

# The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.

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## THE COMING STORM.

THERE are many indications that priestcraft is gathering its forces for a great struggle. We do not mean that we are approaching the Armageddon of Reason and Faith, which Charles Bradlaugh referred to when he declared that the final fight, even in England, would be between Freethought and the Roman Catholic Church. What we mean is, that priestcraft, feeling itself threatened, has its instinct of self-preservation thoroughly aroused, and will not only defend itself, but probably make aggressions upon its enemy. And in this struggle the priests of all denominations—for they are all priests, whatever they call themselves—will hang together. Let us hope that the friends of freedom, on their side, will be equally energetic and united.

The principal storm signal is the demand which is being made by the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church for additional grants in aid of what is facetiously called their "voluntary" schools. These establishments very obviously exist for one object—the instilling of religion into the minds of children. It is not the merely secular education of boys and girls in which the men of God have any interest. That might be left to profane School Boards, or any other body of persons who would take charge of it. Reading, writing, arithmetic, geometry, geography, and so forth—these are not the subjects about which priests have the slightest anxiety. All such subjects can be taught without them, without their supervision, and without their interference. They are only solicitous about religion. Every other motive they allege is a brazen pretence. They see multitudes of children brought together by the Education Act, who cannot be compelled to go to Sunday-school; and this compulsion is the priest's opportunity. "These children *must go somewhere*," he reasons, "and if we get the faithful to build schools for their accommodation, and then get the State to give us financial support on account of the secular education we impart to them, we shall have establishments open every day, filled with children whom we could never approach otherwise, and at very little or no cost to ourselves we shall be able to stuff them to the throat with our religious doctrines, and thus secure them, or at least the major part of them, as worshippers in our churches when they grow up to be men and women." Having reasoned in this way, the priest goes to work and erects "voluntary" schools, in which he teaches his sectarian theology at the cost of the taxpayers. Not satisfied even with this, he affects a miraculous interest in the education of children in the non-voluntary schools. He puts himself forward as a candidate at School Board elections, and, having succeeded in cheating a sufficient number of voters, he proceeds to bring the religious education in Board schools as near as possible to that which he deals out in his own places of juvenile perversion.

The priest and his nominees are already pretty strong on the School Boards of this country. In most districts they carry matters very much in their own way. The Bible is introduced as a good beginning; the use of it, in some way or other, being the maximum of Christian agreement. In some places it is supplemented by that document whose very name is a lie—the Apostles' Creed. But there is always a certain dread of public opinion on School Boards. To get on them you have to appeal to the ratepayers, and truth is apt to leak out in contested elections. There is no such danger, however, in regard to the "voluntary" schools. They are the priest's happy hunting-ground. Still, they have to be paid for. Aye, there's the rub! Slowly, but surely, the "voluntary" subscriptions have fallen off. The bulk of the cost is borne by the State, and the priest now demands that the State shall also bear the "voluntary" balance. And the worst of it is that the Tory Government, which owes so much to the priests, can hardly resist this impudent demand. Lord Salisbury gives the bishops a plain hint that the Church Temperance Bill is all rot; but when it comes to Church schools he bids them hope for the best.

Nonconformist opposition to this demand of priestcraft will be of little avail. It is half-hearted, and is based upon no principle. Besides, it has leaders, like Mr. Price Hughes, who declare that *anything* is preferable to secular education.

There are but two possible methods of education—secular and sectarian. And as religion is the natural support of sectarian education, so is Freethought the natural support of secular education. The only way to promote secular education is to make Secularists. And this is the one great immediate task to which the Secular party must address itself. Our supreme duty at present is propaganda. It is idle, one might say ridiculous, for a handful of Secularists to get together in a big town, and fancy that a semi-family party is enough for the situation. Twenty or thirty Secularists in a town of a hundred thousand inhabitants have just one duty to perform—to convert the population to Freethought. Anything else that they can do by themselves will never disturb the great stream of public affairs.

Unless we make more Secularists by an active propaganda, the victorious priests will do their best (or worst) to deprive us of the few rights we already enjoy. Those who know history will be perfectly sure of this. Aggression is, therefore, our best method of self-defence. We must win over recruits from the army of faith, so as to strengthen our own side before the struggle begins. *How* it will begin, who can say exactly? But begin it will when priestcraft sees its opportunity—for Freethought only exists on sufferance. Those who *tolerate us, put up with us*; and they will not put up with us any longer than they can help.

Ours has always been a fighting party. It is so still, and will remain so longer than any of us will see daylight. Those who carry on the fight will obtain the support. Those who merely stand aloof and criticise—or offer that cheapest of all presents, irresponsible advice—will soon be disregarded, and eventually forgotten. The main army always travels one way, and sweeps on to one end; and the doom of stragglers is desertion or annihilation.

G. W. FOOTE.

## ANOTHER CONVERSION?

*Joyful News* is a Christian evangelical and temperance organ, "edited by Thomas and Eliza Mary Champness," and published by the well-known firm of S. W. Partridge, Paternoster-row. In its last number, dated February 20, it contains a narrative signed "J. T. S.," and headed "Conversion of an Infidel." The story is throughout so typical of its class that I shall give its essentials in the very words of "J. T. S.," interspersing a few remarks naturally suggested by some familiarity with "infidels," and with stories of their conversion.

It begins "Mr. X."—and, before allowing "J. T. S." to proceed, I must interject that the heroes of these stories are usually nameless, or denominated only by some letter of the alphabet. "X." is distinctly appropriate, as it always stands for an unknown quantity. It says, then: "Mr. X. was a pronounced infidel. His presence threw a coldness of heart and misery over others in his home, business, and company." That the very presence of pronounced infidels suffices to throw coldness of heart and misery over others is a fact of Christian psychology which has not come under my observation. It deserves noting and possible inquiry. "Having," it goes on to say, "much acquaintance with the Bible"—here is an "infidel" characteristic I can endorse—"especially those parts suitable for his wicked designs." What's this! Parts of God's Holy Word suitable for wicked designs! Well, this looks like a true touch, and reminds me that I, who, in my *Footsteps of the Past*, have publicly stated that I consider the Bible, viewed from the standpoint of the anthropologist, throws much light on the past, have been asked why I do not write on the beauties of the Bible, which I both acknowledge and appreciate. My answer is that thirty thousand ministers are paid to do this weekly; so while the whole book is regarded as a fetish I am more likely to select those parts suitable for my "wicked designs."

But to get to "Mr. X.": "he was constantly thrusting infidelity before the notice of others, and delighted to meet an opponent not versed in the Scriptures, or ignorant of their meaning. When possible, he spoke standing near Glasgow Cross." This is the only indication of locality in the story; and, although I lived for some years in Glasgow, it indicates nothing to me save that "Mr. X." must have selected some time for speaking when the police were not about; for public speaking—let alone the preaching of infidelity—would no more be permitted at Glasgow Cross than at Charing Cross, London.

"Should an opponent put 'Mr. X.' into difficulties, he became passionate, using most brutal language; even cursing God and his book. Christians of ability would not speak in opposition to him, owing to his disgusting language, lack of courtesy, control, and modesty." These are the unflinching characteristics of infidel advocates—in Christian fiction. Lack of culture, experience, or sensitiveness must have stood in the way of my ever noticing them in fact.

Now a new character is introduced on the scene by "J. T. S.," who, perhaps, hardly cares to take the responsibility himself. He says: "My friend, a Christian cobbler, remembers 'Mr. X.' calling, with vehement language and hands uplifted, for God to 'Paralyse my hands if he exists.'" Who, pray, is this Christian cobbler, and where does he cobbler? Is he any relative of the Atheist shoemaker of Mr. Hugh Price Hughes? If his address can be communicated to me, I will undertake to inquire further into his story. I have heard of many Atheists thus offering a test, and recollect that Mr. Bradlaugh made some good Christian subscribe pretty heavily to the Masonic Orphanage for having said that he challenged God to strike him dead. God does not seem to have exactly taken "Mr. X." at his word; but, nevertheless, He was kind enough to make the Atheist a notable warning, for the story continues: "Years passed, and the ungodly man continued crying against his Maker; but his hands had gone, cut off accidentally by machinery! This did not cripple his efforts to injure Christians." This should be a means of identification. Having in view a History of Freethought, I have ever been a sedulous inquirer as to infidel advocates; but I never heard of such a mutilated person. I wrote to Mr. J. P. Gilmour, vice-president of the N.S.S., a gentleman whose accuracy and information can be relied on. He answers me as under:—

"(1) 'X.' is an utterly 'unknown quantity' to me and to all the Glasgow Secularists to whom I have recited the

*Joyful News* fable. (2) I never heard of any Glasgow 'Infidel' mutilated as 'X.' is said to have been. Some years ago we had a one-legged member, but, as he died unrepentant, he can hardly be worked in anyhow. (3) No outdoor meetings of any kind are permitted at Glasgow Cross. Evangelistic street-meetings are held in some of the thoroughfares leading from it; but even they are on sufferance. No political or anti-theological harangue would be permitted. (4) To the best of my belief and knowledge, there is no foundation whatever for the *Joyful News* story."

From something else Mr. Gilmour tells me, I think he is on the track of discovering who "J. T. S." is.

The story continues: "Mr. X. became seriously sick. Every evening his followers gathered around their chief's bed to watch and encourage. Hideous oaths and curses resounded in the room. Although it became a struggle to breathe, yet with nearly every breath came a curse." This is the regulation pattern of the proceedings when an infidel chief is sick—in Christian fiction. "My friend called at the house, and went into the bedroom, after being strictly cautioned not to cause agitation by referring to Christ." The room resounds with hideous oaths and curses, yet the friends—or is it fiends?—are anxious not to cause agitation. This seems a dim reflection from the story told of Voltaire that he said, "Do not mention to me the name of that man." But back to our friend. "He stood still, and, with Bible clasped under his arm, watched and waited. Mr. X. was propped up with pillows; his eyes, like projecting glassy balls of fire, rolled feverishly in their sockets." Yes, dear reader, I have been at the death-bed of infidels before, and I have noticed how their eye-balls roll in their sockets. This may not have received the attention it deserves in treatises on pathology; but it is to be found—where I have found it—in Christian fiction. "Gasping for breath, he cried out, 'Burn that cursed Book! burn that Book!'" The infidel (of fiction) always has his heart set on one thing. He wants, above all else, to burn the Bible. I must have read of dozens of them who looked on this as a consummation devoutly to be wished, and yet, though the performance would be so easy, I never came across the man or woman who did. The only authentic case of Bible-burning in modern times of which I know was when a Roman Catholic priest burnt a Protestant Bible in Mayo. "J. T. S." proceeds: "It was a hideous picture of abject misery and remorse." Up till now the remorse has not been apparent. However, it is coming. "With all possible vehemence he hissed out fiery curses, again crying, 'Burn that Book.'" The friend evidently could not stand "fiery curses," and went home to pray.

"At midnight a knock was heard at the door. 'Can you come immediately? Mr. X. wants you.'"

"Quickly dressing, he took his Bible and went.

"'Will you forgive me?' asked Mr. X."

"'Yes, but you need God's forgiveness.'"

"'Will you ask Him?'"

"'You had better ask yourself, and He will forgive when you confess faithfully.'"

"The infidel prayed with agonising plea; then my friend prayed.

"'Will you read fourteenth of John?' asked Mr. X."

"My friend read it. He had hoped to read that very chapter, and his hope was realised. 'Yes, many mansions for those who believe,' added the Christian. Again they prayed, and pardon was given.

"Next evening Mr. X. informed his old comrades of his decision. 'I have led you wrongly. All was dark and miserably dreary; now all is light and happiness!'"

"God spared his life for sixteen weeks. Full of intense pain and agony of body, yet he murmured not, and passed away trusting in Christ.

"His conversion caused considerable commotion, and many called to hear his wonderfully clear testimony, mingled with a desire to undo what wrong he had committed—a noble desire never fulfilled.

"Others of Mr. X.'s followers became Christians after seeing the change and hearing his testimony."

