted at revival meetings ; but, somehow or other, the rogues are not diminished in number. Moral miracles of this kind do not affect the general statistics of vice and crime ; and let argument do its worst, there is no appeal against figures.

In its garrulous old age, religion prattles of what it did in its lusty youth. It speaks of marvels, of heroism, of preternatural exploits. "Once upon a time" is the burden of its reminiscences. To doubt the accuracy of its memory is a species of blasphemy. If you press for some evidence, religion gives you a long record—written by itself ; and it thinks this should be taken as conclusive.

The God of religion falls under exactly the same reproach. He manifests the same supinity now, and yet he has such a brilliant ancient history. It reminds one of Heine's mordant witticism on Alfred De Musset, whom he described as a poet with a promising past.

God used to be extremely busy. He was here, there, everywhere, all over the shop. Nothing was too great for his power, nothing too little for his attention. His providence was like the elephant's trunk, which picks up a pin or pulls down a tree. Now he was making a world ; anon he was manufacturing holy hair-oil for Aaron. Now he was creating whales ; anon he was turning clouds of dust into lice. Now he was thundering laws from Mount Sinai ; anon he was giving directions for candle-snuffers. Now he was slaughtering myriads of Assyrians by one magical stroke ; anon he was saving the life of a poor woman in a famine by endowing the food in her larder with a miraculous power of self-multiplication.

Now all these things are over, as Virginius says in Macaulay's ballad. Jehovah has retired from active business. Nearly two thousand years ago his son visited this planet to give the firm a fresh start. He performed many wonders and laid in a large stock of miracles, upon which the Church has been trading ever since. But he did not remain at the earth branch-office. He soon went home again. And although he promised to return shortly, he has not arrived up to the time of our going to press. He is terribly behind date—like all the gentlemen who represent him. "Lo he comes!" they sing, with most damnable iteration ; but it is always a false alarm ; and nobody, except a few Second Advent cranks, ever thinks of looking up.

It is really time, however, that Jesus Christ came again, or that God the Father bestirred himself. Thomas Carlyle, with all his inherited piety, complained to Mr. Froude that "God does nothing now." And has not Mr. Swinburne, the poet, in his splendid and sonorous *Hymn of Man*, warned the priests that they must really stimulate the God of their faith into some activity ? He bids them call upon him, as the priests of Baal called upon their deity in that famous contest with Elijah. "Cry aloud!" he exclaims, "for the people blaspheme." Is even his hatred cold—the hatred that was manifest in the fires of hell ? And what has

become of his loving kindness, which gave the elect the joys of heaven, while the heretics roasted under their very noses ? The poet declares that God is "smitten," his "death is upon him."

And the love-song of Earth, as thou diest, resounds through the wind of her wings—
Glory to Man in the highest ! for Man is the master of things !

All very well, Mr. Swinburne ; but any good Christian will tell you that your blasphemy will meet with due punishment in the lake which burneth with brimstone and fire. You have missed the Poet Laureateship (if you wanted it!), you accursed infidel ! And it has fallen to the lot of a good Catholic, though a poor poet (Banjo-Byron, Browning called him), who finds that godliness has the promise of the life that now is, as well as of the life that is to come.

Seriously, however—for we *can* be serious—it may be suggested that the Christian God should give some sign of his existence. We are not going to take out a watch, and give him five minutes to strike us dead, as so many "infidels" have done—in religious tracts ; for, in the first place, he may have something else to do just then ; and, in the next place, we don't want our own funeral to swell the budget of Christian Evidences. Our proposals are less extreme, and less illogical. Let us submit a few, by way of sample.

Jesus Christ raised from the dead a man called Lazarus, but nobody took much notice of him. It is not recorded that anyone asked him a single question as to what he saw and heard while he was dead. For any useful purpose, except perhaps to his own family, Lazarus might as well have stopped in the tomb, and (to descend to New Testament language) gone on with his "stinking." It was a wasted resurrection.

How much more efficacious would be the resurrection of (say) Charles Bradlaugh ! To begin with, there is no doubt about his death. His daughter is still living, and so are the doctors and nurses who tended him in his last illness. The undertaker could add his affidavit. Testimony could be given by hundreds of people who saw the coffin lowered into the grave at Brookwood. Newspaper accounts of the funeral could be produced. And lastly, so long a time has elapsed *since* the funeral, that it is reasonably certain that he is really dead. Well now, does anyone doubt that the resurrection of Charles Bradlaugh would be a triumphant vindication of Christianity ? We should all know him again. He was no common man. You could not mistake him for anyone else. And if he came amongst us again "in his habit as he lived," and told us that he had been in the presence of God, and seen Jesus Christ, and learnt that the Christians were right and Iconoclast was wrong ; would not this settle the hash of "infidelity" for ever ? Would it not rouse the very indifferents, and turn mere acquiescence into positive and ardent faith ?

Our first proposal, therefore, is that God the Father, God the Son, or God the Holy Ghost, or all of them together, should raise Charles Bradlaugh from the dead. Now is the accepted time, now is the day of resurrection. It will be too late when all the witnesses are dead. Let it be done now, while they are all living. Let Bradlaugh arise, and God's enemies be scattered !

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be concluded.)

PROGRESS OF FREETHOUGHT.

WHEN David Hume lay dying in Edinburgh, near one hundred and twenty years ago, he amused himself with reading *The Dialogues of the Dead* of the witty Freethinker Lucian. Alluding to the excuses there made to Charon for desiring not to enter his ferry and cross the Styx to Hades, he diverted himself by imagining what he himself could say and the answers he might receive. The usual excuses as to money, houses, and lands could not apply; but he thought he might ask for time to improve his works for a new edition. "But," said he, "Charon would answer: 'When you have seen the effect of these you will be for making other alterations. There will be no end of such excuses; so, honest friend, please step into the boat.' But I might still urge: Have a little patience, good Charon; I have been endeavoring to open the eyes of the public. If I live a few years longer, I may have the satisfaction of seeing the downfall of some of the prevailing systems of superstition. But Charon would then lose all temper and decency: 'You loitering rogue, that will not happen this many hundred years. Do you fancy I will grant you a lease for so long a term? Get into the boat this instant, you lazy, loitering rogue.'"

Very soon after this little *jeu d'esprit* the great philosopher died, as his physician, Dr. Black, reported, "in such a happy composure of mind that nothing could exceed it." Superstition was then so rampant that crowds went to his grave in the Calton burying-ground in the expectation of seeing the Atheist's body snatched from its last resting place in a blue flame. The seed he had sown did not bear fruit at once; as he saw full well, the downfall of the prevailing system of superstition was a work of centuries. But the work has been going on—Freethought has become more open and aggressive. Men like Paine, Bentham, Mill, Shelley, Carlyle, Greg, Newman, Bradlaugh, and Huxley have upheld its standard, and there is now no country—not even Russia—wherein the prevailing superstition of Christianity is preached, where there are not also men challenging or undermining that superstition. Freethought is firmly based among all the educated classes in France, and in Germany it cannot be dislodged by all the persecution of the divinely-guided Emperor. In Catholic lands every Freemason's lodge is a protest against priestcraft, a place for the dissemination of belief in the brotherhood of man, irrespective of race or religion—a wider, nobler doctrine than that of exclusive Christian salvation.

There is not a colony now where Freethinkers are not engaged in the task of converting the Christians. In America Colonel Ingersoll is a champion who alone suffices to spread consternation in the Churches, and against whom they have vainly matched their ablest men. A Boston minister recently declared that Ingersoll had two million followers in the United States. In India only the non-Aryan races are converted into rice-Christians. Moslems, Brahmins, and Buddhists alike condemn the idea of salvation through the blood of a dead Jew. To some extent they retort on Christian missions and seek converts among Christians. Like the Christians themselves, they often seek to accommodate their faiths to modern science, and if they give up their ancestral creeds they turn to secular humanitarianism rather than to any exclusive schemes of salvation in another world. China will have nothing to do with Christian missions; but, as its millions become educated, they take to the Secularism of Confucius, who declared that we should not talk of death until we understood life, nor concern ourselves with spirits until men were known.

In Japan, that England of the East, where a free, happy, courteous, and patriotic people have made astonishingly rapid progress in all Western arts and sciences, it was definitely decided that, while many European institutions could be copied with advantage, its religion should be left severely alone. So far as the old faiths—whether Shintoism or Buddhism—are breaking up, they are replaced, not by Christianity, but by Secularism. Here is what W. E. Curtis, the long-time correspondent of the *Chicago Record*, says:—

"In almost every school-house is found an infidel. The works of Herbert Spencer, John Stuart Mill, and other authors of the same sort, were translated into the Japanese language as soon as the Bible. Reprints of many scientific works of the controversial sort can be

purchased in any bookstore for less than they cost in England. There are weekly and monthly publications devoted to the discussion of scientific topics, which are not only open, but able, antagonists of the Christian faith. It is from them the missionaries meet with the greatest opposition and discouragement. One of the native faculty of a Christian university, founded by the prayers and the contributions of the pious people of the United States, and managed by the American Board of Foreign Missions, himself a graduate of Yale College, has recently renounced the Church that pays his salary, and is now making frequent public addresses that would do credit to Colonel Ingersoll."

The evolution philosophy, the views of Darwin, Huxley, Spencer, and Haeckel, have spread over the civilised world. Even in the Churches many have given up the old belief in special creation, and, after studying science, are forced to exclaim, "Thou hast conquered, O Darwin!" So in the domain of criticism. The views for which Paine and Voltaire were reviled now find utterance even in the pulpits, and men like Drs. Driver and Cheyne are teaching the younger generation of theologians to abandon all the old positions.

The Churches are everywhere changing their attitude towards the traditional system of Christian doctrine. Wondrous squirming and wriggling go on in the endeavor to accommodate the new truths of science to the old assumptions of sky-pilotage. In educated circles the creeds are discarded. We have from the preachers, instead of the doctrines and articles of belief which they are pledged to teach, a lot of gush about the pure and simple gospel, the Christianity of Christ, etc.—phrases used to cover up the fact that they are dispensing new wine out of the old bottles.

The inspiration of the Bible is given up. Professor Goldwin Smith writes of it as the millstone round the neck of Christianity. Few now-a-days could be found to argue that the books of Samuel are any more inspired than the books of Shakespeare. The doctrine of the Trinity is kept out of sight, or resolved into nebulous metaphysics. Hell is unmentioned to ears polite. Satan is superannuated, and the whole scheme of salvation is shifted from dependence upon belief in the Fall, or reliance upon the blood of Christ, to imitation of a great ideal—though the ideal offered never appeared in the character of husband, father, or citizen.

Large organisations, immense enthusiasm, and enormous wealth are devoted by the Christian Churches to bringing the heathen to Christ. The heathens are heathen, and usually remain so; but where among the Christians is to be found a single follower of Christ? Christianity is but lip profession. All its distinctive doctrines are melting before the sun of reason, and all that is wanting for the triumph of Freethought is moral courage, organisation, and the sinews of war. The Churches are strong, not because of vital belief in their teaching, but because of their endowments and the air of respectability given by an influential past. When the indifferent and time-serving desert them, they will be empty indeed. Meanwhile open and avowed Freethinkers who stand the brunt of the battle with superstition, if, like Hume, they cannot expect to see all at once the entire collapse of the prevailing superstitions, may at least see them gradually fall into decay, and have the assurance that time is working with them, and that their labors are not in vain.

J. M. WHEELER.

CHRISTIANITY AND HISTORY.

CHRISTIANS frequently boast that their religion has a trustworthy history, and that the essentials of their faith are based upon records about whose accuracy there can be no reasonable doubt. For instance, a leading canon of the Church recently wrote in one of our monthly reviews that, if we credit history at all, we must accept *Christian* history; by which he meant the alleged writings of the Apostles. He then declared that there is stronger testimony for the resurrection of Christ than there is for the coronation of Queen Victoria, or for many of the battles fought during the early part of the present century. This is a fair sample of the orthodox method of jumping at conclusions. For, even if the term "history" is applied to the writings of the New Testament, its records are of an exceedingly

doubtful character, as we have frequently shown. But there is no parallel between the supposed resurrection of Jesus and the coronation of Victoria, and the fighting of battles during the early part of the present century. Many persons, doubtless, are still alive who witnessed these nineteenth-century events, while we have never read of anyone who asserted that he saw the Resurrection take place. Besides, there is nothing contrary to human experience in coronations and in battles, but for a dead man to come to life would be opposed to all our knowledge of natural law.

To us it seems a confusion of terms to apply the word "history" to the writings of the Apostles, to those of the Fathers, or to those of any of the officers of the Church. The principal work these Christians did was to give the world vague and contradictory records of (to say the least) unreasonable beliefs and improbable events. Such records, if produced for the first time to-day, would not be considered of any historical value whatever. It is true that the writings of so-called Pagans were once designated "scriptures," but that term was applied to all literature, irrespective of its character. The difference between sacred and secular writings has long been established, and a distinction is invariably recognised between ancient history and Christian revelation. When we read of "scriptures" being given by the inspiration of God, we don't understand that it is meant that such literature was the same in its nature and purpose as the histories given us by Greek and Roman writers. Why, then, should the writings of Christians be classed as "history," from which they are so clearly separated by their character and purpose? A collection of doctrines and accounts of ceremonies, which were adopted by a church or a sect, is not history in its true sense. Buckle, in his *History of Civilisation*, approaches the Greek idea of the term, which was a record of facts based upon an examination of their nature and force. Polybius writes thus: "Truth is the eye of history; for, as an animal deprived of sight becomes incapable of performing its natural functions, so, if we take away truth from history, what remains will be nothing more than a useless tale." Vain imagination and fantastic ideas do not furnish materials for history in the proper sense of the word. These creations of fancy belong to allegory, to fiction and fable, which form the beginnings of a nation's record. But, as Diodorus Siculus observes: "What was useful for the life of man was not found out at the beginning." This is discovered only by experience in the realms of reality, which Christian "history" seldom touches.

