

The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.]

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

THE EDUCATION BILL.

(Concluded from page 258.)

FROM the Freethought point of view, there is a good deal to be said for and against the proposal in this Education Bill to put a large part, and in time perhaps the whole, of the elementary education machinery under the County Councils. The Nonconformist objection to it is well expressed by Sir Henry Fowler, who says it will poison municipal life by introducing theological bitterness into municipal elections. But this is an objection which is not likely to excite the sympathy of Freethinkers. "Theological bitterness" among Christians is a domestic matter. The more they quarrel and scratch and bite each other the more the thoughtful public are likely to grow disgusted with religion altogether. On the other hand, the education of children is of vast importance, and it would, on the whole, be probably best to have it controlled by a specially elected body of men and women, chosen for their fitness in this respect by the parents themselves, who may otherwise take less interest in the subject.

The greatest danger of this proposal arises in connection with the clauses authorising the Voluntary schools in any district to club together, so as to be recognised by the County Councils as an Association. Such an Association may receive money for all the schools thus associated, and distribute it at pleasure. By this means the wealthier schools might aid the poorer ones; and, as all the schools of any religious denomination may associate in this way, it is obvious that the arrangement will practically mean the establishment of powerful Church of England corporations. This will be a danger to Freethought as well as to Nonconformity, and in my judgment the clause should be opposed by our party. No doubt the point will be fully discussed at the National Secular Society's approaching Annual Conference, and whatever decision is arrived at ought to be loyally supported by English Secularists. (The Act does not apply to Scotland or Ireland.)

Let us now turn to the twenty-seventh section of the Bill, which deals specially with the subject of religious instruction.

Lord Salisbury has said that the religion taught at present, at least in Board schools, is Nonconformist religion; and in one sense he is right. Nonconformists have dogmas just as well as Churchmen, but if dogmas are taught they will probably take a Church color. For this reason, and for this reason only, the Nonconformists oppose the introduction of dogmas altogether. Their plan is to let the children receive the undenominational minimum of Christian teaching. This is a safe starting point. It is the creation, so to speak, of the raw material of Christianity; and in course of time Dissenting ministers may get hold of it and mould it to the pattern of their denominations, in free and open competition with the clergy of the Church of England.

The Church party see this clearly enough, and do not

care to be bound by the Nonconformist conscience. They perceive an opportunity of manufacturing something more than the mere raw material of Christianity. It seems better to them to turn out the finished article, properly marked with the Church brand; and who can blame them for seizing their advantage?

But to do this openly is rather dangerous, as there is a multitude of people who are neither Nonconformists nor Churchmen, and who may resent the domination of one religious party in the public schools. Accordingly the Church party has resorted to strategy, and turned the flank of the Nonconformist enemy by the following proposal:—

"(1) One of the regulations in accordance with which a public elementary school is required to be conducted shall be that, if the parents of a reasonable number of the scholars attending the school require that separate religious instruction be given to their children, the managers shall, so far as practicable, whether the religious instruction in the school is regulated by any trust deed, scheme, or other instrument or not, permit reasonable arrangements to be made for allowing such religious instruction to be given, and shall not be precluded from doing so by the provisions of any such deed, scheme, or instrument.

"(2) Any question which may arise under this section as to what is reasonable or practicable shall be determined by the Education Department, whose decision shall be final."

Now, in one sense, this is a step in the direction of religious equality—not exactly of religious freedom, which is inconsistent with any sort of State interference. The Government says to the people: "Look here. We intend to let the management of any school decide what religious education shall be given in it by their servants. And that is surely fair. But if your children go to that school, and you don't like the religious education given there, you shall still be protected by the old Conscience Clause, and we offer you also a further privilege. You may have your children taught the religion you do like. If a number of you—a reasonable number—send in a man to teach it, your children shall be put under his instruction for a certain time, and in a schoolroom set apart for the purpose. And so long as *your* children get the religious teaching *you* desire them to have, what does it matter to you how other people's children are taught? That is *their* affair, and let them look after it themselves."

Of course a "reasonable number" is a very elastic expression, like the famous phrase "as big as a piece of chalk." And the Education Department may conclude that *unreasonable* people can never make a *reasonable* number. Nevertheless, the matter is susceptible of some sort of determination, and the publicity of the press and platform would tend to keep the Education Department within the bounds of decorum, or at least prevent it from doing anything really outrageous.