Very pretty, Mr. "J. T. S.," but, having looked into a few similar cases, you must excuse my asking, Is it true? In order that "J. T. S." may have an opportunity of substantiating his statement, I give it this extra publicity, and shall see that a copy of this number is sent to the editors of *Joyful News*. J. M. WHEELER.

There is one road to peace, and that is truth.—*Shelley*.

## SECULARISM A REAL EDUCATIONAL FORCE.

WE regard Secularism as being one of the greatest educational forces of the present century. Secular philosophy recognises that the ignorance and the many evils by which we are surrounded are the natural outcome of imperfect conditions; and, instead of looking for a remedy to what is termed the supernatural, Secularists endeavor, not only to remove these drawbacks by human means, but to ascertain their causes. With this knowledge we are the better enabled to avoid a repetition of the evils we deplore. So long as we are subjected to a defective environment, so long must we suffer from its necessary consequences. Instead, therefore, of depending upon so-called divine agencies for deliverance from the many "ills that flesh is heir to," we rely upon secular effort to regenerate man, and to improve the conditions by which he is surrounded.

Orthodox believers frequently urge that Secular principles are derived from Christianity, and they further assert that, without such theological inspiration, our teachings would lack a regenerating force. If such a supposition were true, Christians, to be consistent, should accept our views as being the true gospel for man. When, however, we remind professed Christians that their allegations are wrong, and that Secular principles are concerned only with the affairs of mundane existence, we are told that such a belief is destitute of hope, and that it is without any objective stimulus for effecting any beneficial change in the condition of the human family. St. Paul appears to have entertained a very low estimate of any system of thought that had for its basis, aim, and end, only the requirements of this life and the adequate means to provide for them. Hence he exclaims: "What advantageth it me if the dead rise not? Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." A more selfish and grovelling view of the duties of existence it is hardly possible to conceive. In such teaching no consideration for posterity is manifested, and the world of itself is deemed as being of no practical account. In the face of such notions, what becomes of the Christian boast that New Testament teachings are adequate for secular education? Were such injunctions acted upon, we should indeed be strangers to the highest happiness, and to those enjoyments that are possible to be derived from a well-spent life. In the early centuries of the Christian era the one thing which appears to have been thought needful was, to prepare for another state of existence. There was but little opportunity for, and no encouragement given to, educational enterprise. The all-absorbing consideration was, how to prepare to die. The principal object of Secularism is to instruct people how to live, for death will follow as the natural result of life.

The question we desire here to emphasise is: Can it reasonably be shown that Secularism is superior to Christianity as an educational force in all matters of importance to the human race? We think that it can, inasmuch as the primary object of Secularism is to develop the intellect and to enlighten the mind of man, so that he may be led into the path of truth, honor, and justice. It has been said that there is nothing great in nature but man, and that in man there is nothing great but mind. Hence we regard it to be of the highest importance that we should cultivate those faculties in man that enable him to distinguish the true from the false, and the right from the wrong. Experience proves that it is only by intellectual culture that man can reach the highest possible condition of his nature. There are two requisites for human guidance which the intellect can alone discover, and these are to know what is true and to learn what is useful. The main difference between a wise man and a fool is, that the former applies the true and useful to lessening the evils of life, while the latter increases them by fostering sentiments of superstition. Surely the depth of folly was never so nearly sounded as it was by those who devoted themselves to the unprofitable task of trying to persuade men to despise "the world and the things of the world." This fatal and delusive doctrine of the Church kept the people in mental darkness for ages, and prevented them from realising some of the noblest objects of existence. To isolate oneself from the rest of the human family is conducive neither to personal happiness nor general improvement. Monks and nuns have not been the great educators of the world; they have too often sacrificed the noblest passions of their natures, and deprived themselves of the greatest charms of life.

Secularism maintains, what the foremost intellects of the day are constrained to accept as being the dictates of reason and common sense, that it is the moral duty of all to strive to become useful citizens in this world, and to evince a generous feeling of sympathy for the welfare of mankind in general. This can only be properly effected by our coming in contact with men and women on admitted terms of equality—that is, that each person should have an equal right to share in all that is conducive to the establishment of thoughtful and self-dependent members of the commonwealth. We are aware that the art of navigation can be taught where neither seas roll nor winds blow; but the proof of the value of such instruction must be found in facing the storms and tempests of the ocean. In like manner, the principles that are to guide man through his journey of life may be planned amidst the timidity of some, the pride of others, and the ignorance and superstition of many; but the soundness of the proposed plan of procedure must be proved on the tempestuous ocean of life, where we have to encounter too frequently the waves of custom, passion, and prejudice. A mind educated by Secular philosophy will be better enabled to withstand these disturbing elements than one imbued with the notions of a crude theology. This fact is being more and more perceived in this sceptical age of ours. A knowledge of things and an exposition of the useful are being appreciated in proportion as they are seen to promote the progress of the world. Secular education aims to furnish motives for action superior to those supplied by the Church; and, as the result of this educational process, we hope to inspire new efforts in the direction of the mundane improvement of mankind. Contributions to the common harvest will, we believe, flow in more than ever when it is made clear that all will fairly participate in the distribution of whatever tends to human advancement. When men understand that their own tranquility depends largely upon the education of those around them, they will seek to elevate their neighbors to the same moral and intellectual level that they have reached themselves. It is to the accomplishment of this task, so far as it is possible, that the educational force of Secularism is directed.

The education of the masses we know is slow, but no intelligent mind can doubt the marked strides that have been made in this direction during the past few decades. The increased facilities for the instruction of the young; the extension of the circulation of literature; the diffusion of general knowledge; the scientific explanation of natural phenomena; the granting to woman of rights which for centuries had been denied her; and the higher estimation that has been formed of the duties and responsibilities of human life, are among the results that have followed the partial decline of theological instruction and the establishment of a rapidly-approaching secular system of education. Let our readers reflect what will be the result of this improving process if it continues for, say, a century. What a contrast our ideal of what society will be a hundred years hence presents with the actual survey of the condition of the people when they were under the unrestricted influence of Christian rulers. This contrast of the actual past with the justifiably imagined future shows the possibility of important changes which can be wrought by true educational force. Those who think that the world will be for ever governed by fear, moved by fanaticism, and controlled by priestcraft must be oblivious of the law of mental progress. The influence of the darkest past has been too great to be denied or ignored; but that it is being superseded by the growth of the human intellect, and the spread of a knowledge of rational principles, is a fact that gladdens the hearts of all lovers of truth and of an enlightened humanity.

Secularism aims at the multiplication of those forces that contribute to the fostering of intelligence, the consolidation of freedom, and the inculcation of those virtues that adorn the nature of man. To achieve this is the object of Secular philosophy; and, judging from the lessons of the past, we have good grounds for believing that our object will be attained. We have said that the work of true education is slow, and this is not to be wondered at, considering the amount of false instruction that for ages has been imposed upon the people. The errors of the past have to be eradicated from the human mind before it can fully receive the truths of the present. Happily, the work of mental purification is steadily going on, and the mists of ignorance are fast clearing away, opening

to our view a regenerated society, where devotion to truth and justice shall be the passports to recognition and distinction in a world that has been educated by the force of Secular principles.

CHARLES WATTS.

### THE GOSPEL OF LOVE AND CREMATION.

*An address delivered before the Manchester Branch of the National Secular Society on Sunday evening, February 9, 1896, by J. Harvey Simpson, Secretary of the Manchester Crematorium.*

As Secretary of the Manchester Crematorium, and as one greatly sympathising with your Society, I have pleasure in again addressing you on the subject of Cremation.

This evening, however, I purpose asking you to look upon the subject of cremation from a somewhat different aspect than heretofore, naming my address "The Gospel of Love and Cremation." At first sight it may popularly be imagined that there is little connection between the two; but, before the evening is over, I hope to prove to you that such is not the fact, and that, on the contrary, the Gospel of Love may go hand in hand with the practice of cremation, and be near akin to it.

I will first of all explain what I mean by the Gospel of Love.

You put at the heading of your official note paper the words, "We seek after truth." I also, for the last ten years, have devoted a large portion of my time seeking after truth—that truth which you and I feel that we are unable to find within the tenets of the Christian faith, as taught and practised at the present day.

There is no doubt that it is with no light heart that one separates oneself from the thoughts and religious feelings which have actuated one from one's earliest youth; but, for my part, having once emancipated myself from the thralldom of ecclesiastical superstition, I threw myself with ardor into the task of finding, if possible, some system of ethics, some system of conduct, which would guide me rightly through the troubled seas of this mortal life of ours.

The philosophers of all ages have devoted a superabundance of their energies in the attempt to comprehend the attributes and personality of God; and it is with shame that one has to confess that in this so-called enlightened and highly-civilised latter-end of the nineteenth century the predominant religion of the world attributes to its God thoughts, feelings, and actions which are so awful, so disgusting, and so repulsive that the earnest Freethinker feels that they can have originated only through the ideas and working of man in his most malignant and devilish aspect.

We are called upon to worship a God who is unable to produce a being in any degree perfect or under self-control; a God who permits his creation to become vile through the agency of a devil, presumably also of his own creation; a God who, to stem the tide of wickedness, has no other idea than to drown almost the whole of his creation; a God who again permits wickedness to become rampant upon the earth, and whose second idea is to sacrifice his only son, and (after allowing ages to elapse in which the dwellers upon earth, having no knowledge of this God, are presumed to be now undergoing the terrors of hell for an ignorance from which they were never enlightened) this God sacrifices his son in an out-of-the-way country, and permits his new gospel to filter through various obscure channels, so that at the present time there are three principal Churches of that gospel, each excommunicating the rest and consigning one another to the undying flames of hell. And in this present year of grace this gospel permits us to witness the fact of the central portion of Christendom being merely an armed camp, and Bible-loving England at one time lately almost within twenty-four hours of war with Protestant Germany, and little less with Puritan America; while the sons of our aristocracy are filibustering on the plains of Southern Africa. Now, the God whom I have so far been able to discern is a God of a very different character. I am unable to describe him so minutely as the Christian God is described and analysed in the Athanasian Creed, nor do I think it necessary so to do; but, at the same time, I do not consign non-believers to eternal perdition. The God in whom I believe has one name and one message only. His name is "Love," and his

message is "Do unto others as ye would they should do unto you"—a message found in books far more ancient than the Christian New Testament. The message is simple, can be grasped and realised by the most ignorant and lowly of mankind, and is not obscured by the theological dogmas which have made Christianity so repulsive and so terrible.

It is because I believe in the Gospel of Love, and in our duty of doing unto others as we would they should do unto us, that I am so enthusiastic in the cause of cremation. The Gospel of Love would banish disease, pain, and misery. But by the present method of interment we are placing in the earth annually four million stones of putrefying flesh and bone, which flesh is for years rotting, decomposing, and evolving gases, fluids, and other poisonous organisms which must have their outlets from the graveyards, which sometimes (perhaps in mockery) have been fondly called breathing places. The danger from such a method of interment is perhaps small in sparsely-populated countries, but here in England we have now to deal with over-populated towns and crowded cities.

Is evidence necessary to prove the danger? Let me give you some.

A committee of physicians appointed in the United States some years ago reported that "the horrid practice of earth burial does more to propagate the germs of disease and death, and to spread desolation and pestilence over the human race, than do all man's ingenuity and ignorance in every other custom of habit. The fatal illusion that the earth renders harmless and innocuous the corpse must be dispelled."

Dr. Cameron has said: "I might multiply examples *ad nauseum* to prove the danger of contamination to our water supply which many of our burial grounds present."

The Right Hon. Sir Lyon Playfair says: "In most of our churchyards the dead are harming the living by destroying the soil, fouling the air, contaminating water springs, and spreading the seeds of disease. I have officially inspected many churchyards, and made reports on their state, which, even to read, make me shudder. By the act of ordinary interment we literally sow broadcast through the land innumerable seeds of pestilence, germs which long retain their vitality, many destined at some future time to fructify in premature death or ruined health for thousands."

Is it necessary to quote any more statements proving the danger of our present method of interment—a danger, as I before said, infinitely greater now than our town population has so largely increased?