Is it not strange that the principal historians of the first century are silent as to Christians and their faith? For instance, Plutarch and Strabo, who lived and wrote soon after the alleged advent of Christ, are both silent upon the leading events recorded in the Gospels. These eminent historians travelled much, and were most assiduous in collecting current information. They give accounts of many prodigies, marvels, and supposed supernatural events, and the fact, therefore, that they make no allusion to the most striking incidents of the New Testament can be reasonably accounted for only by the supposition that they had not heard of them. We are aware that it has been asserted that Plutarch had a knowledge of the existence of Christians; but the Rev. Dr. Langhorne states that "nothing of Plutarch's is now extant" which justifies such an assertion. Moreover, it must be remembered that, when seeking for guidance, Plutarch did not go to Jesus, but to the Stoics and to Socrates. It may also be mentioned that four hundred years later Boethius, who studied the same old Greek authors as Plutarch did, wrote *The Consolations of Philosophy*, but he did not refer to Christianity. This is significant, because it is often alleged that the consolations afforded by the Christian religion excel those imparted by Greek and Roman philosophy. Had Boethius known of the Christian faith, doubtless he would have made some allusion to it. Granted this is but negative evidence in our favor; it, however, has its value, nevertheless.

Livy (book xxiv., chap. 10) gives a good sample of Christian "history" when, relating certain matters the truth of which he cannot vouch for, he says: "Numerous prodigies were reported to have happened this year; and the more such were credited by the simple and superstitious people, the more such stories multiplied." This explains why so many foolish tales originated, and were perpetuated, in the primitive days of Christianity. Evidently, in the early

history of the Christian faith, the fabulous predominated, superstition precluded the dignified use of reason, and the belief in supernatural agencies rendered the proper recognition of natural powers impossible. We are not now concerned as to how the Gospels originated; our desire is to inquire if the most important events mentioned therein bear the marks of historical accuracy. That they should do so is, in our judgment, necessary to entitle Christianity to be regarded as an historical religion.

Gratz notices that, although Josephus gives the most trivial details of the proceedings of Pilate, he nowhere alludes to his dealings with Jesus of Nazareth, or to Christianity. We may understand his want of interest in new doctrines, but we fail to discover any reason for his omitting all reference to the great trial in Court, and its marvellous attendant phenomena, if such events occurred as stated in the Gospels. Josephus even reports street rows and minor conflicts with "the powers that be"; but he takes no notice of the judicial examination, condemnation, and even crucifixion of one who is said to be the Son of God. Dio Cassius, who devoted twenty years to collecting evidence for his *History of Rome* down to the eighth year of the Emperor Severus, does not mention Christianity or the Christians. Mr. W. Addis, in his *Christianity in Rome*, confirms the fact of the omission by this learned man. Then there was Philo, who visited Rome A.D. 39, and wrote on *The Logos* after the manner of Saint John; but he does not mention Christianity. We do not overlook that subsequent writers, such as Suetonius, Tacitus, and others, are supposed to have made some vague reference to the Christians. But these writers are too late to speak from personal knowledge. The events to which they are said to have referred occurred, if at all, certainly not less than thirty or forty years before either Suetonius or Tacitus wrote. It does not appear at all improbable, to those who are acquainted with the forging propensities of the early Christian Fathers, and with the habit of interpolation indulged in by the primitive theological writers, that the passages in the latter writings referring to Christianity were inserted at a later period.

The doubtful character of what is termed Christian history may not affect the conclusions of those persons who accept without question whatever the Bible or the Church asserts; but those thinkers who exercise their faculties, irrespective of theological considerations, may recognise the importance of pointing out the fact of the silence of impartial history upon some of the most prominent events that have influenced the minds of professed Christians during the past eighteen hundred years. In the interest of truth, we consider that this aspect of Christian propaganda deserves the serious attention of all men who profess to be the teachers of historical accuracy. If it can be shown that the conclusions at which we have arrived are erroneous, let it be done by all means; but this can be accomplished only by the production of absent evidence. It is not a subject of faith or mere belief, but one of fact and demonstration. If the existence of Christ is regarded simply as an "ideal," encouraged to gratify emotional desires, let it be so stated; if, however, he is alleged to have been a real character, then the silence of independent writers in the first century should be accounted for.

Personally, we think it possible that at that particular period a person named Jesus might have lived, for that was not an uncommon name; but we have failed to discover sufficient evidence to justify us in believing that the Christ of the Gospels ever existed. He appears to us as a purely imaginary character, which was drawn by theological fancy, and has been handed down through the indifference and audacity of the clergy, and the ignorance and credulity of their followers. To us, as Secularists, it matters not whether Christ was a reality or a myth; the good that is associated with his name did not originate with the Christian era, and we accept it as the common heritage of the human race. Finally, belief in him either as a real or a mythical personage will not save us from the ills of life, for experience has proved that such salvation can come only by the wise and persistent use of mundane agencies.

CHARLES WATTS.

There is in every village a lighted torch, the schoolmaster; and a mouth to blow it out, the parson.—*Victor Hugo.*

THE FATE OF RELIGION.

RELIGION must die. What! do you doubt it? Look and see. Look at the long roll of gods, dead gods, and say if the gods are not all as mortal as men. Chronos, Saturn, Jupiter and his court, Neptune, Dis, Mercury, Charon, Wodin, Thor, and all the gods of our own race, are dead. Even the Devil is dead, with all his innumerable host.

And Elohim, Jehovah, Elshaddai, Adon, Baal, Jesus, are as dead as the deadest god ever worshipped. Yes, and Mary and all the saints are equally dead.

The names of some of the gods remain, but so altered that their owners would not know them. A few mourners, we may say, linger round their graves and chant their praises; and a few people in asylums and on the road to them still believe in the gods and saints, just as others believe in fairies, pixies, etc.

Yes, religion is dying. The churches are getting very worldly in belief, as they have ever been worldly in practice. They are glad to drop the old jargon. Hell is gone, and Heaven is out of sight and attracts no one; the Judgment Day is a thing to jest with, Gabriel's trumpet is a phrase to amuse, the resurrection is a laughing-stock, and the Devil's dungeon now hardly frightens children.

The clergy themselves jest, when alone, upon the most sacred subjects; and they merely put on airs and manners when in the pulpit or performing their mummery before the people.

Bah! the people are opening their eyes. They are beginning to see that those holy drones who renounce the world and follow the example of Penniless Jesus are just the parties who live in the greatest luxury, have the finest buildings, the best clothes, and the least worry in life. The people see that the clergy do not believe their own professed creeds and dogmas; and the stuff that drove our fathers half mad with fright will tickle our children as the queerest rubbish ever known.

All the tending and care in the world cannot keep religion alive—impossible. The clergy will galvanise the old carcase into some sort of movements yet in order to raise the wind; but even that must grow less and less successful.

The Dissenting bodies are doomed for a certainty. Their position is too illogical; they are neither fish, flesh, nor fowl. The Anglican Church will hang together until the State refuses all further supplies, and then die a lingering death. The last to die will be the Popish sect, because her people are the most stupid of all. Her priests have studied and learnt to perfection the art of robbing their dupes of all manhood and womanhood, and turning them into docile slaves. But even this is being reversed. Each generation believes less than the former one; and the priests are compelled to permit this; if they object, their salary will suffer.

It is inconceivable that even Papists can go on believing the absolute rubbish which makes up their creed—the primacy of Peter, the unbroken list of popes, the visions of saints, the existence of Purgatory, the wafer turned into Christ's body, etc. In spite of priests and lackadaisical parents, in spite of themselves, the dupes of Popery must grow more sceptical with each advancing generation, until the stuff is dead.

No doubt some people look with alarm, or even horror, upon a time when gods and ghosts shall be no longer believed in, when dogmas and nonsense shall no longer sway mankind. I do not. To me the prospect is a bright one.

Are we the worse, the less moral, the less happy, for having lost all faith in the older gods? Have we degenerated, or have we risen, in growing out of old pagan creeds? Has the death of pagan dogmas left us without any moral guide, or with a worse one than our distant fathers had? Let fact and reason say.

Shall we pay our debts less readily, or kill or rob our fellows the readier, because we cannot believe the Nursery Tales of the Bible? How does the story of Eve's origin from a rib (or tail) of Adam affect our character? Shall we grow less moral because we have learnt to despise the praying rakes and cutthroats of the Bible, and do not altogether admire Mary Magdalen and the Prodigal Son, the highest types of New Testament saints?

Will our sons be less pure because they despise the polygamous saints of the Bible? our daughters less chaste

or modest because they don't care to imitate the Misses Lot, Tamar, Ruth, Esther, and Mary, the unfaithful sweetheart of Joseph? What say you, grasping priests and insolent pretenders to a divine commission to gull mankind?

When people once awake to the clear truth that morality is essentially and exclusively a this-world affair, they will also understand that other-world elements and considerations can only disturb and paralyse human conduct, and corrupt morals. They will find abundant proof of this in the history of religion—especially the Bible religion.

When people are sufficiently educated to see the truth of this they will help us to cart away the theological rubbish-heaps about, so as to give the future generations a clear field for the full development of their nobler character.

In the meantime we hard-worked and ever-fighting soldiers must fight on. There is to be no rest for us till the last rest comes. It is a battle to the death with superstition that must be our lot. Amen.

—*Liberator*.

JOS. SYMES.

THE MAGI.

By rendering the Greek word, *magoi*, by "wise men" (Matthew ii. 1), our translators have partially concealed the fact that the name designates them as astrologers or oriental soothsayers. The same word in the singular is rendered "sorcerer" in Acts xiii. 6. Such men were held in high estimation for their ability to cast horoscopes and read signal events about to happen in human affairs from the movements of the stars; it is clear that the narrative of the visit of the magi to pay homage and tribute to the infant Jesus presupposes the highest admiration, on the part of the evangelist, for this pretended wisdom.

The appearance of the star which led the magi to Bethlehem is represented as a supernatural occurrence. It is described in terms which cannot be applied to any known astronomical phenomenon; and it is, therefore, a throwing away of time to inquire whether at or about this time there was or was not some conjunction or transit of stars, or some appearance of a comet. We may give all due weight to the assertion of Kepler (confirmed in the main by Pritchard) that a remarkable conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn occurred three times in the year 7 B.C., and that Mars joined them in the spring of 6 B.C.; and yet we may affirm that neither this conjunction nor any comet could be the phenomenon described in Matthew. Neither stars nor comets will appear to point to or to stand over any definite spot; and if we go so far as to grant that the occurrence of Kepler's conjunction in the constellation Pisces, supposed by some astrologers to be connected with the fortunes of Judea, may have turned the thoughts of the magi to the Judæan capital, it is impossible to reconcile it with the language of the text: "And lo, the star [not stars], which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was." To do this, it must have been a body far within the reach of the earth's attraction, in which case its light would have been extinguished by falling to the earth before the magi could have fairly started on their six-mile journey from Jerusalem to Bethlehem. Hence, as Farrar admits, "the immediate applicability of this [Kepler's] phenomenon to the Gospel narrative is now generally abandoned."

To admit that a meteor, an evanescent star, or the conjunction described by Kepler, is to be identified with the star of the evangelist is to admit that the evangelist or his authority has distorted the facts almost beyond recognition, and made a miracle out of a natural event; and, *ipso facto*, to discredit in advance whatever other remarkable circumstances out of harmony with the rest of our knowledge he may have to relate.

The star, then, was miraculous; and the magi having seen it, and recognised it as the star of the King of the Jews, calling it "his star," God must, according to the narrative, have wrought an event which was perfectly certain to strengthen the belief of the magi, of Herod, of the priests, and of the Jews generally, in the truth of the pseudo-science of astrology.

But, aside from the miracle which always indicates the

myth, there are other reasons for regarding the visit of the magi under the guidance of the star as unhistorical. "Why," asks Thomas Scott, "were the magi brought to Jerusalem at all? If they knew that the star was the star of Christ, and were by this knowledge conducted to Jerusalem, why did it not suffice to guide them straight to Bethlehem, and thus prevent the slaughter of the innocents? Why did the star desert them after its first appearance, not to be seen again till they issued from Jerusalem? or, if it did not desert them, why did they ask of Herod and the priests the road which they should take, when, by the hypothesis, the star was ready to guide them?"

"The Jews," says Dr. Geikie, "had already, long before Christ's day, dabbled in astrology, and the various forms of magic which became connected with it.... Everywhere throughout the whole Roman Empire, Jewish magicians, dream expounders, and sorcerers were found. 'The life and portion of children,' says the Talmud, 'hang not on righteousness, but on their star.' 'The planet of the day has no virtue, but the planet of the hour [of nativity] has much.' 'When the Messiah is to be revealed,' says the book Sohar, 'a star will rise in the east, shining in great brightness, and seven other stars round it will fight against it on every side.'"

The very fact of the universal belief that extraordinary events, especially the birth and death of great men, were heralded by appearances of stars, and still more of comets, or by conjunction of stars, is of itself sufficient to account for the existence of a narrative of a peculiar star heralding the birth of Jesus. Some astronomical phenomenon may have aided in the formation of the legend, but the superstition of the age would have created the legend without such assistance. If we are to believe the legends, the births of Abraham and Moses among the Hebrews, of Yu and Laoutsze among the Chinese, of Buddha and Rama among the Hindus, and of the Roman Cæsars, were all heralded by stars. A certain Jew who, in the reign of Hadrian, gave himself out as the Messiah received from the celebrated Rabbi Akiba the surname of Bar-Cocheba, or "son of a star," and caused a star to be stamped upon the coinage which he issued.

It is not unlikely that the form of the legend in Matthew was influenced by certain passages from the Jewish scriptures, such as that which predicts that a star shall come out of Jacob (Numbers xxiv. 17), and others which speak of the glory of the Lord rising upon Israel, and nations coming to the light and kings presenting their treasures as tribute (Isaiah x. 3-6, Psalm xxii. 10). "Such images signified the future splendor of the people of Israel; but the Christian reader applied them to the Messiah Jesus, and, because their fulfilment could nowhere be shown in the known public life of Jesus, they sought to find a place for it in the obscurity of his pre-historic childhood" (Pfeiderer).