Mr. Moncreu D. Conway, in his letter to the *Times*, from which I have already quoted, takes a rosy view of this twenty-seventh section, and thinks it will bring relief to Rationalists:—

"Of course, unorthodox Protestants are aware, from

long experience, that they belong to those 'least' concerning which *lex non curat*, and are accustomed to the position of the unheeded patient in Hogarth's picture over whom the two doctors are quarrelling about their respective drugs. It so happens, however, that other and larger associations, such as Jews and Catholics, have also need of a relief not afforded by the present conscience clause, and the first important gesture towards such relief is that in the new Education Bill. Whatever its other faults, under the proposed measure the withdrawal of a child from so-called religious instruction would no longer bring on it any stigma of singularity among its fellows or any vulgar epithet, such as 'infidel,' 'papist,' Jew. If it did not appear for religious instruction in one room, it would be inferred that he was in some other equally respectable class, which, under the large concession made to varieties of belief, would generally be the case."

There is something in Mr. Conway's argument, but perhaps less than he imagines. When children are inquisitive—and the curiosity of most of them is pretty largely developed—it is hardly possible to conceal the fact that one of their number is receiving no religious instruction whatever. They may get accustomed to fish, flesh, fowl, and red herring; but the child who eats *nothing* will soon be spotted. But the odium would probably diminish in proportion to the variety of religious teaching in the school. When twenty denominations are all admitted under the same roof as equally respectable, and equally entitled to State consideration, the principle of toleration is given an opportunity; and some of its sweetness may drop upon the children whose parents belong to no denomination at all, not even the twenty-first.

This twenty-seventh section, however unintentionally, strikes hard at the principle of *infallibility*. Whatever infallibility remains is transferred from Churches to individual parents. *They* are to decide what is true or false—at least, for their own children. The State takes a neutral position. "Most people," it seems to say, "believe in God, and Heaven and Hell, and want their children taught their own belief. Very well, then, let them all go to Heaven or Hell in their own way. We don't care which it is. All we undertake is to pay for the signposts. They can stick them where they like."

How the new plan of religious education will work out in practice is not easy to prophesy; but this much is clear—it will benefit the Church of England and the Roman Catholics, and probably injure the Nonconformists. That, however, is no special concern of Freethinkers. The real danger of the Bill, to our party, lies in the possible setting up of Denominational Corporations governing schools supported almost, if not entirely, by public money, and in the possible extinction of School Boards in the interest of such Corporations. This is the really retrograde part of the Bill, and against this (in my judgment) the efforts of Freethinkers should be directed.

G. W. FOOTE.

FREETHOUGHT IN NORTHAMPTON.

MR. BRADLAUGH wisely refrained from delivering Freethought lectures at Northampton while he represented it in the House of Commons. But there is absolutely no reason why Freethought propaganda should not be carried on there now. It is idle to urge that the interests of this or that Parliamentary candidate may be injured. Such an objection, if admitted all round, would abolish Freethought propaganda all over the country. Freethought is a good thing or a bad thing. If it is a bad thing, it is not wanted anywhere; if it is a good thing, it is wanted everywhere. And everywhere includes Northampton.

A few friends there, including Messrs. Taylor and Bull, tell me that they have at length found a suitable hall, and at my request they have secured it for Sunday (May 3). The time is very short, and in the hurry my Northampton friends have forgotten to tell me the name of the hall or where it is situated. But the advertisements will inform the local public, and I hope to have good meetings in the afternoon and evening.

I shall endeavor to start a Branch of the National Secular Society after my lectures, and see whether arrangements cannot be made for further meetings at Northampton.

G. W. FOOTE.

INGERSOLL IN A PULPIT.

THREE thousand persons, including all the leading citizens of Chicago, attended at the Columbia Theatre on Sunday, April 12, to witness what the *Chicago Times-Herald* calls an event of historic note—a lecture by Colonel R. G. Ingersoll under the auspices of a Christian Church.

Dr. Rusk, who induced "our Bob" to do this, is himself a somewhat notable man. Formerly the pastor of the Fullerton Avenue Presbyterian Church in Chicago, he seceded from that body and formed an independent organisation of his own called the Church Militant, with the avowed object of giving Christianity a secular character, and making it influence the affairs of this life. He took the major portion of his congregation with him, but had to give up the Church and hold his services in the Women's Christian Temperance Union Temple. It was to this building he invited Colonel Ingersoll, whom he has known for many years. The W. C. T. U. declining to allow an Agnostic to speak within their walls, Dr. Rusk was all the more determined to conduct his services as he pleased, and he has secured the Sunday tenancy of the Columbia Theatre from the date which Colonel Ingersoll offered him.