Referring for a moment to the love which we should bear to those now around us, when they die ought we not to decently dispose of their bodies and vigilantly secure their remains from violation? How many people have tried to realise the process which the body undergoes under the present system of earth burial? The dreadful change in some bodies within a few hours after death indicates in some slight manner the much greater and more detestable and horrible change in the body shortly after interment. As a matter of fact, we perversely shut our eyes to the facts, and imagine some change chaste and beautiful, so that we may with kindly and reverent feeling visit the grave of him or her whom we have lost, and whose loss we so much deplore. Your motto is "We seek for truth," and yet in one of the most sacred phases of our existence you wilfully evade the truth and seek refuge in a fanciful idea, which is an absolute lie. You permit your lost friend to become vile, offensive, and dangerous, when you have it in your hands to avoid it by annihilating those elements of physical evil by the purifying action of fire.

Is it "reverential" care for our dead to leave them to rot in the ground, spreading abomination and disease, and becoming the prey of creeping insects and virulent germs?

Another aspect of cremation in regard to our care for our descendants is the economic. Acre after acre are we adding yearly to the making of municipal cemeteries and other graveyards for the reception of our dead; land not on far distant hill country, but right on the outskirts of our overcrowded population; land which is certain to be wanted within a few years, and yet for ever unusable. Is not this of itself the acme of selfishness, the desire to please ourselves without thought of others? Perhaps we are a cynic, and say: "What have my descendants done for me?"

People fondly imagine that by interring their dead they have provided them with a permanent resting place. Vain

illusion! how often dispelled, when we hear in so many districts of old burial places disturbed, and the remains rudely removed.

An argument in favor of cremation particularly appealing to oneself is the prevalence of premature burial, and on that point Dr. Alexander Wilder, of New York, has lately been giving some highly-interesting and instructive lectures, pointing out its frequency. On interment life may exist several minutes after regaining consciousness, whereas with cremation the body enters a temperature of 2,000° F., and the action of the heart absolutely ceases at once and life is extinct, some minutes of direful agony thus perhaps being obviated. And now let me describe to you the process of cremation as carried out at the Manchester Crematorium, and attempt to prove to you that by cremation the body is disposed of in a manner much more reverential, much purer, more beautifully and more really sentimental, than by the present method of earth burial.

To commence with, the applicant for cremation must sign a Request for Cremation, stating (*inter alia*) that the deceased expressed no objection (orally or in writing) to be cremated after death. There is no craving for compulsion among the adherents to cremation, except in those cases where the deceased died from some zymotic disease, when we think the Government should step in and compel cremation.

In the next place, we require, beyond the ordinary Registrar's order for burial, two medical certificates of the cause of death—the first being exhaustive, and signed by the medical attendant of the deceased; and the second signed by an independent medical practitioner, who shall certify that there exists no reason why the body should not be cremated. These certificates are necessary for two purposes: (1) To prevent premature burial; (2) as a precaution against poisoning or other crime.

If it were not a fact, proved by the report of the Registrar-General, it would hardly be believed that of 562,248 deaths in 1890 in England and Wales no fewer than 15,947 bodies were buried without any certificate at all, and 25,683 bodies were buried with a certificate wholly inadequate.

A select committee of the House of Commons have been lately sitting on "The Disposal of the Dead," and the evidence there adduced is highly instructive, and should be read by all persons who imagine that a facility for crime arises solely from cremation.

The advocates of cremation demand that in every district there should be appointed a medical officer, to whom every death should at once be notified, and whose duty would be to visit and inspect the corpse; and without his authority nobody should be allowed either to be cremated or buried.

We argue that prevention is better than cure, and that all necessary precautions should be taken before burial, and not required afterwards. It is pointed out that by cremation the power of exhumation is gone. But what is this power, and how has it been exercised? We find that for the last twenty years the annual average of bodies exhumed has been five, and of these the proportion is less than one annually of those who have met their death criminally. And we know that only metallic and mineral poisons are capable of detection for any length of time in the human body after burial, the vegetable poisons being rapidly decomposed.

The committee of the House of Commons say they "are of opinion that, with the precautions adopted in connection with cremation as carried out by the cremation society, there is little probability that cases of crime would escape detection."

And then as regards the cost. The coffin itself must be of the plainest possible character, with no ornaments whatever; and when cremation becomes more popular the cost of the actual cremation will be very small, the present cost being from two to five guineas; and afterwards no expensive plot of ground and monument in a cemetery, but simply a plain, unpretending niche with a marble tablet, and inscribed thereon the name of the deceased, costing about £3.

Arriving at the crematorium, we find that the service, of whatever character it may be, is conducted in the interior of the building, thereby avoiding that profuse source of mischief to the living—namely, the attendance at the graveside with uncovered head and damp feet, often in pitiless weather. On arrival, the coffin containing the body is placed on the table, or catafalque, in front of the aperture

leading to the furnace, and at a given signal passes, by invisible mechanical means, through the small door of the draped ante-chamber to another chamber, and thence to the furnace.

The furnace mainly consists of a gas generator and a cremating chamber, the actual fire from the coal and coke being fifteen feet away from the cremating chamber. By mechanical means an intense heat, reaching up to 2,000° F., is eventually produced, at which point the cremating chamber is ready for the reception of the coffin. The coffin itself is disposed of within a few minutes, leaving no trace behind, and the body is left almost a shapeless mass, the gaseous portions finding their way as elementary gases, pure, and without any unpleasant odor, up the chimney, and the bones remaining in the chamber.

After the space of about one and a quarter hours the process is over, and the remains are carefully gathered and placed in the urn provided for that purpose. The ashes are absolutely inert, absolutely innocuous.

And thus the body is disposed of in a quick and, as I contend, beautiful way, without harm to anyone, and a pure white ash is the result, which can be placed in a niche where the friends may visit and renew and soothe their grief; or, if preferred, the ashes can actually be buried (much less space being required), where the relatives may, as under ordinary interment, have their quiet grave, their green turf, and their surrounding shrubs and flowers, but without the revolting details of the process of decomposition which belongs to the present custom.

It may even be legitimately imagined that, their friend having gone up in flames to heaven, the very atmosphere around the crematorium is thereby sanctified by the admixture, in some way, of the friend who has departed, and whose loss is so much deplored. His remains have mixed again with the elements from which they and all things terrestrial sprang, quickly and purely, and not, as in interment, slowly and horribly.

The memory of the departed becomes more precious, more pure, more holy.

## GOD'S ADVISERS.

THE Lord's most vain and stupid friends go out  
To teach his pagan children how to pray;  
The god-helped pagans kill God's friends, and flout  
The God whose schemes they aid, whilst thus they slay;  
And all's for best, God's friends agree.

God's creatures kill God's creatures, and obey  
His grinding law of change: Life, Strife, and Death;  
They work and love; they preach, and hate, and pray,  
And think, poor fools! that God cares aught for breath  
Of infant, tiger, priest, or flea.

Does Nature's hideous strife our Reason fill  
With hope that Hatred's fell Designer feels  
For those whose slaughter prompts the song-bird's trill,  
Or those whom tyrants crush beneath their heels?  
To sharks, go bend in pray'r your knee!

A pray'r to Him that doeth all things well,  
That numbers hairs, and makes the sparrows fall,  
Must shake the universe, from heav'n to hell,  
With mirthful shrieks of demons, great and small—  
If God, heav'n, hell, and ghosts there be.

The priests and parsons—God Almighty's staff  
Of cosmical, consulting engineers—  
*Advising God*, are fit to force a laugh  
From Christ himself, the man of threats and tears,  
Whose frenzied frown could blast a tree.

The foolish folk that pray—if God there be—  
Were made to pray, and we were made to think  
That pray'r's absurd, and yet that they and we,  
Their faith and our contempt, with all things link,  
Perforce, to make what is to be.

If aught we know, we know that naught is known  
Of heav'nly aid—man saves himself, or dies.  
Let, therefore, work, true seed of hope, be sown  
On earth alone, nor waste on silent skies  
The time so short for you and me.

G. L. MACKENZIE.

## AN UNPUBLISHED LETTER OF THOMAS PAINE.

MONCURE D. CONWAY publishes in the New York *Nation* of February 6 a letter of Thomas Paine, purchased many years ago at an auction sale by Mr. Joseph Cowen, of Newcastle-on-Tyne, to whom it now belongs. Though there is no indication in the letter of the person to whom it was written, Mr. Conway feels certain that it was to Colonel John Fellows, the New York bookseller, who had then copyrighted Part I. of *The Age of Reason*.

The letter is dated from Paris, when Paine was about to be imprisoned, and it was doubtless entrusted to Joel Barlow, the ex-parson, with the MS., which was forwarded to Barlow's own publisher in New York.

The letter refers to Dr. Franklin, "my intimate friend of thirty years past"; and for this reason Paine thinks it natural the connection with Colonel Fellows, Franklin's grandson, should be continued. He refers also to the fact that "the printer (an Englishman) whom I employed to print the second part of *The Age of Reason* made a copy of the work while he was printing it, which he sent to London and sold. It was by this means that an edition of it came out in London."

Mr. Monroe, the author of the now famous doctrine, is stated to have been "in good credit" with the French while American Minister at Paris. Paine speaks bluntly of the "Father of his country," saying that "it is time that Mr. Washington retire, for he has played off so much prudent hypocrisy between France and England that neither Government believes anything he says." This estimate of the character of the great first President hardly harmonises with the popular idea of the hero of Sunday-school story-books, who could cut down a pear-tree, but "could not tell a lie." According to Paine, he must have got over his boyish scruples, thereby disproving the dictum of Wordsworth, that "The child is the father of the man."

Mr. Conway, in some comments, gives a short outline of the "strange outcome of Paine's purpose of publishing all his works." On his return to America, in 1822, Paine was made the scapegoat of the Federalists furious at the election of Jefferson, and of the parsons furious over *The Age of Reason*. This tornado of fanaticism prevented him from publishing his old works, and still less the two he had in manuscript. These were Part III. of *The Age of Reason* and *An Answer to the Bishop of Llandaff*. These he bequeathed to Madame Bonneville, "who, in Paris with her husband, had nursed him in illness, and shared with him their home for nearly eight years." This lady was an ardent disciple of Paine and his ideas, but "no sooner was Paine dead than she began to revert to her original type—Catholicism." This was, indeed, as Mr. Conway well observes, a strange irony of fate. The reconstructed devotee at once began to make up for her years of backsliding by "mutilating and erasing Paine's ideas, so that the two important volumes were well nigh ruined." Madame's poverty luckily checked her destructiveness, and "it is due to the means and enterprise of John Fellows ..... that a number of important fragments were rescued; and in a good many cases he was able to recover striking passages, despite the erasures of the zealous French woman."

Had this strange combination of circumstances led to the preservation of some ancient Hebrew myth about supperless Jehovah, ladder-climbing angels, and fiery-chariotteering prophets, it would have been quoted far and wide as a miraculous intervention of Providence, and a convincing proof of the truth of the legends saved from destruction; but that the masterpiece of the most famous infidel of the century should have been rescued—well, this is quite another thing, and would doubtless be explained by pious zealots on the theory that "the Devil looks after his own."

It is well known, however, that Paine's entire career abounded in striking instances of "providential intervention" in his favor. The merest accident saved him from the guillotine, and in many other ways the shafts of destruction were turned aside or intercepted by an unseen hand. His life, like those of Shelley, Byron, Heine, Lassalle, Bradlaugh, and other of the world's great iconoclasts, was a stormy one, and when his soul, like that of Lucretius, shot down the fiery sides of the universe and sank with hissing thunder into the ocean of eternity, the world stood amazed that the event should have been so long and incomprehensibly delayed. B.

## ACID DROPS.

CHARLES BRADLAUGH was expelled from the House of Commons on February 22, 1882. Mr. Horace Marshall has noted this event in his "Calendar of Scripture Quotations." Against the date he says: "Bradlaugh expelled from the House of Commons as an Atheist." Then comes a quotation from 2 John 10: "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed." A very appropriate text. But of course you can always quote bigotry from the Bible.