—*Independent Pulpit.*

C. L. ABBOTT.

A BOOTHITE ORGIE.

IN the Temperance Hall there have been many gatherings of a remarkable character, but it is doubtful whether any demonstration ever held on the premises was more emotional and weirdly impressive than a midnight gathering convened there last night by the chief of the Salvation Army, "General" Booth. The very scum of Melbourne had been invited to this meeting—drunkards, thieves, and irreclaimables generally of both sexes, and they had all been told they were expected to "bring a friend." It was given out as an inducement that sympathy would be offered them, and helpful words which would aid in their reform. Certainly a very mixed crowd responded to the call, containing all the elements mentioned; but it is to be feared the very large majority of the class who were wanted remained away. A large proportion of those present were apparently of a different class from those who were to be benefited by the demonstration. Army officers and Salvation lasses thronged the place dressed in uniform. A well-known barrister occupied a front seat in the centre of the hall, and around the wings and in the balcony were at least four members of Parliament, including a representative of the Upper House and the gentleman who moved the abortive vote of want of confidence on Tuesday. A promising penitent of that character of course could not

be overlooked. Nothing was done until 11.30 p.m. Then, amidst cheering, waving of hats, and musical jubilation provided by a brass band, "General" Booth and his staff filed on to the platform. Hymns, the burden of which was a call to salvation, were sung excitedly, and then the "General" delivered an address suited exactly to the mental attitude of the people he had proposed to deal with. He pleaded with them in all forms of logic, wheedled and coaxed them to abjure their evil ways and become self-respecting, well-doing members of the public. "When you have become saved," said he, "and have had a wash and a shave, you won't know yourselves; and, instead of being a walking nuisance and a blight wherever you go, you will be looked upon as an angel. Are you going on as you are? Are you not sick of the Devil's service?" he asked. "You don't get much satisfaction out of it. Only aching bones after a little excitement, which is like thorns crackling under a fire." He added that there was forgiveness for all, and it did not matter whether a man was the blackest sinner in Melbourne, the army would be friendly to him and help him if he would only come forward and pray to God. Finally, after an argumentative talk to the strange gathering, in that peculiarly ingratiating, cogent fashion of speaking of which he is a master, he worked up the feelings of many to a strong pitch of enthusiasm, and then invited converts to step forward and kneel at the seat of mercy. Two or three shocking sinners, who had recently repented, had been previously observed wrestling on their knees with every sign of mental agony, tempered with divine inspiration, and no sooner had this request been made than others joined them. A fine young woman, dressed in startling green, was amongst the first to succumb, and she was received by the sisters of the army with manifestations of the liveliest joy. Immediately afterwards an intoxicated ruffianly man joined the fold. He had been interjecting a good deal during the "general's" speech about having recognised that warrior of the Lord in the Whitechapel-road. After he had writhed in the anguish of a contrite spirit on the floor for some time, he sprang up and demanded to shake the "general" by the hand, declaring that he was saved, and asking the "general" to hunt up an old chum of his in London to tell him the news and promote his conversion. Frantic old men thronged to the mercy seat, and middle-aged women weeping, in maudlin or sentimental fashion, according to their moods, until half-an-hour after converts had been first invited to come forward there were observable thirty kneeling figures groaning and gesticulating in repentance, whilst throughout the crowded hall soldiers and citizens, to its very confines in the shadowy depths under the balconies, sang deliriously joyful hymns. Still, the member of Parliament who moved that vote of confidence motion remained unmoved. Momentarily the throng of converts was getting larger when our representative left at 12.30 a.m. The hall was then still packed with people to the extent of leaving hardly standing room. The calls demanding of sinners that they should accept salvation were being reiterated with unflagging zeal, and a powerful man, who had been overwrought by his feelings, was being carried out in convulsions between six stalwart army officers and two policemen.

—*Melbourne Age (November 28).*

Christian Re-union.

"United Christendom" is a miasma arising from the morass of orthodox dogmatism. About all of the religious sects have intimated that a grand re-union of the Church of Christ would be very desirable; but they have made the great mistake of attempting to define the terms of that re-union. The Roman Catholic Church says that it is a glorious idea, and mildly suggests Papal infallibility as the nucleus about which all may cluster; the Episcopal Church is entranced, and hopes that everyone will recognise the succession of bishops; the Baptist Church is delighted, and will see to it that the water-mark is on every page of the universal creed; the Presbyterian Church hears therein tidings of great joy, and gives assurance that the supply of foreordination and universal damnation is ample for all; and so it goes on to the end of the catalogue. "United Christendom" will be possible when fairy tales are constructed by mathematics, and clergymen's sermons are verbal diamonds in matrices of logic—in other words, *ad Kalendas Græcas*.—*Boston Investigator.*

THE PARSON'S GHOUL-BOARD;
OR, THE PARSONS SWORE A FEUD.

Tune—"The Phairshon swore a feud
Against the clan Mac-Tavish."

THE parsons swore a feud against the men of science,
And all that are imbued with honest self-reliance;
They know they cannot cope with men who have their
senses,
And so they fix their hope on babes ere thought com-
mences.

A scientific truth needs no predisposition
In mind of man, or youth, to yield the fact admission;
The truth will force its way, resulting in conviction,
And in the mind will stay, in spite of interdiction.

But parsons know their creed cannot appeal to reason,
They therefore mould and knead the brain in childhood's
season:
They have, of course, to live, and wish to live by preaching;
But people will not give who don't believe their teaching.

Now, each unbiassed brain repudiates their preaching,
And so they strive to gain control o'er infant teaching;
They know they dare not wait till brains have started
thinking,
For then 'twould be too late to practise mental blinking.

All progress they detest, and, though they cannot foil it,
They always do their best to do their worst to spoil it;
They prowl around our schools, and when they make a
capture
They grin like ghastly ghouls, with godly glee and rapture.

But fear their bosoms fills, despite their frequent rallies;
The sun has lit the hills, and soon will light the valleys;
They know their end is near, for, lo! the day is breaking;
The shadows disappear, and all to light are waking.

G. L. MACKENZIE.

ACID DROPS.

THE Young Men's Christian Association at Melbourne has often rejoiced over the troubles of our old colleague, Mr. Joseph Symes. But it appears from the newspaper report that the Y.M.C.A. has itself come to grief. Its head (or what serves the purpose) was turned by the land-booming and speculative mania, and it went in for the erection of a monster pile of buildings at a cost of £100,000. When the boom burst, the Y.M.C.A. was unable to meet its obligations, and it was sold up and turned into the street penniless.

Mrs. Blaikie, speaking at an Edinburgh meeting of the British Women's Temperance Association, said there would be no social revolution until there had been a great revival and ingathering into the churches. Then the social revolution is a long way off—longer than Mrs. Blaikie will wear bonnets or drink ginger-beer.

Kirkintilloch Parish Council has had to exempt the Parish Church minister from paying poor rates. One member said it was scandalous for a minister of religion to shirk his share of such a burden, while another argued that ministers who don't pay rates should be dealt with like paupers, and struck off the voters' list.

The Glasgow School Board's idea of appointing an inspector of religious instruction is resented by the Teachers' Association. Six reasons are given against having such an official. We suspect there is a seventh reason, which is *not* given—namely, that the teachers dread the prying of an official into their orthodoxy.

The Edinburgh Burgess Golfing Society has decided by 108 votes to 96 to allow Sunday golf on its ground. The Sabbatharians are not asked to play themselves, but only not to interfere with the liberty of others. Nevertheless, they are in a great rage, and many of them are seceding.

Mr. R. Souttar, M.P., lecturing on the Armenian question at Dumfries, quoted the supposed letter of Christ to Abgarus in Armenia, and said: "I don't know why the letter should not be a genuine one." Mr. Souttar cannot

know much of criticism, only he might ask himself the question: Why, if genuine, is it not in the New Testament?

A minister called Price has just died at Ilfracombe. He was ninety-two. It was a long while to keep out of heaven, but he has had to go there at last.

A great many clergymen, more especially those located in the country towns, where their congregations are not liable to be very well informed, have a mean and contemptible habit of attributing crimes and wickedness to Freethinkers by inference, when they dare not do so openly and directly. A favorite method of describing the conversion of an infidel is to assert that, after the sinner received Christ into his heart, he let go this bad habit, threw aside that vice, cut off this wicked indulgence, avoided that sin, etc., etc. Thus the minds of his hearers are insidiously poisoned, and false impressions find lodgment as easily as a snowflake falls upon the ground. Open warfare and sturdy blows are preferable to fighting in ambush and thrusts in the back.—*Boston Investigator*.

The Rev. J. M. Fitzgerald, suspended pastor of the Catholic Church at Charlotte, New York, who is under indictment and awaiting trial charged with burning several buildings on which he held insurance policies, and also implicated in the burning of the parochial school of his former parish, has added to his notoriety by assaulting his servant girl.

Bailie Burt was the victim of false appearances in the Northern Police-court yesterday morning. It was an assault case, and there appeared as a witness on behalf of the accused a merchant of the Northern district—a man of the highest standing, and prominent in church matters. He said the accused bore a most exemplary character, was a regular and zealous attendant at the mission, and in no sense a man of war or violator of the peace. The Bailie was duly impressed; other witnesses were heard, and the case was found not proven. Then Superintendent Sutherland quietly handed up the list of previous convictions against the accused, and its dimensions and items simply staggered Bailie Burt. His Honor remarked that the statements of the merchant had decidedly influenced him, but if he had only known of this little *billet-doux*—well, there was no knowing what might have happened.—*Glasgow Evening News*.

The Rev. E. Gough, pastor of the Congregational Church at Barrowford, Lancashire, revives the Gnosticism of the first century, at the risk of receiving the curse of those who deny that Christ came in the flesh. In an address, reported in the *Burnley Gazette*, he says: "We believe that the Gospels, and all those portions of Scripture which narrate miraculous incidents, are inspired moral history, but not literal history. We believe that what is said in the Gospels of the birth, miracles, death, and resurrection of Jesus all refers to what takes place in man's nature. Hence we believe that the so-called *Lives of Christ* which are current in the land, while setting forth good morals, are but religious romances, having no foundation in outward fact, and being, in some cases, Unitarian in their drift. In like manner, we hold that visits to Palestine, with an idea of seeing Christ's birthplace, are but a species of relic-mongering, and prompted by an historical delusion."

Mr. Gough further says: "A time will come when men will cease to believe that he who upholdeth all things by the word of his power was ever carried as a helpless infant in the arms of a literal woman, or ever went to a literal wedding as we might go, or ever ceased for three and thirty years to be the mighty indwelling Savior who hears and answers prayer." No doubt an ideal Christ would evade some Christian difficulties. But why has Christ's Church always taught a literal founder?

Plenty of lies are told about Colonel Ingersoll. The latest *canard* is in the *Daily Chronicle*, as follows: "Our New York correspondent says it is reported that Colonel Ingersoll, the notorious Agnostic, has signified his intention to abjure his more aggressive anti-Christian theories by joining what is called the People's Church. This queer institution has its headquarters at Kalamazoo, Michigan, and seems to be conducted on the plan of a benevolent club. The leader and pastor of the church, which has no creed in the accepted sense, is a Miss Dartlett." We attach no importance whatever to the report, as our American exchanges show Ingersoll is lecturing as aggressively as ever. Possibly he may lecture for the Labor Church at Kalamazoo.

The Rev. Mr. Shaw, of the Jews' Society, makes a good calamity howler. He says the coming of Christ is near at hand. He knows it because you cannot take up a newspaper without seeing the fulfilment of the prophecy that there shall be wars and rumors of wars. We wonder at

what era in the history of the world this wondrous prophecy was not fulfilled. But Mr. Shaw has something stronger than this. The Jews, he says, are going back to Jerusalem. When they are all there we shall begin to think there is something in it.

"We hope, we believe," says the *Methodist Times*, "that it is not too late to save the British Empire." That's good news, anyhow. We are reprieved for a bit. But we must "humble ourselves before God" if we wish for final pardon and safety. Let us pray!

"That rash and revolutionary spirit which does not see in the existing social order a great work of the providence of God, and that unprogressive spirit which does not recognise that better things are to be looked for as the purposes of God unfold, are both to be avoided."—This is from President Waller's new year's greeting to the Methodists. It is about as nutritious as a mouthful of sawdust.

There has been a suicide in St. Peter's, at Rome, some unfortunate cutting his throat at High Mass. The Pope was much shocked, and ordered re-benediction at once, with a view, we suppose, of preventing the suicide's spirit having any influence on the congregation.

Father Fletcher, the head of the Guild of Our Lady of Ransom, announces that he is going to Rome, to lay before his Holiness an account of the work accomplished by the Guild. If Father Fletcher states the facts accurately, the poor old Pope may be undeceived in his expectation that England will speedily become the patrimony of St. Peter.

The Roman Catholic population of the United Kingdom is estimated at nearly five millions and a half—namely, England, one million and a half; Scotland, 365,000; and Ireland, 3,549,956.

As a matter of fact, while there have been some gains to the Catholic Church by the conversion of a few wealthy people, who have enabled showy churches to be built, there has been a considerable and increasing leakage in its working-class population. The proportion of Catholic marriages—one of the best tests—shows that, instead of increasing, they are actually declining in numbers.

There is no doubt that Ritualism has been advancing, and that Rome hopes in the long run to profit by it, for the sacerdotalism and ritual it countenances have their consistent and fitting resting-place in Rome. But Ritualists are not logical, and the advance of Ritualism is often actually a hindrance to the Roman propaganda.

The Catholics think their chance has come for a dip in John Bull's pocket, and are loudly demanding for their schools "additional, substantial, and permanent support from the public funds." If John doesn't see that this is really a demand for the endowment of religion, he must be very short-sighted.

A lot of nonsense is talked about parents' rights to have their children educated in the religion they prefer. Nobody objects to this, if they are so taught at the parents' cost. What Catholic would be willing to make provision for the children of Freethought parents being taught their parents' views upon religion? The truth is that the mass of parents are only concerned in their children receiving a sound secular education, fitting them for the duties of this life. If they require religious instruction, it is absurd to suppose there are not ample opportunities. The talk of parents' rights comes, not from parents, but from clericals, anxious that public time, public money, and public buildings shall be used to further their interests.