Although admission was strictly confined to ticket-holders, the street in front of the theatre was blocked with people long before the opening of the doors, and even after the interior had been packed to suffocation over a thousand men and women besieged the entrance. On the stage were four hundred or more representative citizens, including nearly every member of the Appellate and Superior courts, and several county officials, delegations from every medical and law college and institution of learning in the city and suburbs, and a number of retired divines.

Every sect and denomination, without an exception, had its representative. When Colonel Ingersoll made his appearance, arm-in-arm with Dr. Rusk, there was loud applause, mingled with murmurs from some who seemed to regard such a demonstration as foreign to a religious service. In the prayer that followed the musical exercises Dr. Rusk asked for a special blessing on their guest of the day, who was endeavoring to show the world how this life might be made one of usefulness and joy, and invoked a dispensation for his wife and children; while in his introductory remarks Dr. Rusk characterised Colonel Ingersoll as "the man who is endeavoring to do this world good, and to make it better."

The *Church Times-Herald* puts a big heading on its front page: "Ingersoll Speaks from a Text to Church Militant Members." We find in small type that the text, which Colonel Ingersoll ascribed to "the greatest of human beings," was, "There is no darkness but ignorance," which is to be found in the English gospel according to Shakespeare. The *C. T.-II.* expresses astonishment that "the man named Ingersoll" said nothing to wound or offend the congregation, whose pastor had invited him to speak. Many, however, must have felt that he was subtly undermining the old faith. The Christian dogmas, if true, are all-important. If they are considered not important, it is because they are felt to be not true. To leave them out, though common in sermons of to-day, is virtually to admit that they are no longer tenable. Ingersoll took for his subject the practical elevation of humanity, and had no need to refer to the specific dogmas which he virtually dismissed and superseded. He began, after asking the audience not to hold Dr. Rusk responsible for his heresies and his philosophy, by saying: "Every human being is a necessary product of conditions, and everyone is born with defects for which he cannot be held responsible. Nature seems to care nothing for the individual, nothing for the species. Life pursuing life, and in its turn pursued by death, presses to the snow line of the possible, and every form of life, of instinct, thought, and action, is fixed and determined by conditions, by countless antecedent and co-existing facts. The present is the child, and the necessary child, of all the past, and the mother of all the future."

Ignorance being darkness, what we need is intellectual light. The most important things to teach as the basis of progress are: that the universe is natural; that men must be the providence of man; that by the development of the brain we can take advantage of the forces of nature. Man should cease to expect any aid from any supernatural source. By this time he should be satisfied that worship has not

created wealth, and that prosperity is not the child of prayer. He should know that the supernatural has not succored the oppressed, clothed the naked, fed the hungry, shielded the innocent, stayed the pestilence, or freed the slave. Being satisfied that the supernatural does not exist, man should turn his entire attention to the affairs of this world, to the facts in nature.

First he should avoid waste, and the Colonel alluded especially to the waste of war:—

"For eighteen hundred years peace has been preached, and yet the civilised nations are the most warlike in the world. There are in Europe to-day between eleven and twelve millions of soldiers ready to take the field, and the frontiers of every civilised nation are protected by breastwork and fort. The sea is covered with steel-clad ships filled with missiles of death. The civilised world has impoverished itself, and the debt of Christendom, mostly for war, is now nearly \$30,000,000,000.

"If we wish to do away with war, we must provide for the settlement of national differences by an international court. This court should be in perpetual session, its members should be selected by the various governments to be affected by its decisions, and, at the command and disposal of this court, the rest of Christendom being disarmed, there should be a military force sufficient to carry its judgments into effect. There should be no other excuse, no other business for an army or a navy in the civilised world."

The Colonel did not forget the waste of thought, devotion, and actual money on the service of the supernatural. He said:—

"For many centuries the wealth of the world was used to propitiate the unseen powers. In our own country the property dedicated to this purpose is worth at least \$1,000,000,000. The interest on this sum is \$50,000,000 a year, and the cost of employing persons whose business it is to seek the aid of the supernatural and to maintain the property is certainly as much more. So that the cost in our country is about \$2,000,000 a week, and, counting ten hours as a working day, this amounts to about \$500 a minute.

"Now, it seems to me that it would be far better for the people of a town having a population of 4,000 or 5,000 to have one church, and the edifice should be of use not only on Sunday, but on every day of the week. In this building should be the library of the town. It should be the club-house of the people, where they could find the principal newspapers and periodicals of the world. Its auditorium should be like a theatre. Plays should be presented by home talent, an orchestra formed, music cultivated. The people should meet there at any time they desire. The women should carry their knitting and sewing, and connected with it should be rooms for the playing of games, billiards, cards, and chess. Everything should be made as agreeable as possible."