The Lord's Day Rest Association sends out a circular inviting to united prayer "on behalf of God's Holy Day"—not Saturday, but the day substituted by Christians for God's Holy Day. The united prayer is to take place from April 12 (it should have been April 1) to April 19, and will include special prayer "for all Lord's Day committees and writers in newspapers and periodicals."

Special prayer should be offered against the Bill backed by Mr. H. M. Stanley, General Laurie, Colonel Mellor, and Sir B. Simeon, to legalise in the United Kingdom colonial marriages with a deceased wife's sister. The preamble sets forth that, such marriages being lawful in certain of the British colonies, and the laws relating thereto having been duly sanctioned by the Imperial Parliament, it is expedient that the status, legitimacy, and rights of inheritance and succession within the United Kingdom of the issue of such marriages should be distinctly affirmed and declared. This Bill has already passed the Commons more than once, but has been thrown out of the House of Peers by the efforts of the bishops.

The United States offers to the world the sublime spectacle of a land of liberty. We read in a New York paper that on Sunday, February 2, "a family taking dinner in a respectable restaurant were pounced upon by one of the police spies and marched off to prison because they were caught drinking wine with their dinner." No such liberty as this prevails in effete old Europe. It would hardly be tolerated in Russia.

America is the happy hunting-ground of religious cranks. It seems to be fifty per cent. worse than England. Dr. Lyman Abbott is our authority for stating that America boasts six kinds of Adventists, twelve kinds of Mennonites, twelve kinds of Presbyterians (Ugh!), thirteen kinds of Baptists, sixteen kinds of Lutherans, and seventeen kinds of Methodists, besides a variety of Episcopalians and Congregationalists. Outside all these there are 153 independent congregations who own no fellowship with anybody. What a happy family it is, to be sure!

In New York City not one-half of the churches exist to-day, in proportion to population, that existed fifty years ago. The annual gain in membership is but a little over one per cent., and of this not one quarter are males.

The Pope's order of condemnation of the secret societies of Knights of Pythias, Sons of Temperance, and Oddfellows is absolute. The three orders have a Roman Catholic membership of nearly 100,000. An appeal from a representative committee to Cardinal Satolli to set a day for hearing the case brought forth a reply from the Delegate Apostolic to the effect that the matter was not open for discussion.

Talmage took the three fires at Brooklyn Tabernacle as a hint that the dear Lord wished him to change the scene of his labors. He went to Washington, but has been in hot water with his colleagues and assistants ever since.

Talmage has gained his point in his contest to oust his associate pastor in the First Presbyterian Church of Washington, D.C., and hereafter he will appear twice every Sunday, and will have the benefit of all collections.

A Catholic priest at Rochester, New York, named Fitzgerald, has been sentenced to ten years in the penitentiary for setting fire to a parochial school in the village of Charlotte. His hired man and "housekeeper" are in jail awaiting sentence for the same crime of which the priest was instigator.

Jesus Christ has turned up in Cincinnati, Ohio. At any rate, there is someone there remarkably like the pictures of J. C., and who calls himself by that name. He went to hear a lecture by Miss May Collins, the nineteen-year-old infidel advocate, at the Ohio Liberal Club, on February 2, and said: "I go everywhere, and these people are nearer right than the Christians." It is to be hoped J. C. will not get run into a lunatic asylum, as he seems to be acquiring a little sense at last.

Christ Schlatter, according to the *New York Journal*, the pioneer one-cent paper of the States, has got run in. He has been arrested for vagrancy at San Bernardino, California, and set to work to break stones in company with manacled tramps. When brought before the justice and asked his name, he answered, "Call me Elijah"; and since that reply was given he answers all questions as to his identity with a sorrowful glance, and will not speak of himself.

Christopher Cusuck, of Dublin, left legacies to the value of £350 for masses and cleaning church. The Attorney-General asked that the priest to whom the money was left should pay legacy duty, but the Exchequer Court held that the bequests were for charitable purposes, and as such not chargeable with duty. So that legacies, by which the Church benefits, go even without duty, while bequests for Freethought purposes are altogether illegal.

Rev. Charles F. Aked, of Liverpool, puffs a certain book by a brother man-of-God, which is clearly the most wonderful book in the world. Mr. Aked says "it is all point"—and the italics are his own. All point! Prodigious! Fancy a face all nose?

The Lord sendeth his fires, like his rain, upon the just and the unjust. The recent "million-dollar fire" in Philadelphia destroyed property to the value of 700,000 dollars belonging to the American Baptist Society. We dare say, however, that this Society did not put all its trust in Providence, but did a little judicious hedging in the way of insurance.

D. L. Moody, the American evangelist, has had a religious training. He tells how, when he was a young man, if either he or his brother got into bed without first saying his prayers, the other one would kick him out and swear at him.

There are hosts of unemployed preachers in the United States. According to a correspondent of the *Christian World*, the scramble for pulpits is very exciting, and "the old notion of a divinely-directed call seems to be wearing thin."

"A Sceptic Convinced." This heading attracted our attention in a religious newspaper. The matter below it was an advertisement of colored pills for white people. "Conviction" is played low down in some Christian journals.

"Never Heard of a God" is the dreadful heading of a paragraph which is going the round of the Church papers. It refers to a boy of ten who was called as a witness at a coroner's inquest at Southampton. The coroner asked him, "Have you been told there is a God?" and the boy answered, "No." "Can you say the Lord's Prayer?" was the next question, and again the answer was "No." Whereupon the coroner turned to the jury, exclaiming, "This is what you are paying for in the rates. It will be a serious thing for England if her children are brought up as heathens." It does not appear, however, that this godless boy was less able or willing to tell the truth than the coroner or the jury; and as all the court wants from a witness is his evidence, it is really a waste of time for the presiding officer to deliver theological discourses. If he wishes to preach, he should hire a chapel, and hold forth in his private capacity.

The Rev. J. Twamley was reported as saying that brick-makers were a low class of men, whereupon one signing himself "Hazel Grove" writes to the *British Claymaker* saying that the brickmakers are, as a class, far superior to any parson, inasmuch as they work for an honest living. "Can any parson conscientiously say as much?"

The Church magistrates have been investigating a case of indecent assault by a Wesleyan school-teacher, at Clayton-le-Moor, upon two girls aged nine and ten.

The Rev. G. W. H. Hanford, vicar of St. Andrew's, Cardiff, has obtained a decree nisi for a divorce against his wife on the ground of her adultery with the Rev. T. Lewis Harris Jenkyn, one of the curates of his church.

The Dean of Ely is one of those who are very busy in putting a new complexion on Christianity. Preaching at Westminster, he sought to show that the "cursing" words in the Communion service are not words of imprecation. Dealing with Lenten observances generally, he contended that the season, instead of being regarded as sad and gloomy, should be pleasant and comfortable. Fasting might, as a temporary expedient, be necessary for most of us; and if, he said with marked emphasis, "fasting helps you, use it and make no fuss; while, if feasting helps you, use that and thank God." This new coat of paint, under which one would hardly recognise the old features of the faith, is put on to hide the putrid carcase beneath.

The *Liverpool Post* (Feb. 24) has a long article on Thomas

Paine, and finds that his theological opinions were rather more orthodox than those of Broad Church clergymen to-day. If this be so, it does not say much for the honesty of the Broad Church clergymen.

The *Glasgow Herald* has a leaderette on a young man named Joseph Carson, who has been convicted of stealing books from the Mitchell Library. It is so good that we venture to reproduce it *in extenso*: "It is a generally-received opinion that meditation on a future state produces good moral results. The rule, however, is not invariable, and has just received a striking contradiction in our own city in the case of the young man who was convicted yesterday of stealing books from the Mitchell Library. *Salvator Mundi, The Doctrine of Annihilation in Light of the Doctrine of Love, and Plymouth Brethrenism*—these are edifying titles, and of the person who pores over the books that bear them one is tempted to say, What a very good young man that good young man must be. But human nature, alas, is strongly perverse, and, as the poet has it, things are not what they seem. When Mr. Joseph Carson turned up the library catalogue at the heading 'Future State' he was filled with dark and evil purpose; he asked for the tomes of Dr. Samuel Cox and the Rev. James Baldwin Brown as though he had been one of the elect and regenerate, yet 'the same with intent to deceive.' Verily, the ways of the book-thief are past finding out. One can understand how felonious leanings may co-exist with a desire for first editions and rare copies, as they did in the heart of that priest who amassed a library by murdering rival collectors, and felt remorse only when his booty turned out not to be unique. But it is more difficult to realise how a taste for speculative theology and a disposition towards petty larceny can go together. It must be a very severe anti-nomian that can enjoy religious studies in a stolen book, and a very morbid curiosity about a future state that insists on being gratified even at such risks as beset the breach of the Eighth Commandment."

Mr. John Morley was heartily supported in the Montrose Burghs by several ministers of religion, but he was thoroughly well denounced by the Rev. Andrew Douglas, parish minister of Arbroath. This man of God deplored Mr. Morley's "pronounced hostility to the supernatural and essential element of the Christian faith." He described Mr. Morley as more than a sceptic, as an avowed enemy of Christianity, and declared that if he were elected "it would be the darkest day that Scottish Christianity had ever seen since the Revolution settlement." Well, the darkest day has arrived. Mr. Morley has been returned by an increased and overwhelming majority.

The Rev. Andrew Douglas says that no man who "dispenses with the presence of God," like Mr. Morley, is "fit to make the laws of a Christian nation." Perhaps not. It is enough that he is fit to make laws for honest and sensible people. The time has gone by for filling Parliament with nominees of the pulpit. Let the men of God save souls—if they can, and leave practical matters to better qualified practitioners.

The *New Orleans Picayune* says: "The burning to death of a defenceless woman, who was about to become a mother, by an armed mob of fifty men, near Lebanon, Ky., was one of the most brutal and cowardly crimes that ever blackened the fair fame of a civilised community. The woman's sin was unfaithfulness to her husband. If a mob of women should go about the country burning all the men who are unfaithful to their wives, what an illumination there would be! The very heavens would be lighted up." This in Kentucky, so piously Christian a State that Editor Moore, of the *Blue Grass Blade*, was obliged to cross over to Cincinnati, O., to carry on his heathen paper.

An old superstition says that one born with a caul can never be drowned. James Parks, who has spent eighteen years of his life as fireman on board different steamships, doesn't believe this. On the contrary, he thinks a caul is a "hoodoo." He was born with a caul, and had been wrecked three times, when finally he shipped on board the *St. Paul*, when the latter was first launched. Every disaster which has befallen that vessel he lays to the evil influence of the caul, which he has made over to a friend.

James McAvoy, a groceryman, of Carthage, Ill., has gone crazy over religion. A protracted meeting had been in progress, and McAvoy was baptised in a creek through the ice. The excitement maddened him. While being taken to the asylum he continued to shriek, "Help! Help! The crucifixion!" He claims to witness the divine tragedy. Is that religion heaven-inspired which produces insanity? Will worse than howling dervishes be always permitted to work upon the fears of the people, and meet with no restraint? Do systems of religion other than Christianity steal away men's brains?

A missionary to the Chippeway Indians in Northern Wisconsin told them that if they planted corn on Sunday it would not yield a harvest; and they perversely proceeded to test his wisdom. They planted an acre on Sunday, hoed it on Sunday, worked on it on no day except Sunday; and in August it was the best acre of corn on the reservation. The missionary resigned.

Rev. Julius Feick, of Hoboken, N.J., is ready and willing to earn an honest living; and he doesn't care whether he does it by preaching sermons or by selling whiskey. Just now he is in the saloon business; but he says: "I am prepared to take up the ministry again, if I can find a chance which will give me a salary large enough to enable me to support my family; but you can't pay rent and educate five children on \$700 a year." Possibly, if the Rev. Feick should run his gospel-shop on Sundays and his rum-shop on week days, he might manage to do quite a respectable business—that is, if his leading toppers did not object to the combination.