The *Nottingham Daily Express* contains a long account of an interview by a deputation with the Carlton School Board. Mr. J. Bell, speaking for himself and the other two members of the deputation—Messrs. T. Bexon and W. Russell—said that they had applied for the use of the school for a lecture, but the caretaker had refused to let it without consulting the Board. "What is the subject?" asked the Rev. J. Greenlaw. Mr. Bell said it was "Humanity's Gain from Unbelief." This brought up the Rev. H. E. Field, who spoke of the use of the Board school for such a lecture as a "prostitution." The vice-chairman, however, took a different view. He believed in the Gospel himself, but he did not believe in stifling free opinion, and he thought the public school should be open to every orderly section of the rate-payers. Thereupon the Rev. H. E. Field made another speech, full of bigotry and folly. He was followed by the Rev. J. Greenlaw, who took the opportunity to say something about Thomas Paine. "With almost his dying breath," said Mr. Greenlaw, "he exclaimed: 'I would give worlds if I had not written the *Age of Reason*.'" "No!" ejaculated Mr. Bell. "He said it in Paris," replied Mr. Greenlaw. "He didn't die in Paris," said Mr. Bell. But that didn't

matter. He didn't die in Paris; nor, in fact, for some years after he left France to settle down again in America. Still, he breathed a few dying breaths there—we presume by way of anticipation.

Fortunately, these amiable and accurate men of God, who are professionally opposed to any "unsettling" of the people's minds, were defeated. Five voted against them, and the school room was granted for the proposed lecture. The only remedy open to the men of God is to engage the school room for an opposition lecture; or, better still, let them turn up at the Freethought lecture and expose the "hollowness of infidelity."

There is to be a new Anglican bishop in Japan, under the title of Bishop of Osaka. His funds will be supplied from England, there being no likelihood of their being forthcoming from any native converts for a long time to come.

The *Record* says, anent the success of *The Sign of the Cross*: "We are willing to believe that the drama may have been written and launched with an honest wish to work no harm to faith; but the stage is not the place for the treatment of religious subjects." Yet there was a time when the Church sought to utilise the stage for that purpose. The objectionable thing now is, that the stage cannot be kept under clerical control.

The change in the relations between Church and stage is emphasised by the greater liberties now taken by the latter institution with religion. In Mr. Henry Jones' new play one of the scenes is laid in the interior of a church, as indeed was also a scene in Mr. Pinero's *Lady Bountiful*.

Mr. Herbert Burrows has been lecturing before the South London Ethical Society on "Socialism and Science." We have read the report of it in the *South London Mail*, and we find it in one respect like the peace of God—it passes all understanding. Mr. Burrows gave scraps from Ruskin, and digs at those dreadful people, the Materialists; and, finally, he wound up by informing the audience that "outside the world of our five senses there lay a universe much more wonderful and beautiful than the one in which we lived." Perhaps there is; but as you have to go out of your "senses" to find it—and may not find it then—it is just as well to stay where you are.

London has nearly 6,000,000 inhabitants. It stretches 14 miles from north to south, and 17½ miles from east to west. It has 7,500 miles of road, 702 railway stations, and 780 miles of railway-line. Every month 900 new houses are erected. What a tin-pot place is Heaven after London! Just read the book of Revelation, and judge for yourself.

The value of £100 of tithe rent charge for 1896 will be only £71 9s. 6½d., the commutation being lower than ever before. The average value of £100 of tithe rent charge for the sixty years which have elapsed since the passing of the Tithe Commutation Act is £98 8s. 9½d.

There is, it appears, a sect in America known as Sanctificationists. The first intimation we have of their existence is the following: "The Rev. Harry Dishon, a Sanctification preacher, was fined \$8, at Rowland, Ky., in Lincoln County, for using obscene language. The fine was suspended on his offer to leave the town and never return."

Some little while ago the Perfectionists were much talked of in America. They believed that by grace they were made perfect, and above all law. Marriage was one of the ordinances done away with by Christian liberty, and the Perfectionists believed in, and practised, community of women, which Dean Swift said was the common centre to which all religious fanaticism tended.

According to a recent dispatch from Louisville, Ky., a bloody encounter occurred at a church near Manchester, Clay County, Ky., the other Sunday, which resulted in the death of one man, the fatal injury of three, and the wounding of two others. Such occurrences as these are so common as to attract but little attention; but what would be the result if this sort of a disturbance should occur at a meeting of infidels? It would undoubtedly be the theme of the clergy for years to come, and would point a moral to thousands of sermons from Maine to California. Isn't it surprising how orderly these raving infidels manage to be at their meetings?—*Boston Investigator*.

Rev. George J. Low writes in the *Open Court*: "Does the Christian Church realise the change of front in all secular learning which has taken place in the last half century? Does she ever consider that some adjustment is required in her teachings, to adapt them to that change of front? Does she ever think of the mischief resulting from a Bourbon policy of learning nothing and unlearning nothing?" Oh yes, Mr. Low; the Church usually realises on which side its bread is

battered, and the question how to retain hold over the minds of the ignorant without incurring the contempt of the educated is troubling it sorely, as your own writing is evidence.

Here is what Ingersoll says: "Destruction is our only course. Reformation is a hospital in which the new philosophy exhausts its strength in nursing the old religion."

The Rev. C. F. Aked, pastor of the Pembroke Chapel, Liverpool, says that American journalists are insufferably vulgar and unconscionably inaccurate. They had the audacity to report one of his sermons with the headline, "The Rev. C. F. Aked in Love with the New Woman." Mr. Aked doubts whether shorthand is known amongst American reporters, who rely, he says, upon their memories for one-tenth of what they write, and upon their imagination for the remaining nine-tenths.

A Japanese paper states that the villagers of Hanke, in the prefecture of Kochi, have been "honored" with the sum of 100 yen by the Imperial Household department for their unusually good conduct as a body. Their record is a long one. For over two hundred years, says the journal in question, perfect friendliness has reigned among them, and neither quarrels nor law-suits have occurred. No crime of any kind has been committed, and whenever calamities have overtaken them the villagers have helped each other, and have not troubled the authorities. The village contains 80 houses, and between 400 and 500 inhabitants. None of the vices practised in Christian communities are known in Hanke. Evidently the missionaries are sadly needed to convert these wicked heathen from the error of their ways.

Are the heathen everlastingly damned? This momentous question has again been raised in missionary circles by reports that missionaries in Japan absolutely refuse to preach the blessed gospel of damnation, which, they say, is an obstruction to the spread of the gospel. But the societies at home cannot afford to let the salvation of the heathen be preached, for then the question may arise: If the heathen can be everlastingly saved without Christianity, why take it to them and give them a greater chance of damnation by rejecting it?

This question, some few years ago, was brought before the American Board of Foreign Missions, which decided that no missionary should be selected who believed in future probation. They know that it is the hope of saving the poor heathen from hell that makes the foolish people who subscribe for missions shell out their cash. But if any people need a missionary among them, it must be these very Christians who believe in a God that makes millions of people who never hear of his divine revelation, and then damns them for their ignorance. It is safe to say that no "heathen in his blindness" holds a more stupid or barbarous religion than this.

Some people think the old dogmas are dead, but the missionary instructions and practice show that the dogmas which are kept out of sight at home are put forward in their crudest form abroad. There is no safety against the revival of a superstition but to exterminate it. The lukewarm reformers who say, Leave the disintegration of religion to time, remind us of the orthodox deity who allowed four thousand years to pass after the Fall before he thought of sending a Redeemer.

Christian ministers, as a rule, do not like debates. A fresh proof of this has just arisen at Leek, where a debate is to take place in March between Mr. Foote and the Rev. W. Howard. This gentleman has been favored with a round robin protest from his Nonconformist "brethren" in the Lord's vineyard. It has been published in the *Leek Times*, and we are violating no confidence in publishing it in the *Freethinker*:

"Leek, December 13, 1895.

"To the Rev. W. W. Howard.

"Dear Mr. Howard,—We are deeply pained that you have arranged for a public debate in Leek, in the early part of the year, with Mr. G. W. Foote. Believing, as we do, that injury rather than good is calculated to result from such controversy, we feel that, in the interest of our young people and of our churches generally, we ought to indicate to you what our feeling is with regard to the course you have thought fit to pursue. You will believe us when we say that our words are not dictated by any unbrotherly feelings towards yourself. With kind regards, we are yours very truly,

"JAMES COOKE,
"W. AYLMER STARK,
"R. W. RUSSELL,
"THOS. E. BRIGDEN,
"H. V. J. ANGEL
"(Secretary)."

Mr. Howard, who is remarkably afflicted with the itch of scribbling, answers "My dear brethren" in a letter filling a

column of small type. In the course of it he says: "I was forced into what has taken place." But only a few weeks ago he boasted that he had forced Mr. Foote into the debate, Mr. Howard has evidently a convenient memory; or, rather, an inconvenient memory, when he puts so much into print.

Months elapsed before Mr. Howard would come to the scratch. When he did so Mr. Foote was engaged up to the end of February, and could not visit Leek before March. With characteristic modesty and good taste, Mr. Howard hints that this unavoidable delay is due to cowardice on Mr. Foote's part. We advise the reverend gentleman to keep his courage for the combat.

The clerical-ruled libraries of the United States have taken a stand against the Woman's Bible, which they either taboo or put on the shelves for reference only, not allowing it to pass in general circulation. It is doubtful if this sort of boycott will prevail in the long run, especially as the women's papers take considerable interest in the production. The *Catholic Mirror* (of Baltimore) says: "No good Christian woman will give it countenance"; but the *Woman's Tribune* (of Washington) says: "Gleams of new truths or clearer interpretations of long-accepted statements will reward the unprejudiced reader."

Our bishops do not seem to adhere to the interpretation of 1 Timothy iii. 2 and Titus i. 6, held by the Vicar of Wakefield in common with the Primitive Church—viz., that they prohibit second marriages. His lordship of Liverpool has, we believe, entered three times into the holy estate of matrimony, and the Right Reverend Father-in-God, Dr. John Wordsworth, lord bishop of Salisbury, who is on the shady side of fifty, is now spending his second honeymoon, at Rydal, with a young lady who is his junior by over a quarter of a century. This, of course, is not being "unequally yoked."

The Rev. Septimus Buss, Vicar of Shoreditch, one of the working clergy, who lives among his parishioners in East London, writes to the *Daily News* on the shameful perversion of the funds of St. Katharine's Hospital. "St. Katharine's by the Tower" has its hospital comfortably located in Regent's Park, at the other end of London. Mr. Buss mentions that one of the "brothers" took his £300 per annum from the hospital, let his house of residence, and occupied himself with a chaplaincy abroad. He claims that the building should be restored to the East-end, and the "brothers and sisters" ought to live and work there.

Scarcely had the jingle of the coppers in the collecting-plate at the City Temple ceased on Sunday night when the Rev. John Robertson intimated that he was £5 short, which he wanted made up that night. He proceeded: "Is our friend the dentist here?" pointing to the gallery; "well, I want 10s. from him; send it down. Is our friend Bailie—here? I want 10s. from him; send it down. You people will make up the rest at the close." Truly an extremely voluntary process.—*Glasgow Weekly Herald*.

Public Opinion, of New York, reviewing "The Woman's Bible," says: "This book is not, in fact, a 'bible' at all, in the common meaning of the word, but merely a collection of disconnected comments on such passages of the Scriptures as refer in some way to woman, and especially passages that represent woman as inferior to man. Inasmuch as the Old Testament abounds in such passages, the commentators find plenty of texts. The bulk of the work is from the pen of Mrs. Stanton, who comments for the most part in a vein of sarcasm and ridicule, while her co-workers appear generally to write in sober earnest. Much of the comment is, from the unorthodox standpoint, reasonable and even strong; but much of it also is prolix, rambling, and pointless."

This able, and usually impartial, review concludes by saying: "Suppose every band of reformers should undertake to weed out of the Bible everything that seemed to stand in the way of their particular reform. The Prohibitionists would perhaps begin by expunging the narrative of the miracle at the wedding feast in Cana of Galilee; and where the various other bodies of reformers would begin and end nobody can say." But we suppose the object of Mrs. Stanton and her colleagues is not to weed anything out of the Bible, but to show what a barbarous man's book it really is.

A special hymn was produced in connection with prayers for Ingersoll—

We offer prayers for his conversion;
May he be baptised by immersion.

The Colonel says he takes his baptism this way regularly every morning. He has no belief in the efficacy of sprinkling.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, January 19, St. James's Hall (Banqueting Hall), Regent-street, London, W.:—7.30, "The Sign of the Cross" (apropos of Mr. Wilson Barrett's play).

Wednesday, January 22, Secular Hall, New Church-road, Camberwell:—8, "The Curse of Creeds."

January 26, St. James's Hall, Piccadilly.

February 2, Liverpool; 9, Glasgow; 16, Hull.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—January 19, Glasgow; 20, Kilmarnock; 21, Paisley; 22, Greenock; 23, Motherwell; 24, Cambuslang; 26, Edinburgh; 27, Stockton-on-Tees; 29, N.S.S. Dinner. February 2, Athenæum Hall, Tottenham Court-road, London; 11, Wellington Hall, Islington, 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.

A. M. NASH.—We intend to write a little book on the Church of England. There is no end of misconception as to its position and rights. As a matter of fact, it is a creature of the State. Benefices are not private property; they are held in trust, and the owner of the trust property is the nation, which has a perfect right to deal with that property in any fashion it pleases.

LOUIS LEVINE (Charleston).—Thanks. We exchange with the *Blue Grass Blade*. Salut.

H. B.—Paper received with thanks.

H. H. H.—B.C. simply means Before Christ. The custom of reckoning from the birth of Christ is only about a thousand years old. Glad to know you were "delighted" with the St. James's Hall lecture. We note, but dare not reproduce, your compliments.