In concluding his discourse he said that every child should be taught that useful work is worship, and that intelligent labor is the highest form of prayer.

"Let each human being, within the limits of the possible, be self-supporting; let everyone take intelligent thought for the morrow, and, if a human being supports himself and acquires a surplus, let him use a part of that surplus for the unfortunate, and let each one to the extent of his ability help his fellow men.

"This, in my judgment, is real religion. The old creeds are too narrow; they are not for the world in which we live. The old dogmas lack breadth and tenderness; they are too cruel, too merciless, too savage. We are growing grander and nobler. The firmament inlaid with suns is the real cathedral. The interpreters of nature are the true and only priests. There is no darkness but ignorance. Let us flood the world with intellectual light."

I expect that this important lecture, in which the Colonel entered fully into his views upon marriage and the labor questions, will soon be accessible to our readers; so I will make no further extracts. Those given will suffice to show how baseless are the absurd reports that Ingersoll is modifying his views, because he has consented to preach before a congregation calling itself Christian.* Ingersoll in a pulpit has illustrated the new and only possible use of a ministry in these days—to enlighten minds and stir hearts to better service for the welfare of their fellows. He is a forerunner of the new teachers, not of old dogmas, but of new facts; not iterators of old precepts,

but developers of men's judgments and sentiments in relation to questions of conduct arising from the increasing complexity of social life.

Ingersoll in the pulpit has "set a pace" which the men of God will, *volens volens*, have to follow. Dr. H. W. Thomas, of the People's Church, Chicago, admitted as much in saying that the Churches would have to find room for such men as Ingersoll—a man, he said, who believes in reason, in truth, in justice, in respectability, in the love of man. He is the friend of liberty, of the rights of man, woman, and child; he loves his country, teaches a noble patriotism and a high morality. Quite a number of discourses on the occasion are reported in the *Chicago Times-Herald*. One Dr. Hills claimed the Bible as "the fountain of Christian Agnosticism." Another man of God, the Rev. J. Q. A. Henry, lectured on "Why I am not an Agnostic," and took for his texts "To the Unknown God" and "Having no hope, and without God in the world." The most notable reply, however, seems to have been that of Dr. John P. D. John, ex-President of De Pauw University, who took for his subject "Did Man Make God, or Did God Make Man?" This, at any rate, put the question in a square and straightforward fashion. Ingersoll's visit to Dr. Rusk's congregation promises to stir almost as much discussion, and will, perhaps, bear as much fruit, as the Parliament of Religions. J. M. WHEELER.

ORIGIN AND NATURE OF SECULARISM.

CHAPTER VI.

STATIONARINESS OF CRITICISM.

"Zeal without knowledge is like expedition to a man in the dark."—JOHN NEWTON.

CRITICISM in theology, as in literature, is with many an intoxication. Zest in showing what is wrong is apt to blunt the taste for what is right, which it is the true end of criticism to discover. Lord Byron said critics disliked Pope because he afforded them so few chances of objection. They found fault with him because he had no faults. The criticism of theology begets complacency in many. There is a natural satisfaction in being free from the superstition of the vulgar—in the Church as well as out of it. No wonder many find abiding pleasure in the intellectual refutation of the errors of supernaturalism, and in putting its priests to confusion. Absorbed in the antagonism of theology, many lose sight of ultimate utility, and regard error, not as a misfortune to be alleviated, so much as a fault to be exposed. Like the theologian whose color they take, they do not much consider whether their method causes men to dislike the truth, through its manner of being offered to them. Their ambition is to make those in error look foolish. Freethinkers of zeal are apt to become intense, and, like Jules Ferry, a late French premier, care less for power than for conflict; and the lover of conflict is not easily induced to regard the disproof of theology as a means to an end* higher than itself. It is difficult to impart to uncalculating zealots a sense of proportion. They dash along the war-path by their own momentum. Railway engineers find that it takes twice as much power to stop an express as it does to start it.

When I first knew Freethought societies they were engaged in Church-fighting, which is still popular among them. This has led the public to confuse anti-theology with Secularism, an entirely different thing. Insurgent thought exclusively directed breeds, as is said elsewhere, a distinct class of men—among scholars as well as among the uninformed—who have a passion for disputation, which, like other passions, "grows by what it feeds upon." Yet a limited number of such paladins of investigation are not without uses in the economy of civilisation. They resemble the mighty hunters of old—they extirpate beasts of prey which roam the theological forests, and thus they render life more safe to dwellers in cities open to the voracious incursions of supernaturalism.