A correspondent of the Boston *Congregationalist* in India says: "There is little doubt that in most places in India the educated native mind is not as favorably disposed towards Christianity as it was some time ago. Some speak of it as a reaction against Christianity; others denominate it a season of religious apathy; while others still describe it as a revival of philosophic Hinduism. Perhaps all these combined give us the present situation."

It seems that in the United States hairdressers advertise "convent hair" as specially attractive. The poor nuns are encouraged—nay, exhorted—to sacrifice their locks for the good of the convent. A list of hair dealers is kept by the sisters, who, whenever there is a new lot, hasten to the dealer they have reason to think will treat them most generously. If the price he offers is not considered sufficient, they send for another agent, whose stock is perhaps not so full, and who, in order quickly to accumulate a large amount, is willing to pay a somewhat higher price. Paul said a woman's glory was her hair, but Christ's brides have to surrender their locks to the dealers.

According to a recent despatch from Xenia, Ohio, an applicant at that place for enlistment in the regular army was found by the examining surgeon to have his heart upon his right side, instead of upon the left. The surgeon was in doubt as to the advisability of passing him; but the applicant referred him to Ecclesiastes x. 2, where was found the following remarkable assertion: "A wise man's heart is at his right hand; but a fool's heart at his left." Upon the strength of this authority the surgeon recommended that the man be passed. A wonderful production is that collection of documents known as the Holy Bible.

Our paltry Church House at Westminster is to be outdone at Chautauqua, where Bishop Vincent proposes to raise, with the cash of the faithful, a "Hall of Christ." The hall is to contain a hall where the life of Christ can be studied, with seats for five hundred—which seems rather a small allowance for the thousands who go to Chautauqua; a library containing nothing but lives of Christ, and a gallery for paintings and engravings of scenes in the life of Christ. There are Protestants who regard the images and pictures in Roman Catholic churches as objects of idolatry, who will think this project of Bishop Vincent for a \$50,000 shrine very fine.

Prince Robert, Duke of Orleans, the legitimate pretender to the throne of France, who is twenty-eight years of age and gradually seeing his hopes of a crown fizzle out, is going to set up an establishment in London, where he may receive the court of those modern English Jacobins who believe that Mary of Bavaria is the rightful occupant of the English throne. Prince Victor Napoleon, who has as much ambition and bravery as his father "Plon-plon," stays waiting events at Brussels. The Pope's acknowledgment of the Republic disappointed both these young pretenders, who fancy that Republican disregard for the Church will aid their designs.

John Davison Rockefeller, the oil monopolist millionaire, is a good type of the philanthropist who robs Peter to pay Paul. His contributions to the Baptist Church and Chicago University have been well advertised. A benefactress of the latter institution, Helen Culver, has just donated a million dollars to be devoted "to the increase and spread of knowledge within the field of biological science," one purpose being "to make public the advances of science in sanitation and hygiene." Miss Culver, in setting aside this fund to be used in perpetuity for the benefit of humanity, desires it to be associated, not with her own name, but with that of Charles C. Hall, who suggested this endowment.

The *Catholic Watchman*, of Madras, writes in its leading article: "The falling standards of the Salvation Army need propping up, and the 'General' has come out once more to do it. Everyone that runs must see that the results of the

Army operations are not what the noise of the drum and tamborine would lead us to imagine; and, if we are to judge by numbers, the efforts of the Army, as far as this Presidency is concerned, point to nothing but failure all along the line." According to the last census, there are 101 members of this curious and fantastic sect in the Madras Presidency, and that after years of labor.

The rows between Protestants and Catholics in Hyde Park, anent Cardinal Manning, led to a number of questions in the House of Commons, and last Sunday the Protestant lecturer was protected by a large bodyguard of police. They do love one another!

Sunday is the usual day of rest in Japan. Its selection is not due to law nor to religious scruples, but to public convenience, and, perhaps, out of respect to foreign nations. When what is known as the six-day law was passed the Government set the example by closing its offices on Sunday, and all other institutions followed suit. That law was originally suggested for sanitary reasons.

Something like a serious mutiny threatens the American section of the Salvation Army in connection with the removal by "General" Booth of his son, Ballington Booth, appointing in his place, as commander, his son-in-law, Mr. Booth Tucker.

"Colonel" Eadie is said to have been at the bottom of the disturbance. When he went to the States he found the army officers were buying houses on instalment methods through savings from their salaries. "Colonel" Eadie ordered them to stop this and to give up their homes, because Salvationists were to take no thought for the morrow, but to trust to Providence. He ordered one officer who had a private income to stop keeping a horse and carriage, saying that it was preposterous for a Salvationist to ride about on his duties. He also forbade the use of bicycles as unheard of and unseemly. He and Herbert Booth are believed to be at the bottom of the recall of Ballington Booth.

A very bad impression has been made by "Colonel" Nicol in a statement which he sends to the Press, in which he flatly accuses Mr. Booth and his wife of repeated falsehood and fabrication in their announcement of their reasons for withdrawing.

A military spirit seems engendered by the "blood-and-fire" methods of the Army. A despatch from Memel, in East Prussia, says that the local police, having dissolved a meeting of the Salvation Army, were vigorously attacked by the members of this body and their friends. The civil authorities, finding themselves unable to suppress the disturbance, called in the aid of the regular troops, who speedily drove off the rioters. Many arrests were made.

It is quite a treat to hear once more the sweet strains of the good old Christian doctrine of hell. They are so refreshing that we copy from the North Staffordshire *Herald* (Feb. 22) a specimen from its report of a sermon by the Rev. C. Coupe, S.J.: "Upon those who served not God the terrible doom has gone forth, 'Depart, ye cursed, into fire everlasting.' Now in their ears the thunders of God's anger are resounding, and the arrows of God's vengeance are piercing their souls. They are dwelling amid the devouring flames of a fire that shall not be quenched, amid cries of grief and woe, amid shrieks of desolation and despair, amid weepings and gnashings of teeth, and thus for ever—ever to suffer, never to be redeemed, for all eternity, unchanging, unending. For, realise it, the eternity of hell is unchanging, at least in all its essential features. It is ever-green, never-fading. The sun will rise and set its billions of ages, it may be; the tides will ebb and flow; the seasons will come and go; generations of men will be born, will live, and will die. At last the universe will collapse and crumble into ruin. But there will be no change in hell, no mitigation, no alleviation of the suffering, no diminution of the anger of God."

The press boycott of Mr. Foote is very amusing in some respects, although, of course, there is a serious side to the matter. Take the case of *The Shadow of the Sword*, for instance. Mr. Foote has presented this pamphlet to the Humanitarian League, and carefully revised it for this new edition. The League sends out press copies in the usual way, but the pamphlet is only noticed by a few Radical papers like *Reynolds* and the *Weekly Times*. Other journals, that usually notice the League's publications, will not even mention a pamphlet by "that Mr. Foote." The *Echo* is as obstinately silent as the rest of the boycotters, although Mr. Passmore Edwards is a "great humanitarian" and a patron of the League. Of course the press boycott extended to Mr. Foote's lecture at the Memorial Hall. But somehow or other the public came to hear "that Mr. Foote." The hall had not been crowded at any other lecture of the course, but on this occasion the hall was far too small, and hundreds of people were turned away from the door.



**Mr. Foote's Engagements.**

Sunday, March 1, Secular Hall, New Brompton, Kent, at 7, "How the Bible Stands Now."

**TO CORRESPONDENTS.**

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—March 1, Secular Hall, New Church-road, Camberwell; 8, Sheffield; 15, Leicester; 16 and 17, debate with the Rev. James Hyde at Derby; 19 and 20, Nottingham; 22, Hull.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent to him (if a reply is required, a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed) at 81 Effra-road, Brixton, London, S.W.

D. BAKER.—We do not know Mr. Snell's address either. You omit the name of the paper from which you made the cutting.

F. J. BOORMAN.—Monthly and quarterly lists are worse than useless. If we set from them, we simply mislead people in many cases. Secretaries should send Branch lecture announcements weekly. It is not a heavy task, as there is only one Freethought paper which inserts them.

MR. FOOTE'S LECTURE SCHEME.—George Anderson, £10.

J. LEIPPER.—Thanks for cuttings.

G. W. B.—Pleased to hear it, but we always like to see such things before commenting.

J. A. STABBINS.—The far East End is not forgotten. Mr. Foote has been negotiating for good halls there, in which to deliver special courses of lectures during the spring. Announcement will be made shortly.

D. D. (Brisbane).—Thanks. Papers are always welcome.

L. LEVINE (Charleston).—Received with thanks.

N.S.S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss E. M. Vance acknowledges: Liverpool Branch, £2 1s.; Birmingham Branch, £1 5s.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Brisbane Observer—Secular Thought—Two Worlds—Birmingham Weekly Mercury—New York World—New York Journal—Sun—Dunoon Observer—Isle of Man Times—Brisbane Courier—Southend Standard—Progressive Thinker—Liverpool Post—Freethought Magazine—Truthseeker—Boston Investigator—Open Court—Lucifer—Der Arme Teufel—Daily Chronicle—Freidenker—Blackpool Gazette.

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.

**SPECIAL.**

In pursuance of my plans for organising our Freethought propaganda, with a view to establishing it on a satisfactory and permanent basis, I have arranged to keep Mr. C. Cohen in London from May to September. He will deliver open-air lectures on Sunday, and occasionally on week-nights. I guarantee him a fair living-wage, and the collection taken at his lectures must be sent in to me (through Miss Vance) to assist in defraying the expenses. Branches that require his services must please apply to Miss Vance, who will make up his list of engagements. This does not imply that Mr. Cohen has no freedom in the matter. He is at liberty, of course, to make engagements, under this plan, wherever and whenever he specially wishes; only we must keep in view our main object, which is to utilise his services all over the metropolis, and particularly where they are most urgently required in the interest of the movement.

Should this experiment prove successful, it is my intention to attempt the organisation of the whole of our outdoor propaganda next year.

Mr. Cohen has delivered twenty lectures, under my Lecture Scheme, in the provinces during the past six weeks. Mr. Watts has also been fairly busy, and I have done some of the work myself. Mr. Parris, Mr. Moss, and Mr. Heaford have taken part in the free courses of lectures in London, which have generally been very well attended.

These efforts involve a great deal of expense, but I hope we shall be able to continue them. To do so we shall require *the means*.

Six months ago I invited the readers of the *Freethinker* to subscribe to my Lecture Scheme. I now invite them to subscribe again, so that the work may be carried on without flagging. March will be another "Shilling Month." Every reader who is interested in Freethought propaganda outside the old restricted limits of unassisted Branch activity, and who is also able to render some assistance, should send me one or more (preferably *more*) shillings during this month. Every shilling I receive will be duly acknowledged, as usual; and I will make a general statement, financial and otherwise, at the Annual Conference.

G. W. FOOTE.

**SUGAR PLUMS.**

DESPITE the sudden cold weather, which always tends to keep elderly and delicate people indoors, Mr. Foote had a capital audience on Sunday evening, when he lectured at Camberwell on "The Sign of the Cross." We are glad to hear that the Camberwell Branch has been doing "better business" altogether lately, and we hope the improvement will continue.

Mr. Foote lectures this evening (March 1) in the Secular Hall, New Brompton, on "How the Bible Stands Now." This is the first time that Mr. Foote has lectured there on a Sunday.

Last Sunday Mr. Charles Watts had three capital audiences in Manchester. The gathering in the morning was good, in the afternoon more than double the number attended, and in the evening the hall was full. Each lecture was received with great enthusiasm, and several of the audience expressed a wish for Mr. Watts to again visit Manchester at an early date. Friends were present from Rochdale, Failsworth, Oldham, and Hyde.

This evening, Sunday, March 1, Mr. Watts lectures in the Secular Hall, New Church-road, Camberwell, taking for his subject the different types of religious men.

Mr. C. Cohen writes that he has delivered twenty lectures under Mr. Foote's scheme since he left London on January 18. An account of this tour will appear in the *Freethinker*. Mr. Cohen has arranged to give two lectures at Willington Quay on February 28 and March 3. Local Freethinkers will please note.