J. LAW.—The Northampton Freethinkers are very slow in the matter of propaganda. They are always going to do something, but they never begin it. We shall have to send someone down to see what can be done.

MR. FOOTE'S LECTURE SCHEME.—Per R. Forder: A. King, jun., 6s.; South African Admirers (Kimberley), 7s. 6d. Per C. Cohen: Two Leicester Friends, 10s. each.

H. O. SCHOFIELD.—Miss Vance will attend to the business part of your letter. Mr. Foote will gladly visit Newark to lecture for the new Branch. He will write you.

J. G. DOBSON.—It is good to see that you are stirring up some of the clergy at Stockton. Mr. Foote has written offering you a date.

H. L. SUMNER.—Cuttings received with thanks.

J. T. BLANCHARD.—See "Sugar Plums." We hope you will succeed in arousing interest in social questions. The public mind has to be agitated in many directions. It has a great tendency to go to sleep.

G. REDBOROUGH.—(1) We do not know the address of the contemplated mosque in London. Perhaps the editor of the *Crescent* (one of our exchanges) will see this paragraph, and supply the information. (2) Pleased to hear you enjoyed Mr. Foote's lecture at St. James's Hall "immensely." We note your wish for a lecture on John Davidson.

H. C.—Thanks for your good wishes and cutting.

DANIEL BAKER.—Delighted to receive a birthday greeting from a grand old veteran like yourself.

H. C. S.—Shall appear.

W. A. TURNER.—We are not responsible for the statements of other writers in other journals. We adhere to the statement in our own article. The birth of Christ was commemorated on different dates by various sections of the early Church. It was in the second half of the fourth century that the twenty-fifth of December was made orthodox.

TRUTH (Plymouth).—If the major passage in Josephus is a forgery, the minor passage about "James, the brother of Jesus who is called Christ," falls under the same condemnation. You are quite wrong in saying that the genuineness of this passage has never been questioned or even suspected. Some orthodox writer has apparently misled you.

W. H. WOOD.—Glad to hear that you were so highly pleased with Mr. Watts's lectures at Birmingham, and that you think highly of Mr. Foote's lecture scheme.

F. W. THORRINGTON.—Mr. F. C. Conybear, M.A., is, we believe, the authority for the statement that an Armenian MS. mentions a cave as the locality of the virgin birth. The same statement is made in the *Gospel of the Infancy*, in the Protevangelion of James, and in Justin Martyr.

J. M. R. (Glasgow).—Thanks for cuttings, etc.

D. McINTYRE.—We have handed your order to Mr. Forder. Please send to him direct in future, at 28 Stonecutter-street, E.C.

E. D. H. DALY.—Your batches of cuttings are always welcome.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Nottingham Daily Express—Leek Times—South London Mail—Camberwell Chronicle—Blue Grass Blade—Boston Investigator—Fur Unsere Jugend—Der Arme Teufel—Freidenker—Lucifer—Liberty—South Shields Free Press—Burnley Gazette—Morning—Corner Stone—Newcastle Leader—New York Public Opinion.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SUGAR PLUMS.

MR. FOOTE'S first lecture at St. James's Hall drew an excellent audience. The room was well filled, though not crowded. There were many counter attractions in the neighborhood, including the Sunday League concert at Queen's Hall. The lecture itself, on "The New Woman and the Bible," appeared to be highly appreciated; not the least so by the many ladies who were present. Some questions were afterwards put by Mr. Oswald Dawson, of the Legitimation League. The lecturer's answers did not satisfy Mr. Dawson, but they seemed to satisfy the great majority of the audience.

MR. FOOTE'S second St. James's Hall lecture will be given this evening (Jan. 19). Its subject is "The Sign of the Cross," apropos of Mr. Wilson Barrett's play which is winning the applause of the clergy, and attracting church and chapel-goers who regard ordinary plays as "sintul."

The Edmonton course of free lectures, under the President's scheme, winds up on January 30, when Mr. Foote lectures on "The Truth About the Bible." Next week's lecture has had to be changed from Thursday to Wednesday, and Mr. Heaford occupies the platform instead of Mr. Parris. Mr. Foote winds up the Camberwell course of free lectures on January 22 (next Wednesday), his subject being "The Curse of Creeds." We hope the hall will be filled with residents in the locality. On Tuesday, January 23, Mr. Foote opens another course of free lectures (also under his scheme) for the Islington Branch, at Wellington Hall. Mr. Watts, Mr. Parris, and Mr. Snell follow him in this course.

MR. CHARLES WATTS had three good audiences at Bolton last Sunday. Friends came from Rochdale, Darwen, and other surrounding districts. There was no discussion. On Monday and Tuesday evenings Mr. Watts lectured at Bolton and Blackburn under Mr. Foote's scheme. On Monday evening a special resolution was passed thanking the President of the N.S.S. for introducing his scheme of free week-night lectures. We are glad to hear that Mr. Watts was in his best form in all the five lectures.

To-day, Sunday, January 19, Mr. Watts lectures three times in Glasgow. He will also speak every night during the week under Mr. Foote's scheme. Among the places Mr. Watts will visit are Kilmarnock, Paisley, Greenock, and Motherwell.

For the convenience of friends from a distance, tea and light refreshments, at a moderate charge, will be served in the intervals between Mr. Watts's lectures to-day (Sunday).

At Kilmarnock, immortalised in Burns's most terrific satires upon orthodoxy, there has been no public lecture on Freethought for more than ten years. Paisley has had more frequent ministrations of the "means of grace," and now that it possesses a young and enterprising Branch is likely to keep itself well in evidence. Motherwell and Cambuslang are both in *partibus fidelium*, where Mr. Watts will be breaking absolutely new ground.

"The Devil's Doom" was the subject of Mr. A. B. Moss's lecture on Sunday evening at New Brompton. He (Mr. Moss, not the Devil) had a capital audience.

We announced last week that the Bradlaugh Club and Institute was arranging for a Paine Exhibition on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, January 29, 30, and 31. The charge for admission will be sixpence, but members of the N.S.S. will be admitted at half price. The committee "appeal

to all Freethinkers who possess copies of old editions of Paine's books, or pamphlets, cartoons, portraits, lampoons, etc., relating to him, and to his political and Freethought work, to lend them for the occasion. The greatest care will be taken of all articles lent, and they will be safely returned to their owners immediately after the closing of the exhibition."

Mr. H. O. Schofield has obtained sixteen members for a Branch of the National Secular Society at Newark. Others wishing to join should communicate with him at 31 Barnby-street. Mr. Foote and Mr. Watts will both lecture for the new Branch at an early date. It is believed that a good hall can be secured for the purpose.

Mr. J. T. Blanchard, who has been lecturing for some of the London N.S.S. Branches on social subjects, which he treats very thoughtfully, discoursed last Sunday evening for the East London Branch on "The Population Question in Relation to Socialism." He was opposed by Mr. Lyons, who is well known amongst East-end Socialists. It was afterwards arranged that a set debate should take place between these two gentlemen at the "King's Arms," Mile-End-road (near Beaumont-street), on "Will Socialism or Neo-Malthusianism More Benefit the English People?" No doubt the discussion will attract a good audience.

Mr. H. J. Barter has taken the secretaryship of the Plymouth Branch. He is just the man to push forward the movement in the three towns. The Branch holds its next meeting at the Democratic Club, Whimble-street, on Sunday, January 26, at 7. Music and readings will follow the business, and we hope there will be a good attendance. Mr. Foote is pressed to visit Plymouth again shortly, and he will try to accept the invitation. It is also possible that he may hold a debate there with a well-known Christian representative.

An article on "Babylonian Law Tablets," in the *Echo* (Jan. 14), shows that as far back as 539 B.C. women pleaded their own cases before the High Court in Babylon. Yet we are often told that it was Christianity which did so much for the emancipation of woman.

Mr. Thomas Tyler argues in the *Academy* that the author of the book of Ecclesiastes, which all critics agree is far later than the time of Solomon, although the author pretends to be that monarch, really was acquainted with the Ethics of Aristotle—not that he necessarily had a MS. before him; oral communication may have sufficed.

We were pleased to notice a manly, sensible leading article in the *Boston Investigator*, deprecating the idea of any war between the United States and England, and declaring that the only possible justification for war is self-defence in case of an attack by a foreign foe. When the easily-excited Jingo spirit threatens to carry people out of their senses, it is fitting that Freethinkers, whatever their politics, should put in a cool word for the claims of reason and humanity. The *Truthseeker* also writes for peace; and E. C. Walker, in *Lucifer*, says it is very important that Freethinkers put themselves, and keep themselves, on record in regard to the barbarism of war.

The *Camberwell Chronicle*, noticing Mr. Foote's recent lecture at the Secular Hall in that district, says: "Dealing with the question in his usual incisive manner, his remarks were frequently applauded by a crowded audience, and the solitary note of opposition raised at the end of the address was quickly demolished by a few rapier-like thrusts from so skilled a debater."

On Tuesday, January 21, Mr. Frederic Harrison lectures on "The Rights of Men and the Rights of Animals" at the Memorial Hall, Farringdon-street. Mr. Harrison will offer "The Ethical View." Next month Mr. Foote will deal with the same subject, giving "The Secularist View." Admission is free.

The *Blue Grass Blade* is holding up its head again in Cincinnati, and is as sprightly as ever. Brother Moore, writing on the Bacchanalian character of Christmas, says it is the same old drunk. Catholics and Protestants get drunk to honor Jesus, just as the heathen used to do to honor Bacchus; the principal change induced by the new religion being that the Christians get drunk on whisky, while the heathen got drunk on wine.

A good many of our readers are more or less acquainted with Winwood Reade's *Martyrdom of Man*. A brief account of this author appears in Mr. Foote's *Infidel Death-Beds*. He was a great traveller, a man of wide reading, of strong intelligence, and of brave character. The book which chiefly made him famous is a wonderful panorama of human evolution, and its final chapter on Religion is remarkably able, and no less remarkably outspoken. This chapter has

been reprinted in a thirty-two page pamphlet by Mr. George Anderson, under the title of *What Christians Believe*. The price is threepence, but of course Mr. Anderson does not wish to make any profit. His object is to get some thousands of copies into circulation, as he considers it of very great value if the general public can only be induced to read it. Branches of the N.S.S. or individual members who will assist in circulating it should write to Mr. Anderson, at 35a Great George-street, Westminster. On receipt of twelve penny stamps, with an addressed halfpenny wrapper, he will forward six copies and pay the additional postage. Larger numbers in proportion. Mr. Anderson has not told us so, but in special cases of distribution we dare say he will forward larger quantities at a reduced rate. He does not give them away quite gratuitously, because he does not want them to be wasted.

Mr. Symes, who always has his eyes open for the interests of the party, reprints from our columns Mr. Wheeler's notes on Infidel Abolitionists, Garrison and the Bible, etc.

The London Freethinkers' Annual Dinner, under the auspices of the National Secular Society, takes place 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 Secularists. The tickets, four shillings each, can be obtained at 28 Stonecutter-street, or from any London Branch secretary. We hope there will be a large gathering.

"HE THAT BELIEVETH NOT SHALL BE DAMNED."

THE last revision of the New Testament leaves out the last five verses of the last chapter of Mark, because they are thought to be interpolated.

This, then, takes out of the New Testament the famous sixteenth verse of that chapter, that says: "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

In the church in which I was once a clergyman that was the most quoted verse in the New Testament; and, indeed, it is the most important one.

But, strange to say, on the supposition that Jesus ever uttered it, it is not mentioned by any other of the evangelists. Some scoundrelly priest, finding that there was no argument or demonstration by which people could be made to believe the Christian religion, stuck that into the New Testament to frighten people into the Church, so that the priests could get their money. That last clause, "he that believeth not shall be damned," is the most doubly-damned sentence that ever was penned. It has caused more misery to humanity than all the religion in the Bible has caused happiness.

That one sentence has been rung into the ears of the people through centuries past, and has made thousands and thousands of people insane with fear and die with horror and trembling; and yet, after all this, we are informed by the last revisers of the New Testament that it was not found in the New Testament as at first written.

But it serves the purpose of the priests and preachers of this day to have it there, and, though they know it does not belong in the Bible, they are not going to tell the people any better; for they know, if they get to admitting that some parts of the Bible are spurious, the people may begin to inquire into the truth of all of it, and that would be dangerous.

Then the passage is such a good one for Christian bigots to use when they want to vent their spleen on infidels.

Thus "One by one the roses fall." C. C. MOORE.

Why I do not Admire Christianity.

- Because it is not original.
- Because it has been extended by conquest and blood.
- Because Christian countries are not more moral than others.
- Because it has opposed science and education.
- Because it shuns argument and investigation.
- Because it is founded on fiction and dreams.
- Because it is not founded on justice.
- Because it sanctions capital punishment.
- Because it teaches that belief is better than works.
- Because it teaches reverence and fear.
- Because it teaches prayer and flattery.
- Because it teaches miracles and wonders.
- Because it denounces human nature as evil.
- Because it accepts the Jewish Jehovah.
- Because it teaches the divinity of Jesus.
- Because it teaches a bad God—or Devil.

—*Boston Investigator*.

LECTURING NOTES.

On January 1 I commenced my new year's propaganda under Mr. Foote's scheme, by lecturing at Camberwell. There was a large and enthusiastic audience, and one of its most pleasing features was the number of strangers present. They gave rapt attention, and a few of them came to me at the close of the lecture and acknowledged that it was the first Secular meeting they had ever attended. Herein lies the potency of Mr. Foote's scheme. Admission to the lectures being free, inquiring minds attend to learn what our views are, thought upon our principles is evoked, and an increase of members to our various branches is the result.

Having lectured twice in Birmingham on Sunday, January 6, under the auspices of the local branch, I spoke the following evening under Mr. Foote's plan. The hall was filled, and the greatest interest was manifested by the intelligent audience. Many were the expressions of approval at the new departure made by the President of the National Secular Society, and the hope was general that he would receive sufficient financial support to enable him to carry on the present propagandist activity throughout the entire year.