The ferment created by Mr. Foote's visit to the West of Scotland has by no means subsided. The *Dunoon Observer* has a large number of letters on the subject, the Freethought side being fairly represented. One, signing himself "Churchman," complains that the *Observer* gave a full report of Mr. Foote's lecture, but was told by the editor: "Our correspondent is just rather presuming and intolerant, and forgets what are the proper functions of the press. In reporting Mr. Foote's lecture we only discharged a public duty."

Mr. Gilmour informs us that at Dunoon a special meeting of the Commissioners was called to settle the question of letting the Burgh Hall for Freethought meetings, and it was *unanimously* decided that, if respectable ratepayers wanted the hall for any lawful purpose, they should get it. The Dunoon friends have taken the large hall, seating 500, for Mr. Cohen's meeting on March 9.

The *Greenock Telegraph*, too, which had been having a controversy on "The Religion of Burns," inserts letters from both sides on "Mr. Foote and Secularism." A little mishap, it appears, occurred here. On one of our active friends returning to the Hall from the station, he found that about two dozen persons had come into the side-room to see about forming a Branch, but as no one was there to confer with them they went away. It is to be hoped that Mr. Cohen will visit Greenock and bring the lost two dozen and more into the fold.

Mr. Foote has taken the Athenæum, in Tottenham Court-road, for two more Sunday evening lectures, this time by Mr. Touzeau Parris. The first of these will be delivered this evening (March 1) at 7.30. Admission to the front seats is by tickets, purchasable at 28 Stonecutter-street, or near the hall before the meeting. The back seats are free. We hope there will be a good gathering on both occasions.

Mr. Daniel Baker, of Birmingham, sends us a cutting from the local paper, but without the name, containing a descriptive article, entitled "Among the Agnostics." It describes a visit to the Alexandra Hall, and gives a fair account of Mr. Snell's lecture on "Charles Bradlaugh, Atheist and Reformer." The writer pays Mr. Snell the compliment of saying that his lecture was good, clever, and not without a certain eloquence. "The audience," it is said, "were attentive and appreciative, and in the matters of external respectability and decorum altogether unexceptionable. Several ladies of superior type were present, and a number of well-dressed children."

Secularists in the western suburbs are reminded that the West London Branch has engaged the Athenæum, Godolphin-road, Goldhawk-road, Shepherds Bush, for a series of Free-thought lectures on Sunday evenings during March. Mr. Robert Forder will deliver the opening lecture to-night (Sunday) at 7.30, his subject being "The Bible and Ancient Monuments." The hall is easy of access by rail to Shepherds Bush Station, and by trams from Richmond, Kew, and Chiswick, which pass the doors.

The Bradlaugh Club are making arrangements for courses of free lectures in North London. The first series will be on four successive Mondays at Edmonton. Mr. Forder opens the course on Monday, March 9, on "The Devil."

Mr. John Morley is returned to Parliament for the Montrose Burghs by a lumping majority. We hope Mr. Morley will remember that there are other people who want justice besides Irishmen. Freethinkers, for instance, are denied some of the commonest rights of citizenship, and Mr. Morley might really give them a little assistance in obtaining those rights, especially as he is a Freethinker himself, unless he has recently recanted.

The following extract from a leading article in the *Christian World* shows how Free-thought (under another name) is spreading in certain religious circles: "For one thing, it may be said that, so far as choice is concerned in the matter of his religious beginnings, Prince Boris fares no worse than the rest of us. Our personal liberty in these matters of highest moment is, after all, a very limited one. Whether we should be born in the fifth or nineteenth century, whether our parents should be Mohammedans, or Agnostics, or Salvationists, whether we should be male or female, of this mental and moral capacity or that, would seem to be considerations of the utmost importance to our spiritual prospects. Yet on no one of these questions were we consulted. Prince or peasant, Eastern or Western, our ecclesiastical standing has been three parts made for us before we come into the business at all. The theory that the eternal bliss or woe of any mortal depends on his acceptance, in this life, of some one of the creeds or systems into which he may or may not have been born becomes, from the moment that this view of the matter has been fairly grasped, manifestly impossible."

Another article in the *Christian World*, over the well-known signature of "J. B.," speaks of the "ferocity of the theology" of Calvin and Knox. This is nearly as strong, though not so pointed, as Colonel Ingersoll's saying, that Calvin and Knox fitted each other like the upper and lower jaws of a wild beast.

J. Allanson Picton, writing in the *Christian World* on "Honesty in Teaching," says: "I am afraid there is another cause for the continued repetition of 'antique ideas.' People who know better are afraid to say so."

New England used to be the home of American Sabbatarianism. Now, says the report of the New England Sabbath Protective League, from 50 to 90 per cent. of the population of New England are non-churchgoers, and many of these open Sabbath desecrators and scoffers. Over one thousand churches have been closed on the Lord's Day in New England, and some six hundred Sunday trains run regularly in and out of Boston.

*Munsey's Magazine* for February gives a good portrait and sketch of Elizabeth Cady Stanton.

Cremation is growing in favor in Philadelphia. A cremation society was organised in 1888, and the number of bodies cremated each year since then has increased steadily. In 1889 there were twenty-eight cremations, and, so far, this year there have been eighty-six. The society has started

recently a scheme to "popularise the movement," by issuing bonds, which net the purchaser three per cent. interest per annum, and entitle the holder of each bond to one incineration, with a receptacle and space for the storage of the ashes. The society now has two hundred and sixty members and three hundred stockholders.

A very bold letter on "The Bible and the Bible God," signed "Varon," finds place in the *Blackpool Gazette and News*. It puts the matter so straightly that the editor quite needlessly disclaims agreement with "Varon."

The *Literary Guide* (March 1) contains, among other interesting matter, a notice of Gerald Massey's *My Lyrical Life*, and of Mr. Holyoake's *Public Speaking and Debate*. Professor Edwin Johnson tells of his literary relations with Professor Froude, who did not accept his theory. "F. J. G." continues his "Literary Chats," this number's being with Mr. J. M. Wheeler.

The following subscriptions were received for the National Secular Society at the Annual Dinner, held at the Holborn Restaurant on January 29. The delay in acknowledgment has arisen through Mr. Foote's illness and absence from London:—Mr. and Mrs. Miller, 5s.; A. Hartman, £1; T. D. Harris, 2s.; A. Sumner, 10s.; E. Winning, 5s.; Mrs. Penny, 2s.; Friend, £1; H. S., 5s.; S. M. Willen, 2s.; E. C. Ramsey, 5s.; G. Bedborough, 5s.; E. Wilson, 5s.; F. Cottrell, 2s. 6d.; Mrs. Henderson, 2s.; F. J. W., 5s.

## AN INVITATION FROM AMERICA.

Washington, February 4, 1896.

George W. Foote, President of National Secular Society, Great Britain.

MY DEAR COMRADE,—In accordance with the resolution passed by the Congress of American Freethinkers, held last October at New York, I cordially invite yourself and Mr. Watts to visit our shores during the coming year. Our people will gladly welcome you both. Your own fame is already known to thousands of my countrymen. They remember your valiant defence of freedom in England, and they desire to extend to you the hand of fellowship, and to look upon your face. The battle you fought is the battle for all mankind, and we reap the benefit with our friends in England. Mr. Watts has already been with us, and the value of his work is appreciated. We desire to receive you both as the representatives of the Free-thought of Great Britain. My own visit to your land, the generous reception accorded me, and the acquaintance with many friends have increased and broadened the comradeship of American Freethinkers. It has given a nobler outlook to our future work; it has helped us on both continents to see the world-wide significance of our common cause. Your visit to our land will be equally productive of practical results. It will kindle our thought, enlarge our horizon, and add to our forces; it will help to make Free-thought more widely known among millions of our people. I voice, therefore, the unanimous sentiment of the membership of our national organisation in asking you to come to our Congress of 1896, and to mingle with our people. I desire you to know the greatness of our own country, and to see the progress of truth and liberty in a New World, while you can give to us the intellectual wealth of the Old World, which we need for our highest civilisation. Free-thought comradeship must be cosmopolitan. We must work on no narrow lines. Like Thomas Paine, we labor for the glory and freedom of two continents. To myself it will be the greatest pleasure to stand with you and friend Watts upon the same platform in this American Republic to do our best for man, for liberty, and for progress. Don't fail to come. In behalf of the Freethinkers of America, I am, yours always,

SAMUEL P. PUTNAM,  
President of American Secular Union and  
Freethought Federation.

## How to Help Us.

- (1) Get your newsagent to take a few copies of the *Freethinker* and try to sell them, guaranteeing to take the copies that remain unsold.
- (2) Take an extra copy (or more), and circulate it among your acquaintances.
- (3) Leave a copy of the *Freethinker* now and then in the train, the car, or the omnibus.
- (4) Display, or get displayed, one of our contents-sheets, which are of a convenient size for the purpose. Mr. Forder will send them on application.
- (5) Distribute some of our cheap tracts in your walks abroad, at public meetings, or among the audiences around street-corner preachers.
- (6) Get your newsagent to exhibit the *Freethinker* in the window.

## HUMBOLDT AS A FREETHINKER.

THOUGH living in the pre-evolution era, the mind of Humboldt was as truly of a scientific cast as that of Darwin or of Huxley. He imbibed from the French Atheists, Lalande and Delambre, love for fact and dislike for "a system of chemistry in which one did not get one's hands wet." He saw many lands and many people, yet, in the days when Hegelianism was in vogue, remained a frank naturalist. An unwearied student of science, he paid no attention to religion, frankly disliked pietists and theologians, and even opposed his brother Karl Wilhelm's essay on *The Province of the Historian*, because it seemed to acknowledge a divine government of the world, which to him was as much a delusion as the hypothesis of a principle of life. In his *Kosmos*, and his other works and letters, he never tired of teaching the Gospel of Humanity. Nothing was more odious to him than that pietistic hypocrisy which domineered in State and society during the reign of Frederick William IV. The noted General v. Gerlach, of the *Kreutz-Zeitung*, ironically asked Humboldt: "Your Excellency now often attends church, I suppose?" to which he as sarcastically replied: "The NOW is very kind of you; evidently you intend to show me whereby I could enter upon a career." Thereafter the pietistic wit no more tried his smart sayings on Humboldt. The clergy of all denominations hated him with that fervor of which the *Church militant* alone is capable. Had he not been chamberlain, it would have fared ill with him. Varnhagen relates, in his *Memoirs* (Dec. 26, 1845), that Humboldt himself spoke of his probable expulsion from Berlin, were it not for his position at the court; and he also spoke of the almost incredible endeavors made by the ultra-pietists to prejudice the Government against him. Nor would other Germanic countries have tolerated him had he not been protected by his high position. The great author of the *Kosmos* was distinguished, in the Jesuitic press, by such epithets as "soul-poisoner" and "assassin."

Humboldt resolutely opposed the persecution of the Jews in the name of religion, writing a strong letter to Count Stolberg, which concluded with the following remarks: "It is a dangerous presumption on the part of men to expound the old laws of God. The history of dark ages teaches of the missteps to which such interpretations have led. Let no fear of any harm it may do me keep you from making use of these lines. First of all we must have the courage of expressing our opinion." Among his favorites in latter days were two cultured Freethinking Jews—Heinrich Heine, the poet, and Ferdinand Lassalle, the Socialist, whom he called "das Wunderkind." About the time when Bruno Bauer was turned out of his chair at Bonn for having published his *Review of the Gospel History*, Humboldt wrote to his friend, Varnhagen von Ense, under date December 3, 1841: "Bruno has found me preadamitically converted. When I was young, the Court clergy held opinions much the same. [Humboldt was seventeen years of age when Frederick the Great died.] The one who confirmed me said that the Evangelists had made a variety of notes, from which in later times biographies had been romanced. Many years ago I wrote: '*Toutes les religions positives offrent trois parties distinctes; un traité de mœurs partout le même et très pur, un rêve géologique, et un mythe ou petit roman historique, le dernier élément obtient le plus d'importance*'"—(All positive religions offer three distinct elements—a code of morals everywhere the same and very pure, a geological dream, and a myth, or little historical romance; this last element obtains the greatest importance). Later on he says to his friend that Strauss disposes of "the whole historical romance of the apostolic myth collectors"; and Varnhagen notes, in his *Diary*, how he made merry with Bunsen's sanctimonious little tract on *Passion Week*. So also he speaks of being "much amused with the Straussian Savior," and with the tactics of the black army, "who, in order to impose fresh fetters upon mankind, even put on the armor of their former enemies." How admirably does this describe the tactics of the men of God in our own day. Of Strauss's *Leben Jesu* he says in a letter dated April 6, 1842: "The method of its logical arrangement is excellent; besides which, it imparts to us the whole history of the religious beliefs current in our time, especially the priestly craft, with which people, Schleiermacher-like, profess all forms of the Christian myths, accommodate themselves to dissentients,

and, the 'chalice being drained,' will have themselves put under the sod with a *cortège* of royal carriages;\* while for each of these myths a so-called philosophical explanation has been substituted." Such expressions, and many more that could be culled from his works, could come only from one who utterly rejected "the Christian myths."