On Wednesday, January 8, I lectured at the West-end of London under the same plan, and through its agency I am this week speaking in Bolton and Blackburn. Next week I visit Scotland and Stockton-on-Tees. Other places wishing me to give week-night lectures under this scheme should write me at once.

While at Birmingham I presided at the Conference held to form a federation of the Midland Societies. All present were really earnest to extend Secular propaganda, and they thought that now Mr. Foote's plan was in force a good opportunity presented itself to do more useful work in the Midland districts. Personally, I wish them all success in their laudable efforts; but I would remind them that, to carry out the program they decided upon, constant attention and persistent labor will be required.

I am looking forward with great confidence to the results of the present year's work, and I hope to be able, at the Annual Dinner of the London Freethinkers, which is to be held at the Holborn Restaurant on Wednesday, January 29, to give ample reasons for believing that my expectation will be realised. I sincerely hope that all who appreciate the increased activity now going on in our movement will rally on that occasion, as it will be one of the most important gatherings of the year.

CHARLES WATTS.

THEY RUN! THEY RUN!

WHEN Wolfe, the conqueror of Quebec, lay in the agonies of death on the battlefield, he heard the exclamation, "They run! they run!" "Who run?" faintly asked the dying chief. "The enemy," replied one of the mourning circle. So it is with the expiring cycle of time. In its last hours it is hearing the cry, "They run! they run!" on every side. The enemy, the forces of ignorance and superstition, that erstwhile held full sway, are already on the run. Not long since their aggressive career was arrested, and they were thrown on the defensive, in spite of themselves. Had they remained passive in that attitude, they might have held out indefinitely; but in an evil moment for themselves they issued from their entrenchments, and dared to justify themselves by argument, force no longer being available. From that moment they were lost; and to-day they are already on the run. The Catholic Church bows down before Darwin, and tries to cover its defeat by protesting that some one of the hair-splitting casuists called "The Fathers of the Church" accepted and taught his doctrine of evolution long before. It would seem as though one of the most distinguished and authoritative of the said "Fathers" was the father of lies himself. Among the Anglican clergy one of the great modern canons—Fremantle, I think—in a controversy held some few years since with the late Dean Burgon, an ecclesiastic of the good old style, said we must remould and recast our old conceptions of "God"; and then proceeded to wipe out the deity with whom we had all been

familiar in our youth. Recently, as has been shown in *Secular Thought*, the Rev. H. R. Haweis, who could easily have given Athanasius points in the matter of theological conundrums, has taken up, among others, the question of the incarnation. The result is, that he makes confusion worse confounded, and leaves Christ shorn of all his divine attributes, and cuts the foundation from under the feet of the Christian who believes in the efficacy of the Crucifixion. Evidently we are getting into the region of the Sun-myth, and the whole story of the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus will be one day held and accepted as a great moral or religious allegory, invented and propagated with the laudable wish and idea of turning mankind to higher and nobler pursuits than those they appear to have been engaged in at the time of his reputed appearance upon earth.

The worst enemies of the so-called Christian religion could have wished for nothing better than these recent admissions and changes of base. The Catholic Church, with characteristic dishonesty, shifts the boundary marks to new ground, so to say, in the night, and then pretends in the day that they were always there. It is an old dodge, often played, but getting at last played out. The Protestant, to show that he is abreast of the times, rushes into the street proclaiming that he has found the solution of the puzzle, and propounds another as insoluble as the previous one. But with these trumpet blasts they are only bringing down the walls of their own Jericho. Let them blow away, and before long the Freethinker, the Secularist, and the Agnostic may enter in and take possession without the trouble of forcing the gates. It is too late in the day to be pulling up the plants of the old beliefs by the roots, and then expect them to take root again and produce fruit (*i.e.*, big contributions, good salaries, and good times generally for the clericals) as of old. The African savage has infinitely more awe and veneration for the hideous old idol carved out of the trunk of a tree handed down to him by his ancestors than for any new-fangled deity in polished brass produced by a Birmingham factory. And so the modern clerical will find with his modernised Christ and his new conception of God. But what else can he do? The old ideas and old beliefs do not square with modern knowledge, and, as a consequence, with modern thought. With the decline of faith the ceremonials and doctrines that had once a real meaning to the faithful can no longer be regarded in the same light. Man's nature does not allow of it, as daily experience in other matters shows. Once shatter an old ideal, an old belief, in no matter what, or whom, it never can be the same thing again, no matter how much one may try to repair it or set it up again. How many people would go to Rome to kiss the Pope's toe if, instead of wearing his robes and tiara, he were seated in St. Peter's chair in a pair of light tweed pants, a white vest, blue frock coat, and stove-pipe hat? The thing would be too ridiculous; the most devout worshipper would explode with laughter long before he got within kissing distance of the venerated pedal digit. There was a time when people drank old-crusted port believing it to be real, natural old-crusted wine; now that everyone knows that the "old" crust can be rapidly and artificially produced, one may drink the wine all the same, but with serious mental reservation on the matter of the crust.

To the Freethinker, the signs of the times are full of cheer; and none contribute so much to that cheerfulness as the clericals themselves. Their rage, their denunciation, are all gratifying symptoms that they are losing ground, and know it. The worst thing they can do for themselves is to try and keep up the old beliefs under the new conditions; the next worse thing is to try and propagate new beliefs under the old conditions. They have no alternative between these two—and in either case they are bound to fail. Their hope, of course, is in the young; hence their determined efforts *per fas aut nefas* to obtain control of their education. But even the young can be made to think; and they are not, we may be sure, inattentive spectators of the struggle going on about them. They should be encouraged in their curiosity, and be got to ask questions about it. This would give opportunity to explain, and in that way the first seeds of knowledge would be planted in the ready soil of their young minds, and would bear fruit in due season.

G. F.

—*Secular Thought*.

"SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES."

[Written in reply to an admonition from a friend that it would greatly benefit the author to search the Scriptures.]

"SEARCH the Scriptures," and you'll find
Anything to suit your mind.
If you wish to have a spree,
Or would marry two or three—
Yea, a thousand, more or less—
"The Book" will tell you how, I guess.
If to murder you're inclined,
God will justify your mind,
And will sanction all you do—
If "The Church" is in it too.
If you'd like to cheat the blind,
Bunco those of feeble mind,
Sacrifice your only daughter,
Cause men's blood to flow like water,
Rob the helpless, aid the rich,
"The Scriptures" give examples which
Will show you so well how to do it
That God will help you safely through it.
Or, if you would be forgiving,
Kindly, helpful, cheerful, loving,
You will find superb example
That will give incentive ample.
"Search the Scriptures!" Yea, so do,
But search *other books* so, too ;
And, whatever good you find,
Let impregnate all your mind—
Separating good from evil,
Not by aid of "God" or "Devil,"
But by knowledge purely human
Gained by every man and woman.
By prefixing "D" to "evil"
You don't make a fiercer Devil,
But another "o" in "God"
Gives it meaning high and broad.
So, when you "The Scriptures" search,
Don't let superstition, "Church,"
Or any fear of "Holy Wrath"
Tempt you out of truth's straight path ;
But let reason, sound and true,
Guide you in whate'er you do.

Here's the moral to my rhyme :
Use your life while yet there's time ;
Enjoy yourself ; treat all men well ;
And then, while here on earth you dwell,
You'll know hereafter, come what may,
You lived for life, and not decay.

—Liberty.

W. W. C.

BOOK CHAT.

SOME time ago we called attention to the parable of the Three Merchants, which appears in the Jain sacred book entitled *Uttaradhyana* (lecture vii.), translated in *The Sacred Books of the East* (vol. xiv., p. 29). The parable closely corresponds to that of the Talents found in Matthew xxv. 14 and Luke xix. 11, but has still greater resemblance to the version of the parable as it appeared in the Gospel according to the Hebrews. In his translation of the Jain Sutras Dr. Hermann Jacobi says : "Taking into consideration (1) that the Gaina version contains only the essential elements of the parable, which in the Gospels are developed into a full story, and (2) that it is expressly stated in the *Uttaradhyana*, vii. 15, that 'this parable is taken from common life,' I think it probable that the parable of the Three Merchants was invented in India, and not in Palestine." Two conclusions can clearly be drawn from this instance—viz., that tales originating in India did find their way into our Gospels, and that the earlier form thereof appeared in the lost Gospel according to the Hebrews.

* * *

In Divers Tones is the appropriate title of poems by Joseph Whittaker (Wolverhampton: Whitehead Bros., King-street). The first, longest, and most striking piece is "The Storming of Heaven," which represents the damned as capturing the celestial city and hurling God and his angels down to hell, only to find themselves in worse torture, for now their doom was "To be idle when labor was living, to be spoiled of all dreams and desires ; and, dead to life, live on for ever, in sight of Hell's far-away fires." Meanwhile God and his angels fashion a new and improved heaven out of hell itself. Following this come "A Socialist's Creed," "The Worker's Prayer," "The Worker's Song," and other pieces, all showing an earnest humanitarian spirit. The "Sonnets," and a little piece entitled "Ichabod," are real and touching poetry ; and, indeed, the whole book is beyond the average of what is called minor poetry.

Mr. C. I. Abbott, who has written some excellent articles on the Higher Criticism in the *Independent Pulpit* and the *Freethinkers' Magazine*, and whose paper on "The Magi" we reprint in this issue, holds that Jehovah is the final form of an old Accadian deity. He traces the word to Yahweh, of which he holds the "yah," preserved in the names of Isaiah, Elijah, etc., to be the earlier form. It is so preserved in the Psalms. Now, the Chaldean god Ea, the god of life and knowledge, who is king of the rivers and the gardens, is pronounced the same as Yah ; and this Ea is to be traced to the early Accadian period. There is evidence in the Bible itself that Baal and Ashtoreth worship took place in the temple of Yah, and it is probable that in the struggle for existence among the gods Ea, who was the lord of laws, came out atop.

* * *

Mr. B. Dobell, the editor of *The Poetical Works of James Thomson* ("B.V."), publishes on January 21 a six-shilling volume of Thomson's prose essays, entitled *Biographical and Critical Studies*. It will include articles on Rabelais, Ben Jonson, Blake, Shelley, Browning, Hogg, Wilson, and others. It is hoped that the issue of this volume will lead to the publication of a complete collection of the author's prose works, which exhibit the same high qualities as his poetry. We hope to notice the volume at length in an early issue.

* * *

Two other publications are announced by Mr. Dobell for the same date. First, *Human Documents*, studies of prominent living men and women, treated in relation to special functions within our civilisation, by Arthur Lynch, a writer whose ability is known to many Freethought readers. *The Mystical Hymns of Orpheus*, translated by Thomas Taylor, and shown to be the invocations used in the Eleusinian mysteries, comes as the second of the series of reprints of Taylor's famous translations.

* * *

Dr. Adolf Brodbeck, of Zurich, has put out a pamphlet on *The Life and Teaching of Buddha* (Leben und Lehres Buddha's), which indicates how much Christianity is Judaised Buddhism.

* * *

Reviewing as it is sometimes done :—"Here," says the *Westminster Gazette*, "is an extract from a printed postcard received by the publishers of a certain popular book two days ago. We suppress the names : '———, editor of —— Magazine, would feel particularly obliged if the manager would favor him with a copy of their newly-published work, ——, for a favorable review in this and other papers.' The italics are ours. It only remains to add," the *Westminster* continues, "that the editor in question is a parson."

The Sacredness of the Oath.

Recently my son found himself appointed, by will, sole executor to a deceased lady, and he was duly sworn, at Somerset House, to carry out her bequest. The will contained instructions to sell a certain house by public auction or private contract, and, after deducting all expenses attending the sale, the proceeds were to be given to a certain legatee. The legatee, however, desired my son to convey the house direct to her without a sale. This my son refused to do, as he had sworn to comply with the directions given him by the will. The legatee then employed a solicitor, who threatened, and said that, if my son did not agree to convey the house without a sale, he would incur great personal expense. My son then decided to employ a solicitor, to advise and protect him. The solicitor, on considering the case, said : "This is one of those cases no one can predict what a judge would determine. He may say, 'Sell the house by all means, as directed,' or he may say, 'Convey the house without sale.' I advise you to allow me to prepare an affidavit, to place before a Chancery Judge, for his directions." This was agreed to on both sides. After about a fortnight my son was informed that the judge had directed that the house was to be conveyed direct to the legatee without a sale, thus *seemingly* to say : "Never mind your oath, nor your God. I say convey the house direct ; that's enough." J. J.

FEW great men have existed of whose history we have so unsatisfactory a knowledge as we have of that of Jesus. How much more clear and distinct, beyond all comparison, is the figure of Socrates, which is four hundred years older. It is true, indeed, that of the history of his [Socrates'] youth and education we likewise know but little ; but we know accurately what he was in his mature years, what he attempted and what he effected. The figures of his disciples and friends stand out before us with historic clearness ; with regard to the causes and course of his condemnation and the facts of his death we are perfectly informed.—*Strauss*.

FREETHOUGHT GLEANINGS.

ALL religion is paradoxical to reason. God hates sin, yet sin exists. He is omnipotent, yet evil is not overcome. The will of man is free, or there can be no guilt; yet the action of the will, so far as experience can throw light on its operation, is as much determined by antecedent causes as every other rational force. Prayer is addressed to a being assumed to be omniscient, who knows better what is good for us than we can know, who sees our thoughts without requiring to hear them in words; whose will is fixed and cannot be changed. Prayer, therefore, in the eye of reason, is an impertinence.—*Froude.*

I AM sorry to know that honest men, who are quite intelligent on all other questions, and who quite naturally yield to doubt in all other things, are positively thrown into a panic when a doubt respecting any religious matter presents itself to their consciousness. So absolutely have the creeds enslaved men that they feel afraid to use their reason, and dread the possible consequences of the use of their own senses! Can any degradation be deeper than that? Ordinary tyrants can intimidate men as far as actions are concerned; but it requires the wicked priest to intimidate them as to thought and belief. And how utterly wicked must that tyranny be which treats the natural, honest workings of the mind as sin! Yet men permit the mongers of that holy sham to prate of morality, while their system is the *most immoral* thing to be anywhere found. It is horrible! Let us do our uttermost to destroy priestly tyranny.—*Joseph Symes.*

FORCE is no impelling god, no entity separate from the material substratum; it is inseparable from matter, is one of its eternal indwelling properties. A force unconnected with matter hovering loose over matter is an empty conception.—*Moleschott.*

THAT our principle [that of liberty], however baffled or delayed, will finally triumph, I do not permit myself to doubt. Men will pass away—die, die politically and naturally; but the principle will live, and live forever. Organisations rallied around that principle may, by their own dereliction, go to pieces, thereby losing all their time and labor; but the principle will remain, and will produce another, and another, till the final triumph will come.—*Abraham Lincoln.*

WHEREVER bibliolatry has prevailed, bigotry and cruelty have accompanied it. It lies at the root of the deep-seated, sometimes disguised, but never absent, antagonism of all the varieties of ecclesiasticism to the freedom of thought and to the spirit of scientific investigation. For those who look upon ignorance as one of the chief sources of evil, and hold veracity, not merely in act, but in thought, to be the one condition of true progress, whether moral or intellectual, it is clear that the biblical idol must go the way of all other idols. Of infallibility, in all shapes, lay or clerical, it is needful to iterate with more than Cato's pertinacity, *Delenda est.*—*Huxley's Essays, vol. iv., p. x. [Oct. 9, 1895].*

PROFANE JOKES.

Editor—"What proof have you there?" Assistant—"That stuff you sent up yesterday—those epigrams, 'The Sermon on the Mount.' Shall we run it this week?" Editor—"Sure." Assistant—"Copyright by the author I suppose?"

Miss Priscilla Vane (of Chicago)—"And what is your brother doing, Lord Temple?" Lord Temple—"I fancy my brother will take orders when he leaves Oxford." Miss Vane—"Oh, why don't you tell pa; he would send him on the road for his firm right away, without waiting for a diploma."

"What do you think of this previous-existence theory?" "I know it to be supported by facts. For instance, I know a woman only thirty years old who often thoughtlessly tells about things that happened thirty-five years ago."

"The late editor's wife is something of a humorist." "Indeed?" "Yes; took a line from his original salutatory and placed it on his tombstone." "What was it?" "We are here to stay."

In Westminster Abbey, says a contemporary, there is a large marble tablet in memory of a famous bishop. It is a bas-relief, representing the bishop—a portrait—in the agony of death, sinking into the arms of an allegorical female figure, presumably intended for the angel of death. It is said that an aged couple from the country were being shown around the abbey, and, pausing long before the tablet, the old lady remarked to her husband: "That's a good likeness of the bishop, but," regarding the angelic personage attentively, "it's a very poor one of Mrs. —. I knew her very well, and she didn't look like that."

BE CONTENT.

SAID the parson, "Be content,
Pay your tithe-dues, pay your rent;
They that earthly things despise
Shall have mansions in the skies;
Though your back with toil be bent,"
Said the parson, "Be content."

Then the parson, feasting, went
With my lord who lives by rent;
And the parson laughed elate,
For my lord has livings great.
They that earthly things revere
May get bishops' mansions here.

Be content! be content!
Till your dreary life is spent.
Lowly live, and lowly die,
All for mansions in the sky.
Castles here are much too rare;
All may have them—in the air.

T. MAGUIRE.

"Word of God"—Perhaps!

In point of fact, everything is true in a book which is divine in its origin. In such a book there must be no contradictions, since two contradictions cannot at one and the same time be both of them true. Now, the attentive study which I gave to the Bible, read in the light thrown on it by German exegesis, while it revealed to me historical and aesthetic treasures, also proved to me that it was, no more than any other ancient book, free from contradictions, inadvertences, mistakes. There are to be found in it fables, legends, traces of a wholly human authorship. It is no longer possible to maintain that the second part of Isaiah is by Isaiah. The book of Daniel, which all who are orthodox attribute to the time of the captivity, is an apocryphal work composed in the year 169 or 170 before "Jesus Christ." The book of Judith is an historical impossibility. The ascription of the Pentateuch to Moses cannot be maintained, and to deny that several portions of Genesis have a mythical character is to be compelled to treat as narratives of events which actually happened, the accounts, for instance, of the terrestrial paradise, of the forbidden fruit, of Noah's Ark. But you cannot be a Catholic if on a single one of these points you depart from the traditional statement. What becomes of the miracle so very much admired by Bossuet, Cyrus named two hundred years before his birth? What becomes of the fifty weeks of years on which are based the calculations of Bossuet's *Histoire Universelle*, if the portion of the book of Isaiah in which Cyrus is named was actually written in the time of that conqueror, and if the pseudo-Daniel was a contemporary of Antiochus Epiphanes? According to orthodoxy, it is obligatory to believe that the books of the Bible are the handiwork of those to whom the titles attribute them. The mildest Catholic teaching respecting inspiration forbids the admission that the sacred text contains any pronounced error, or any contradiction even in matters which concern neither faith nor morals.—*From Ernest Renan's "Souvenirs."*

No Russian at the Last Supper.

Propos of the annoyance of the passport system in Russia, a story is current among Russians upon whom allegiance to orthodoxy sits lightly, and which they may tell to a stranger if they think there is no police agent within hearing. It runs as follows:—When Jesus, with his disciples, had sat down at table to their last supper, one of the disciples remarked that every nationality but the Russian was represented, and suggested to Jesus that one of that nation should be secured. Jesus observed that Russia was a long way off, and that it was rather late, just as they had taken their seats, to bring a man from such a far country. On this the disciple remarked that he (Jesus), being almighty, could create a Russian, and pointed to a lump of earth on the floor as suitable material out of which to make one. Accepting this idea, Jesus touched the clod of earth with a staff and called a Russian into existence. Hardly had the newly-created Muscovite been on his feet an instant when he held out his hand towards Jesus, and in a loud voice demanded, "Where's your passport?" Turning to his disciples, Jesus said: "Why, here have I been wandering about the country for the last thirty years, and was never asked for a passport until I made this fellow. What am I to do with him?" "Oh," said one of the disciples, who seemed to know something about Russia, "give him ten kopecks and tell him to go away."

And then they went on with their supper. And this is how it came about that Russia was not represented at the solemn event.

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.

ST. JAMES'S HALL (Banqueting Hall, Piccadilly): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "The Sign of the Cross" (apropos of Mr. Wilson Barrett's play).
BRADLAUGH CLUB AND INSTITUTE (36 Newington Green-road, Balls Pond, N.): 7, George Standing, "What Freethinkers have Done for Humanity." Monday, at 8.45, general meeting of members to pass rules. Tuesday, at 8.45, social party. Wednesday, at 8.45, R. Forder, "The Signs of the Zodiac"—III.
BATTERSEA SECULAR HALL (back of Battersea Park Station): 7.30, R. Shaw opens discussion on "Secularism." Tuesday, at 8.30, dancing.
CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 6, tea and soiree. Thursday, at 8, G. W. Foote, "The Curse of Creeds."
EDMONTON (Assembly Rooms): Wednesday, at 8, W. Heaford, "Christianity or Secularism: Which?"
PENTON HALL (81 Pentonville-road—Humanitarian Society): 7, Joachim Kaspar, "Christian Idols."
SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Surrey Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road): 11.15, Sunday-school; 7, J. Ellis opens a discussion on "Materialism."
WEST LONDON (Athenæum Hall, Godolphin-road, Shepherd's Bush): Wednesday, at 8, A. B. Moss, "A New Age of Reason."
WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Westminster Town Hall, Caxton-street): 11.15, Dr. Stanton Ooit, "I thy God am a Jealous God."
WEST HAM SECULAR ETHICAL SOCIETY (61 West Ham-lane): 7, G. Spiller, "The Power of Habit."
WOOD GREEN (Club and Institute, 4 Lawn-villas, Stewart-crescent, opposite Wood Green Church): 7.30, members' meeting—important business.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 12, W. J. Ramsey, "Funny Tales from the Bible."
HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30 and 3.30—lectures, weather permitting.

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM (Alexandra Hall, Hope-street): 7, see advertisement in the *Mail* and *Argus*, Jan. 18.
BRISTOL (Shepherds' Hall, Old Market-street): 7, Leon Dorné, A.K.O., "Are there Three Persons in the Godhead?"—a reply to the Rev. M. Logan. Committee meeting after lecture.
CAMBSLAW: 8, Charles Watts, "The Bible and Civilisation."
CHATHAM SECULAR HALL (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday-school; 7, F. Haslam, "Modern Science and Revelation."
CLECKHEATON (Co-operative Hall): Wednesday, O. Cohen, "Christianity and Morality."
GLASGOW (Brunswick Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): 11.30, Charles Watts, "The Science of Life from a Secular Standpoint"; 2.30, "The Perplexities of Christianity"; 6.30, "The Religious Man."
HECKMONDWIKE (Lumbard's Coffee Palace, Market-place): 2.30, reading from *The Merchant of Venice*. Thursday, at 8, at the Minor Co-operative Hall, C. Cohen, "The Teachings of Jesus Inadequate and Anti-social."
HUDDERSFIELD (Friendly and Trade Societies' Hall, Room No. 5, Northumberland-street): Tuesday, at 7.45, C. Cohen, "What Think Ye of Christ?"
HULL (Cobden Hall, Storey-street): 7, Mr. Smith, "The Brotherhood of Man in Religion and Practice."
KILMARNOCK (Large Temperance Hall): Monday, at 8, Charles Watts, "The Fall of Man and the Atonement: Theological Delusions."
LEICESTER SECULAR HALL (Humberstone Gate): 6.30, H. McNeill, F.S.S., "Bimetallism; or, Justice between Man and Man."
LIVERPOOL (Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street): 7, L. Small, B.Sc., will lecture.
MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, Robert Law, F.G.S., "The History of Life upon the Globe."
MOTHERWELL (Lower Town Hall): Wednesday, at 8, Charles Watts, "The Defects of Christianity."
NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE (Northumberland Hall, High Friar-street, near Grey's monument): 7, a lecture.
PAISLEY (Tannahill Hall): Tuesday, at 8, Charles Watts, "Does Death End All?"
SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 11, C. Cohen, "Science and Man"; 3, "Christianity and Woman"; 7, "The Origin of Man." Tea at 5.
SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, King-street): 7, business; 7.30, O. H. Reynolds will lecture.
STOCKTON-ON-TEES (32 Dovecote-street): 6.30, business meeting.

Lecturers' Engagements.

O. COHEN, 12 Merchant-street, Bow-road, London, E.—January 19, Sheffield; 20, Hoyland Common; 21, Huddersfield; 22, Cleckheaton; 23, Heckmondwike; 26, Manchester. February 2, Newcastle; 5, Chester-le-street; 9, Newcastle; 12, Chester-le-Street; 16, Newcastle; 19, Chester-le-Street; 23, South Shields. March 1, South Shields; 8 and 15, Glasgow.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Oredon-road, Rotherhithe, London.—Jan. 22, Shepherd's Bush. March 1, Balls Pond.

TOUZEAU PARNIS, 32 Upper Mall, Hammersmith, London, W.—January 25, Leicester. February 2, Balls Pond.

STANTON, the People's Dentist, 335 Strand (opposite Somerset House).—TEETH on VULCANITE, 2s. 6d. each; upper or lower set, £1. Best Quality, 4s. each; upper or lower, £2. Completed in four hours when required; repairing or alterations in two hours. If you pay more than the above, they are fancy charges. Teeth on platinum, 7s. 6d. each; on 18 ct. gold, 15s.; stopping, 2s. 6d.; extraction, 1s.; painless by gas, 5s.

TO FREETHINKERS.—Ladies and Gentlemen requiring SUPERIOR OUTFIT GARMENTS at moderate prices. First-class Style and Fit Guaranteed.—H. HAMPTON, Artiste Tailor, 14 Great Castle-street, W. (three doors from Regent-street). Patronised by leading Freethinkers.

ALLINSON FOR HEALTH.

HOME CONSULTATIONS—10 a.m. to 1 p.m., 10s. 6d.;
6 p.m. to 8 p.m., 5s. Patients Visited.

MEDICAL ESSAYS. Vol. I. For Postal Order for 1s. 2d.

Contains Articles on Management of Infancy, Health, Longevity, The Teeth, Tobacco, The Drink Question. Also the Cause and Cure of Disease, Constipation, Biliousness, Eczema, Blackheads and Pimples, Nervousness, Coughs and Colds, Chest Complaints, Deafness, Thread Worms, Long Worms, Tape Worms, The Itch, etc.

MEDICAL ESSAYS. Vol. II. For Postal Order for 1s. 2d.

Contains Articles on The Healing Power of Nature, Urine, Saline Starvation, the Hair and its Management, Sleep and Sleeplessness, Want of Energy, etc. Advice for the Thin, for the Stout; Simple Fever, Measles, Scarlet Fever, Whooping Cough, Ringworm, Hypochondria, Bloodlessness, Diarrhoea, Ulcerated Legs, Tumours, etc.

MEDICAL ESSAYS. Vol. III. For Postal Order for 1s. 2d.

Contains Articles on No More Death, Management of Young Children, Un-suspected Domestic Poisons, How to Grow Tall, to Keep Warm, to Live One Hundred Years, to Improve the Memory, and to become Beautiful and Attractive. On the Cause and Cure of Stomach Troubles, Flatulence, Sleepiness, Varicose Veins, Boils and Carbuncles, Sebaceous Tumors and Wens, Hay Fever, Winter Cough, Chilblains, Epilepsy, and on the Diseases Produced by Taking Mercury.

MEDICAL ESSAYS. Vol. IV. For Postal Order for 1s. 2d.

Contains Articles on Hardening, Work and Overwork, Sugar and its Abuse, Milk as Food, the Tomato, Poulitices, Quinine, Against the Knife, Arsenical Poisoning, Tonics, Against Stimulants in Disease, about Swallowing Pins and other Articles. Also Cure of Sunstroke, Dog Bites, Pains in the Back, Pediculi or Lice, Chicken-Pox, Synovitis or Inflammation of the Joints, Tonsillitis or Quinsy, Herpes (Tetter or Shingles), Erysipelas, Ulcer of the Stomach, Epidemic Influenza, Sciatia, Psoriasis or English Leprosy, etc.