J. M. W.

## MITCHELL LIBRARY THEFTS.

## EXTRAORDINARY CASE—LOCAL CLERGYMAN CENSURED.

JOSEPH CARSON, a respectably dressed young man, who is employed in a locomotive work in Springburn, and resides at 22 Avenue-road, was charged at the Central Police-court, to-day, with having, since May last, stolen from the Mitchell Library "Plymouth Heresies," "Salvator Mundi," "The Doctrine of Annihilation in the Light of the Doctrine of Love," and "Plymouth Brethrenism."

It seems that Carson, who frequently visited the library, took out a number of books, and gave in most cases a false name and address. Several of the books having gone amiss, an official of the library went to one of the addresses the man named in the slip, and satisfied himself that he was not the person who got the books. He stated, however, that one Carson, who also worked in Springburn, had an ill-feeling against him, and had possibly assumed his name to get him into trouble. A further clue was got from a letter, extending to a column and a-half, which appeared in the *Springburn Express*, advocating views similar to those set forth in the missing books. The library officials hit upon an ingenious method of procuring a specimen of Carson's handwriting. A letter, to which a fictitious name was attached, was sent to Carson, complimenting him upon the knowledge which was displayed in his communication to the *Express*, and asking what books should be read by the writer, who desired to learn something more on the subject. The ruse succeeded. Ignorant of the consequence, Carson replied to the letter, and not only gave a list of books, including the ones missing from the library, but informed his correspondent that they could be seen at the Mitchell Library. Having compared the handwriting with the writing on the slips, Mr. Barrett put the case into the hands of the police, and Detectives Dempster and Campbell arrested Carson.

Four of the books were found in his house, but the library stamps had been torn out. To-day Carson pleaded guilty to taking all the books with the exception of "The Doctrine of Annihilation," which he said he purchased.

Police-Judge Brechin said he had received a letter from a local clergyman giving Carson a good character. Such a thing was most injudicious, and he hoped that no such attempt would again be made to influence a magistrate's decision.

The accused stated that he intended returning the books.

Mr. Brechin said he had the utmost difficulty in refraining from sending the accused to prison for a considerable period. It was a very bad feature of the case that he tried to throw a slur on an innocent person. He would impose a fine of three guineas, with the option of 21 days' imprisonment.

—*Glasgow Evening Citizen*, February 19, 1896.

## OUR CHILDREN'S PARTY.

FOR several years past the National Secular Society has given a children's party. It is intended to do the same this year. Miss Vance and a special committee, appointed to make the necessary arrangements, are busy with the preparations for the happy gathering. The date on which it is to take place will shortly be announced. In the meantime, friends who desire to contribute to the evening's amusement of the young ones are earnestly requested to send subscriptions at once to Miss Vance, 28 Stonecutter-street, E.C. It is intended to provide refreshments and a variety of entertainments for between one and two hundred children; and, as this will cost about £20, it is hoped that those who can afford to render pecuniary assistance will do so. Nothing should afford adults greater pleasure than to see the children of our party indulging in innocent sports and pastimes. Let us all do our best to make them happy on the occasion of their annual festival. Mr. Foote and myself will be present to share in witnessing the jollity of the little ones. The committee have not yet decided where the merry meeting will be held, but it is expected that it will be in the large hall of the Club Union, Clerkenwell-road, E.C.

CHARLES WATTS.

\* Alluding to Schleiermacher's profession of the orthodox faith on his death-bed; whereupon King Friedrich Wilhelm III., hearing of it, ordered the court carriages to follow his funeral.

## BELLS.

BELLS come from the East, and have been associated with Buddhist worship from the earliest times. There is little doubt that Buddhist monks introduced them both to China and to Europe, where they got incorporated with Christianity, "the Buddhism of the West." In China and in Russia they have received their largest development, there being in Peking, Nankin, and Moscow bells so enormous that they cannot be sounded. The Czar Kolokol at Moscow, reputed to be the largest in the world, having a diameter of 22 feet and weighing 198 tons, is said to have cost £350,000. That in St. Ivan's Church, though weighing but 57 tons, is a monster compared to any known in England. Our largest are Great Peter at York, Great Tom at Oxford, and Great Paul in London.

The use of bells doubtless arose from the striking of sticks, shells, and gongs to drive away evil spirits. The fool, known by his cap and bells, is only a remnant of the earlier medicine-man or sorcerer, or devil expeller, the prototype of the modern priest and devil-dodger. Durandus, the old writer on Christian ritual, says: "The church, when a tempest is seen to arise, rings the bells that the fiends, hearing the trumpets of the eternal king, may flee away, and cease from raising the storm." Among old inscriptions on bells we find such as these: "I drive away pestilence," "I am called Mary: I disperse the storms, scatter enemies, and drive away demons."

This was one of the "fooleries" against which Latimer, the Reformer, declaimed. "Ye know," he said, "when there was a storm or fearful weather, then we rung the holy bells; they were they that must make all things well; they must drive away the Devil! But I tell you, if the holy bells would serve against the Devil, or that he might be put away through their sound, no doubt we would soon banish him out of all England; for I think, if all the bells in England should be rung together at a certain hour, there would be almost no place but some bells might be heard there, and so the Devil should have no abiding place in England." No disease of the body is more hereditary and inveterate than these disorders of the mind. The Bishop of Chalons christened a peal not many years since, and in a sermon which he pronounced on the occasion enforced the "fooleries" which Latimer had laughed away. "The bells," said he, "placed like sentinels on the towers, watch over us, and turn away from us the temptations of the enemy of our salvation, as well as storms and tempests. They speak and pray for us in our troubles; they inform heaven of the necessity of earth." If this be true, there is more virtue in the clapper of a bell than in the tongue of a prelate. So late as 1852 the Bishop of Malta ordered all the church bells to be rung for an hour to allay a gale. Under the auspices of a hierarchy so enlightened the custom continues to flourish to this day in many parts of the Continent, and may not impossibly endure while a tower, a bell, and a Roman Catholic priesthood can be found collected on the same spot.

So far from bells being a protection in storms, it is likely they increase the danger. At any rate, the ringers, when aloft, are in an exposed position. A German *savant* calculated in 1783 that in the space of thirty-three years 386 towers had been damaged and 121 ringers killed.

The "passing bell," as it was called, was tolled at the time that some person was dying, in order to drive away demons who might be waiting to seize hold of the passing spirit; and this reason lies at the root of the tolling of bells at funerals. The bell, when rung, as of yore, before the death, must often have dismayed the dying, and by putting them in mind of evil spirits and other supposititious terrors of death may have hastened their ends. It doubtless was an instrument in the hand of priestcraft in making dying sinners hand over some of their goods to the Church. Nelson, in his *Fasts and Festivals* (1732), says of the good Christian: "Should his senses hold out so long, he can hear even his passing bell without disturbance."

Bells are still an occasion of dread and discomfort to the sick and dying. In country places, where houses are scattered, and many parishioners remote from the church, they serve some purpose of utility, and even may have, when heard at a distance, some delectable influence upon the feelings, as with

The bells of Shandon  
That sound so grand on  
The pleasant waters of the river Lee.

But in crowded cities church bells are neither more nor less than a tintinnabulating nuisance.

UNCLE BENJAMIN BIMBOM.

He who opposes his own judgment against the consent of the times ought to be backed with unanswerable truths; he that has truth on his side is a fool, as well as a coward, if he is afraid to own it because of the currency or multitude of other men's opinions.—*De Foe*.

## EACH ALIKE GUILTY.

A CLERGYMAN writes that, in his opinion, we err in holding Protestants and Christianity generally responsible for the wrongs and violence of Catholics. He says: "The excesses of which you justly complain were all committed before the Protestants were in being."

The objector cannot be ignorant of the fact that Christianity was fashioned and moulded into form by Catholics. Every rite and ceremonial and belief was shaped by the Mother Church. Not a dogma prevails among Protestant Churches which does not owe its paternity to Catholicism. These were forced on the world by persecution and slaughter. Every sacred day and every holiday observed by Protestants was inherited from their vile ancestors. Every saint in the Church calendar is of papal origin. Her historians were Catholics. Her sacred books were first found in the hands of the fathers of the Roman Church, and in all probability were forged by them. The first commentaries on the "Holy Scriptures" were written by Catholic priests, in whose lead Protestants have slavishly followed. Knowing the wickedness of the parent Church, no trust can be put in anything coming through her corrupt hands.

The thief in possession of stolen goods, with guilty knowledge of the original larceny, who labors to conceal his own connection with the crime, is, in law and in fact, held to be as guilty as the original thief.

Violence was the instrumentality employed to make Christians, without which the Church would be a feeble force in the world at this time. It was advancing civilisation that arrested the Church in its crimes, of which Protestants for several centuries were as culpable as Catholics.—*Progressive Thinker*.

## Secularists on Animals' Rights.

The fifth of the Humanitarian League's series of addresses on "The Rights of Men and the Rights of Animals" was given at the Memorial Hall last night by Mr. G. W. Foote, the President of the National Secular Society, the subject being "The Secularist View." There was a crowded attendance, a large number of persons being unable to gain admission. Speaking as an evolutionist, and basing his argument on utilitarian grounds, Mr. Foote made a strong appeal for the recognition and humane treatment of animals as the relatives and fellow-workers of mankind, and quoted the authority of great Freethinkers, such as Voltaire, Schopenhauer, Bentham, and Ingersoll, the last-named of whom has denounced vivisection as the "disgrace and shame of some of the sciences." The position of the Secular Society on the subject is summed up in its demand for an extension of moral law to animals so as to secure them humane treatment and legal protection against cruelty.—*Westminster Gazette* (February 20).

## Parnell's Hatred of the Priests.

And then he hated the priests. He knew—none so well—that they were the real conservative force in Ireland. "The priests would all be against us. The young men would possibly help us in passive resistance; but for aught else they would be against us." That was his view. "I wish we could be rid of the black dragoons," he muttered on one occasion; "here comes another of them." We were engaged in earnest consultation. The approaching priest was a conceited coxcomb of a curate. Parnell stepped forward, and in his best style, a bland smile and a polite grasp of the hand, excused himself to the priest, and returned with a muttered malediction against priests in general, and this one in particular.—*New Age*.

## Obituary.

A LEADING French Freethinker and scientist has departed in the person of M. Abel Hovelacque, anthropologist and orientalist. Born at Paris November 14, 1843, he studied law, and under the Second Empire made part of the group of *La Pensée Nouvelle*, with Asseline, Letourneau, Lefevre, etc. He studied anthropology under Broca, and founded, with Letourneau and others, the "Bibliothèque des Sciences Contemporaines," publishing therein *La Linguistique*. For the "Bibliothèque Materialiste" he wrote a work on *Primitive Man*. He also published choice extracts from *Voltaire*, *Diderot*, and *Rousseau*. In 1878 he was made a member of the Municipal Council of Paris, and from 1881 to 1894 sat as deputy to the French Chamber.