MEDICAL ESSAYS. Vol. V. For Postal Order for 1s. 2d.

Contains Articles on Pure Water, The Mouth, Its Use and Abuse; Rules for the Aged, Training, Blood Letting, Nose Bleeding, Felon or Whitlow, Ingrowing Toenail, Gum Boil, Cold in the Head, a Red Nose, Flushing and Blushing, Toothache, Sore Mouth, St. Vitus' Dance, Goitre, Mumps, Inflamed Eyes and Eyelids, Fits, Fainting, Apoplexy, Spitting and Vomiting of Blood, Vomiting, Wounds, Burns, Scalds, Bruises, etc.

The Five Volumes, strongly and neatly bound, price 6s. 9d., post free.

HYGIENIC MEDICINE. For Postal Order for 1s. 1d.—An Eye Opener to Drug Takers.

RHEUMATISM: ITS CAUSE AND CURE. Post free for 7d.

DIET AND DIGESTION. Post free for 7d.

CONSUMPTION: ITS NATURAL CURE. Post free 7d.

All these Books, bound in One Vol., post free, 9s. 6d. Send Postal Order.

THREE PAMPHLETS FOR YOUNG MEN. For Postal Order for 1s. 1d.

A BOOK FOR MARRIED WOMEN. For Postal Order for 1s. 2d.

All communications to be addressed to—

DR. T. R. ALLINSON,

4 Spanish-place, Manchester-square, London, W.

THE BEST BOOK

ON NEO-MALTHUSIANISM IS, I BELIEVE,
TRUE MORALITY, or THE THEORY AND
PRACTICE OF NEO-MALTHUSIANISM.

By J. R. HOLMES, M.M.L., M.V.S., M.N.S.S.

160 pages, with portrait and autograph, bound in cloth, gilt lettered.
Price 1s., post free.

* * In order to bring the information within the reach of the poor, the most important parts of the book are issued in a pamphlet of 112 pages at ONE PENNY, post free 2d. Copies of the pamphlet for distribution 1s. a dozen post free.

The *National Reformer* of 4th September, 1892, says: "Mr Holmes' pamphlet . . . is an almost unexceptionable statement of the Neo-Malthusian theory and practice . . . and throughout appeals to moral feeling. . . . The special value of Mr. Holmes' service to the Neo-Malthusian cause and to human well-being generally is just his combination in his pamphlet of a plain statement of the physical and moral need for family limitation with a plain account of the means by which it can be secured, and an offer to all concerned of the requisites at the lowest possible prices."

The Council of the Malthusian League, Dr. Drysdale, Dr. Allbutt, and others have also spoken of it in very high terms.

The Trade supplied by R. FORDER, 28 Stonecutter-street, London, E.O. Other orders should be sent to the author.

J. R. HOLMES, HANNEY, WANTAGE, BERKS.

W. J. Rendell's "Wife's Friend"

Recommended by Mrs. Besant in *Law of Population*, p. 32, and Dr. Allbutt in *Wife's Handbook*, p. 51. Made solely by J. PULLEN, 15 Chadwell-street, Clerkenwell; 2s. per doz., post free (reduction in larger quantities). For particulars send stamped envelope.

IMPORTANT CAUTION.

Beware of useless imitations substituted by some dealers and chemists, the words "Rendell & Co." and "J. W. Rendell" being speciously and plausibly introduced to deceive the public.

LOOK FOR AUTOGRAPH REGISTERED TRADE MARK

W. J. Rendell
No. 182,638.

IN RED INK ON EACH BOX, WITHOUT WHICH NONE ARE GENUINE.

Higginson's Syringe, with Vertical and Reverse Current, 3s. 6d., 4s. 6d., and 5s. 6d. Dr. Palfrey's Powder, 1s. 2d. Quinine Compound, 1s. 2d. Dr. Allbutt's Quinine Powders, 3s. per doz. All prices post free.

W. J. RENDELL, 15 Chadwell-st., Clerkenwell, E.C.

NOW READY.

BIBLE AND BEER

BY
G. W. FOOTE.

CONTENTS:—

Drink Traffic and Local Veto
 Christian Methods of Reformation
 Old Divines on the Lawfulness of Drinking
 Paley and Sydney Smith
 Church Opposition to Temperance Movement
 Bible Drinks
 Scriptural Praises of Wine
 Jesus and the Wine Miracle
 The Last Supper

Communion Port
 The Two-Wine Theory
 Religion and Intoxication
 Religious Drinking in the Bible
 Water-Drinking Heretics
 Christianity and Mohammedanism
 Church Drinks
 Absurdity of Bible Temperance
 Appeal to Common Sense

This pamphlet should be in the hands of every Freethinker for constant use against the upholders of the absurd claims of the Bible and Christianity in regard to Temperance. No pains have been spared to make it complete and unanswerable.

Price Fourpence.

LONDON: ROBERT FORDER, 28 STONECUTTER STREET, E.C.

WORKS BY G. W. FOOTE.

- Philosophy of Secularism. 3d.
 Atheism and Morality. 2d.
 The Bible God. 2d.
 Salvation Syrup; or, Light on Darkest England. A Reply to General Booth. 2d.
 Is the Bible Inspired? A Criticism on *Lux Mundi*. 1d.
 The Dying Atheist. A Story. 1d.
 Christianity and Progress. A Reply to Mr. Gladstone. 2d.
 The Impossible Creed. An Open Letter to Bishop Magee on the Sermon on the Mount. 2d.
 What was Christ? A Reply to J. S. Mill. 2d.
 The Folly of Prayer. 2d.
 Ingersollism Defended against Archdeacon Farrar. 2d.
 My Resurrection. A Missing Chapter from the Gospel of Matthew, discovered by G. W. Foote. 2d.
 Was Jesus Insane? A Searching Inquiry into the Mental Condition of the Prophet of Nazareth. 1d.
 The Rev. Hugh Price Hughes's Converted Atheist. A Lie in Five Chapters. 1d.
 Mrs. Besant's Theosophy. A Candid Criticism. 2d.
 Secularism and Theosophy. A Rejoinder to Mrs. Besant. 2d.
 The New Cagliostro. An Open Letter to Madame Blavatsky. 2d.
 The Shadow of the Sword. A Moral and Statistical Essay on War. 2d.
 Royal Paupers. Showing what Royalty does for the People, and what the People do for Royalty. 2d.
 Bible Romances. New Edition. Revised and largely re-written. (1) Creation Story, 2d.; (2) Eve and the Apple, 1d.; (3) Cain and Abel, 1d.; (4) Noah's Flood, 1d.; (5) The Tower of Babel, 1d.; (6) Lot's Wife, 1d.; (7) The Ten Plagues, 1d.; (8) The Wandering Jews, 1d.; (9) Balaam's Ass, 1d.; (10) God in a Box, 1d.; (11) Jonah and the Whale, 1d.; (12) Bible Animals, 1d.; (13) A Virgin Mother, 1d.; (14) The Resurrection, 2d.; (15) The Crucifixion, 1d.; (16) John's Nightmare, 1d.
 A Defence of Free Speech. Three Hours' Address to the Jury before Lord Coleridge. With a Special Preface and many Footnotes. 4d.
 Rome or Atheism—the Great Alternative. 3d.
 Letters to Jesus Christ. 4d.
 Interview with the Devil. 2d.

London: R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter-street, E.C.

Now Ready, Price Three Shillings,

FOOTSTEPS OF THE PAST.

ESSAYS ON HUMAN EVOLUTION.

By J. M. WHEELER.

With an Introduction by G. W. FOOTE.

CONTENTS:—Early Religion—Animism—Fetichism and Idolatry—Totemism—Were the Jews Savages?—Religious Dances—Sympathetic Magic—Kings, Priests, and Gods—Sacrifices and Scapegoats—Killing the God—Nature Festivals—Lent—Easter—May Day—Christmas Customs.

"The book is well done throughout."—*Weekly Times and Echo*.

London: R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter-street, E.C.

Works by Colonel R. G. Ingersoll.

- SOME MISTAKES OF MOSES. GOD AND THE STATE. 2d.
 The only complete edition in England. Accurate as Colenso, and fascinating as a novel. 182 pp. Part I. 2d.
 1s. Superior paper, cloth 1s. 6d. WHY AM I AN AGNOSTIC? Part II. 2d.
 DEFENCE OF FREETHOUGHT. FAITH AND FACT. Reply to A Five Hours' Speech at the Trial of C. B. Reynolds for Blasphemy. Dr. Field. 2d.
 6d. GOD AND MAN. Second reply to Dr. Field. 2d.
 THE GODS. 6d. THE DYING CREED. 2d.
 REPLY TO GLADSTONE. With a Biography by J. M. Wheeler. 4d. THE LIMITS OF TOLERATION. A Discussion with the Hon. F. D. Coudert and Gov. S. L. Woodford. 2d.
 ROME OR REASON? A Reply to Cardinal Manning. 4d. THE HOUSEHOLD OF FAITH. 2d.
 CRIMES AGAINST CRIMINALS. 3d. ART AND MORALITY. 2d.
 ORATION ON WALT WHITMAN. 3d. DO I BLASPHEME? 2d.
 ORATION ON VOLTAIRE. 3d. THE CLERGY AND COMMON SENSE. 2d.
 ABRAHAM LINCOLN. 3d. SOCIAL SALVATION. 2d.
 PAINE THE PIONEER. 2d. MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE. Agnostic's View. 2d.
 HUMANITY'S DEBT TO THOMAS PAINE. 2d. SKULLS. 2d.
 ERNEST RENAN AND JESUS CHRIST. 2d. THE GREAT MISTAKE. 1d.
 TRUE RELIGION. 2d. LIVE TOPICS. 1d.
 THE THREE PHILANTHROPISTS. 2d. MYTH AND MIRACLE. 1d.
 LOVE THE REDEEMER. 2d. REAL BLASPHEMY. 1d.
 IS SUICIDE A SIN? 2d. REPAIRING THE IDOLS. 1d.
 LAST WORDS ON SUICIDE. 2d. CHRIST AND MIRACLES. 1d.
 CREEDS & SPIRITUALITY. 1d.

London: R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter-street, E.C.

THE SIGN OF THE CROSS

(Apropos of Mr. Wilson Barrett's Play).

A LECTURE BY MR. G. W. FOOTE

(PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY)

AT

ST. JAMES'S HALL, PICCADILLY

(BANQUETING HALL),

ON

Sunday, January 19, at 7.30 p.m.

TICKETS - - - 2s. & 1s.

Obtainable at Tree's Ticket Office, Piccadilly, W., and at 28 Stonecutter-street, E.C.

GREAT WINTER SALE.

LOT 1.	—1 Tweed Suit Length, 1 Tweed Dress Length, 1 Lady's Umbrella, 1 Gent's Umbrella	...	...	for 20s.
LOT 2.	—4 Trousers Lengths, 2 Tweed and 2 Worsted	...	...	for 20s.
LOT 3.	—1 Black Cashmere Dress Length, 1 Navy Serge Dress Length, 3 Blouses	...	...	for 20s.
LOT 4.	—3 Scotch Tweed Dress Lengths	...	...	for 20s.
LOT 5.	—1 Serge Suit Length, 1 Serge Dress Length, 1 Blouse, 1 Umbrella	...	...	for 20s.
LOT 6.	—30 yards of Remnants (double width) for Children's Dresses	...	...	for 20s.
LOT 7.	—15 Fashionable Blouses [you can sell these among your friends for 40s.]	...	...	for 20s.
LOT 8.	—1 Dress Length, 1 Under-Skirt, 1 Umbrella, 1 Blouse, 1 Mackintosh, 12 yards of Flannelette	...	...	for 20s.
LOT 9.	—1 Black or Brown Victoria-shaped Fur	...	...	for 20s.
LOT 10.	—50 yards of Flannelette (fine quality)	...	...	for 20s.
LOT 11.	—1 pair of Blankets, 1 pair of Sheets, 1 Quilt, 1 Table Cloth	...	...	for 20s.
LOT 12.	—2 Dress Lengths and 2 Trousers Lengths	...	...	for 20s.
LOT 13.	—20 yards of Cotton Shirting, 10 yards of Flannel, 10 yards of Flannelette	...	...	for 20s.
LOT 14.	—1 West of England Suit Length	...	...	for 20s.
LOT 15.	—6 Sailor Suits (to fit boys up to 7 years of age)	...	...	for 20s.
LOT 16.	—3 pairs of Trousers (made to measure)	...	...	for 20s.
LOT 17.	—1 Good Melton Overcoat Length and 1 Suit Length	...	...	for 20s.
LOT 18.	—3 Real Scotch Tweed Trousers Lengths (all-wool)	...	...	for 20s.
LOT 19.	—1 Gentleman's Scarboro'-shaped Mackintosh	...	...	for 20s.
LOT 20.	—1 parcel of odd lots, including Suit Length, Dress Length, Blouses, Umbrellas, Aprons, Braces, Belts, etc.	...	...	for 20s.

One Shilling must be added for Carriage.

One copy of "THE FUTURE OF LIBERALISM," by JOHN M. ROBERTSON, enclosed free of cost in each parcel.

Money returned for all goods not approved.

J. W. GOTT, 2 & 4 UNION STREET, BRADFORD.

Price Twopence.

WHO WAS
THE
FATHER OF JESUS?

BY
G. W. FOOTE.

London : R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter-street, E.C.

Price Twopence,

"A Letter to Lord Ellenborough"

OCCASIONED BY THE SENTENCE WHICH HE PASSED ON

MR. D. I. EATON,

AS PUBLISHER OF

THE THIRD PART OF PAINE'S "AGE OF REASON."

BY

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY.

London : R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter-street, E.C.

Printed and Published by G. W. FOOTE, at 28 Stonecutter-street,
London, E.C.