Every day yields illustrations of the way in which men think only of the proximate and ignore the remote.—*Herbert Spencer*.

BOOK CHAT.

ALEXANDER DELMAR, who is a foremost authority on the subject of money, in his *History of Monetary Systems* brings out the fact that the right to coin has always been a mark of sovereignty. In the empires of antiquity the minting of money was a sacerdotal function, and as such it was exercised as to gold and controlled as to silver by the sovereign-pontiffs of Rome and Sassanian Persia, when Mahomet and his undaunted followers issued from Arabia to overthrow these great powers.

\* \* \*

Here is Le Gallienne's latest on books:—

What are my books?—My friends, my loves,  
My church, my tavern, and my only wealth;  
My garden: yea, my flowers, my bees, my doves;  
My only doctors—and my only health.

\* \* \*

*Fun of the Footlights*, by G. V. K. (7 Whimble-street, Plymouth), is a penny contribution to the gaiety of the Three Towns, that can be safely recommended to anyone in preference to pills or pious literature.

\* \* \*

The most popular book in America just now is another of the many bogus lives of Christ. It is called *Titus: A Comrade of the Cross*, and is said to have been circulated to the extent of three millions of copies. Titus is the repentant thief of Luke xxiii. (According to Matthew xxvii., both thieves reviled him.) Titus is represented as a son of Caiaphas, the high priest, who has been stolen in infancy, and whose identity is discovered only when he hangs on the Cross. This sort of thing suits the American religious public, and is considered an excellent kind of book for Sunday scholars. After all, the incidents are not more fanciful or false than those of the well-known story on which *Titus* is founded.

\* \* \*

Here is a very old book advertisement, one of the earliest which appeared in the English newspaper press, and which should be of interest to Freethinking book-lovers. It appeared in the *Mercurius Politicus* for September, 1659:—

CONSIDERATIONS touching the likeliest means to remove Hirelings out of the Church; wherein is also discours'd of Tithes, Church Fees, Church Revenues, and whether any maintenance of Ministers can be settled by Law. The author, J. M. Sold by *Livewel Chapman*, at the Crown in Pope's Head Alley.

The author, J. M., we need scarcely say, was John Milton.

\* \* \*

Another advertisement connected with one of the greatest names in our literature, Dean Swift, appeared in the *Tatler*, August 24, 1710. It reads:—

WHEREAS an ignorant Upstart in Astrology has publicly endeavoured to persuade the world that he is the late John Partridge, who died the 28 of March, 1718, these are to certify all whom it may concern that the true John Partridge was not only dead at that time, but continues so to the present day. Beware of counterfeits, for such are abroad.

This was one of Swift's many jokes on poor Partridge, the astrologer, whose assertions that he was living were not allowed to stand against the prophecy that he should die.

\* \* \*

Writing of prophetic advertisements reminds us of the crank who always advertises in the *Standard* at Easter time about the "coming great war"—or is this one of Prophet Baxter's dodges? At any rate, it is not a new one, and in the *Times* of fifty years ago we read:—

THE MIGHTY ANGEL'S MIDNIGHT ROAR. "Behold the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him." This awful cry, as is demonstrated, will very shortly be heard, viz., at the commencement of "the great day (or year) of God's wrath," or the last of the 2,300 days (or years) in Daniel's prophecy. By the authors of "Proofs of the Second Coming of Messiah at the Passover in 1848." Price 6s. Fourth Edition.

\* \* \*

Camille Flammarion, the astronomer-novelist, is writing another story based on scientific and astronomical facts. Flammarion was educated for the priesthood; but, being unable to reconcile his own views with those of the Church, he resigned his post and took up the study of the stars. His early training and imaginative powers are seen in his Spiritism and his theory that the parallel lines in Mars are the work of human agency.

\* \* \*

Mr. Hardy's *Jude* no longer remains the *Obscure*. The voice of Mrs. Grundy has shouted so loudly against the work both here and in America that it is lifted into a first place among books of the day by the advertisements of its detractors. Mrs. G. always was a foolish female.

\* \* \*

Dozens of stories are told concerning the kind heart and

generous nature of the younger Dumas. Upon one occasion he wrote a play which he sent to a publisher anonymously. Several months later he published the fact, stating that he had heard nothing of the play, and presumed it was lying in the manager's lumber-room with hundreds of others, all unopened. He neglected to say whose lumber-room he meant. A play by Dumas was something of an event in Paris, and every manager set about a careful overhauling and reading of manuscripts that had accumulated. This was exactly what Dumas wanted. Of course there was no doubt concerning his play when it was discovered; but incidentally many a young author received the hearing he had long sought in vain.

\* \* \*

*Money: Its Mysteries and Mistakes, and their Bearing on Commerce, Industry, and Poverty*, by E. S. Cooper (Reeves, 185 Fleet-street, E.C.), is a twopenny pamphlet which argues in favor of individualism and a ready-money system; recovery for debt, which the author says is the parent of bankruptcy, imprisonment, over-reaching, and extortion, to be abolished.

\* \* \*

No. 5 of the Bijou Library (Reeves, 185 Fleet-street) is *Patriotism and Christianity*, by Count Leo Tolstoi. Written shortly after the Franco-Russian festivities at Toulon and Paris, October, 1894, Tolstoi boldly compares this outgush of patriotism to an epidemic in Russia, one feature of which was that the peasants gave up work under the conviction that the end of the world was at hand. Tolstoi sees in such proceedings, not a confirmation of peace, but an incitement to war, which, in his view, though not in that of Christian nations, is incompatible with Christianity. Like all Tolstoi's works, the *brochure* is vivid and attractive.

\* \* \*

In a long and pungent criticism of Mr. J. M. Robertson's book on *Buckle and His Critics*, the *Athenæum* (Feb. 23) admits that "Buckle's book is one of the few attempts at constructive synthetic work in the domain of history which have a permanent value, and in so far as Mr. Robertson has sought to vindicate a great work from petty and ignorant misrepresentations, we are devoutly at one with him."

\* \* \*

A bulky, complete set of the Buddhist sacred books, in four hundred volumes, was sent by Buddhists in Japan to Dr. Barrows, in token of his services in organising the Parliament of Religions. He has handed them over to the University of Chicago, where they should be utilised in the study of comparative religion.

\* \* \*

Sir Henry Spelman's *History and Fate of Sacrilege* is a work making out that all who have taken part in despoiling the Church of England have come to bad ends. It is, of course, popular with clergymen, and has gone through four editions in our own generation. Spelman's facts are by no means unquestionable, and neither he nor any of his editors has ever investigated the proportion of prosperous and unfortunate families, so that his argument is in the air.

PROFANE JOKES.

A very diminutive clergyman, whose head would barely reach the top of a pulpit, went one Sunday to preach at a country church. Of course a stool had to be provided for him to stand upon, but he had no sooner taken his text from the words, "A little while and ye shall not see me," than the stool collapsed, rendering him invisible.

A young theologian, fresh from college, once went to preach at a remote village church; and, wishing to display his learning, quoted largely from the commentators. Some commentators, he said, translate the passage thus; other commentators put on a different construction. At length he was interrupted by an ancient rustic, who exclaimed: "Don't talk to us any more about common taters; me and my old gal allus eats the best kidneys."

A country vicar, on going his round one Monday morning, called at the house of a venerable old dame, who had seen some seventy odd summers. "Well," said he, "and how did you like my sermon yesterday?" "Oh sir," she replied, "it was delightful; especially your description of that place where there will be wailing and gnashing of teeth; and, considering I have had no teeth to gnash for the last twenty years, there will be no chance of you meeting me there."

If men were to abdicate their reason in the simplest transactions of life in the way they are taught and expected to do in matters of religion, they would be laughed to scorn.—*Theodore Mayne*.

## 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.

ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, Touzeau Parris, "Certainties of Religion Worthless."  
BRADLAUGH CLUB AND INSTITUTE (36 Newington Green-road, Balls Pond, N.): 7.15, A. B. Moss, "The Conversion of the Devil." Tuesday, complimentary dance to members of the N.S.S. Wednesday, at 8.30, R. Forder, "The Signs of the Zodiac—Lecture VII, The Twins" (continued).  
BATTERSEA SECULAR HALL (back of Battersea Park Station): 7.45, a lecture. Friday, February 28, at 8, urgent meeting of members and friends.  
EAST LONDON BRANCH: 6, tea and concert at the Aldgate Pump Hotel, 26 Aldgate.  
EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (78 Libra-road, Roman-road): 3, Sunday-school; 7.30, Mr. Johnson, "War."  
KINGSLAND (Ridley-road): 12, meeting at the Bradlaugh Club and Institute, 36 Newington Green-road.  
PENTON HALL (81 Pentonville-road—Humanitarian Society): 7, Joachim Kaspary, "Scotch Presbyterianism."  
WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Westminster Town Hall, Caxton-street): 11.15, Dr. Stanton Coit, "The Prophets."  
WEST LONDON BRANCH (Athenæum, Godolphin-road, Shepherds Bush): 7.30, R. Forder, "The Bible and Ancient Monuments."

### OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 12, F. Haslam will lecture.  
HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 12, J. Rowney, "Paul and his Teaching."

### COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM (Alexandra Hall, Hope-street): 7, members' social meeting.  
BLACKBURN: 3, business meeting at 18 St. Peter-street.  
BRISTOL (Shepherds' Hall, Old Market-street): 7, social.  
CHATHAM SECULAR HALL (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 7, G. W. Foote, "How the Bible Stands Now."  
FELLING AND EAST GATESHEAD BRANCH (Mechanics' Institute Hall, Felling): Wednesday, C. Cohen, "Is Christianity True?" Friday, C. Cohen, "The Teachings of Jesus Inadequate and Anti-Social."  
GLASGOW (Brunswick Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): 12, discussion—impromptu speeches and business meeting; 6.30, Zosimus, "Campaigning Notes; or, the Humors and Lessons of Peripatetic Propagandism."  
HECKMONDWIKE (Lumbard's Coffee Palace, Market-place): 2.30, a meeting.  
IPSWICH (G.E.R., Commercial-road): 7, members' meeting.  
HULL (Cobden Hall, Storey-street): 7, Captain Monro, "Repairing the Idols" (Ingersoll).  
LEICESTER SECULAR HALL (Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Anniversary Sunday.  
LIVERPOOL (Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street): 7, Ernest Newman, "Oscar Wilde." Committee meeting after lecture.  
MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, Ernest Evans, "Plants and their Adaptability to their Surroundings" (illustrated by oxy-hydrogen lantern).  
SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, musical and other recitals.  
SOUTH SHIELDS (Thornton's Variety Hall, Union-lane): 11, C. Cohen, "State Interference v. Individual Liberty"; 7, "What has Become of Christianity?"  
STOCKTON-ON-TEES (Literary and Philosophical Room of the Exchange Hall): Thursday, at 7.45, C. Cohen, "Atheism: its Meaning, Morality, and Justification." Friday, at 7.45, in the Workmen's Institute, Milbank-street, South Bank, "Is Christianity True?"

### Lecturers' Engagements.

C COHEN, 12 Merchant-street, Bow-road, London, E.—March 1, South Shields; 2, Felling; 3, Wellington Quay; 4, Felling; 5 and 6, Stockton-on-Tees; 8, Glasgow; 11, Paisley; 13, Motherwell; 15, Glasgow; 22, Edinburgh; 29, Leeds. April 5, Balls Pond; 12, 19, and 26, Manchester.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon-road, Rotherhithe, London.—March 1, Balls Pond.

TOUZEAU PARRIS, 32 Upper Mall, Hammersmith, London, W.—March 1, Athenæum Hall, Tottenham Court-road; 3, Balls Pond; 15, Athenæum, Tottenham Court-road; 22, Athenæum, Shepherds Bush. April 12, Balls Pond; 26, Glasgow.

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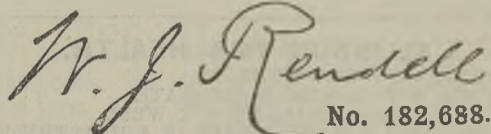
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