Without the class of combatants described, in whom discussion is irrepressible, and whose courage neither odium

* It may be noted also that in the same evening the Colonel gave a lecture on his own account to an overflowing audience at McVicker's Theatre on "Why I am an Agnostic."

* Buckle truly says: "Liberty is not a means; it is an end in itself." But the uses of Liberty are means to ends—else why do we want liberty?

nor danger abates, many castles of superstition would never be stormed. But mere intellectualism generates a different and less useful species of thinkers, who neither hunt in the jungles of theology, nor storm strongholds. We all know hundreds in every great town who, having freed themselves, or been freed by others, from ecclesiastical error, yet remain supine, content with their own superiority (which they owe to pioneers who went before them, more generous than they); they speak no word and lend no aid towards conferring the same advantages upon such as are still enslaved. They affect to despise the ignorance they ought to be foremost to dissipate. They exclaim, in the words of Goethe's Coptic song:—

Fools from their folly 'tis hopeless to stay;
Mules will be mules by the law of their mulishness:
Then be advised, and leave fools to their foolishness;
What from an ass can be got but a bray?

These Coptic philosophers overlook that they would have been "asses" also, had those who vindicated freedom before their day, and raised it to a power, been as indifferent and as contemptuous as believers in the fool theory are. Coptic thinkers forget that every man is a fool in respect of any question on which he gives an opinion without having thought independently upon it. With patience you can make a thinker out of a fool, and the first step from the fool stage is accomplished by a little thinking. It is well to remember the exclamation of Thackeray: "If thou hadst never been a fool, be sure thou wilt never be a wise man."

It is, however, but justice to some who join the stationaries, to own that they have fared badly on the war-path against error, and are entitled to the sympathy we extend to the battered soldier who falls out of the ranks on the march. Grote indicates what the severity of the service is in the following passage from his *Analysis of Natural Religion*: "Of all human antipathies, that which the believer in a God bears to the unbeliever is the fullest, the most unqualified, and the most universal. The mere circumstance of dissent involves a tacit imputation of error and incapacity on the part of the priest, who discerns that his persuasive power is not rated so highly by others as it is by himself. This invariably begets dislike towards his antagonist."

Nevertheless, it is a reproach to those whom militant thought has made free, if they remain unmindful of the fate of their inferiors. Yet Christian Churches, with all the self-complacent superiority to which many of them are prone, are not free from the sins of indifference and superfineness. This was conspicuously shown by Southey, who, in a letter to Sir Henry Taylor, said:—

"Have you seen the strange book which Anastasius Hope left for publication, and which his representatives, in spite of all dissuasion, have published? His notion of immortality and heaven is, that at the consummation of all things he, and you and I, and John Murray, and Nebuchadnezzar, and Lambert the fat man, and the Living Skeleton and Queen Elizabeth, and the Hottentot Venus, and Thurtell, and Probert, and the Twelve Apostles, and the noble army of martyrs, and Ghenghis Khan and all his armies, and Noah with all his ancestors and all his posterity—yea, all men and all women and all children that have ever been or ever shall be, saints and sinners alike—are all to be put together, and made into one great celestial eternal human being.....I do not like the scheme. I don't like the notion of being mixed up with Hume, and Hunt, and Whittle Harvey, and Philpotts, and Lord Althorpe and the Huns, and the Hottentots, and the Jews, and the Philistines, and the Scotch and the Irish. God forbid! I hope to be I myself; in an English heaven, with you yourself—you and some others, without whom heaven would be no heaven to me."

Most of these persons would have the same dislike to be mixed up with Mr. Southey. Lord Byron would not have been enthusiastic for his company. The Comtists have done something to preach a doctrine of humanity, and to put an end to this pitiful contempt of a few men for their fellows—fellows who in many respects are often superior to those who despise them.

All superiority is apt to be contemptuous of inferiors, unless conscience and generosity take care of it and incite it to instruct inferior natures. The prayer of Browning is one of noble discernment:—

Make no more giants, God,
But elevate the race at once.

Even Freethought, so far as it confines itself to itself, becomes stationary, and, like the squirrel in its cage—

Whether it turns by wood or wire,
Never gets one hair-breadth higher.

If any doubt whether stationariness of thought is possible, let them think of Protestantism, which climbed on to the ledge of Private Judgment three centuries ago, and has remained there. Instead of mounting higher and over-running all the plateaus of error above them, it has done its best to prevent any who would do it from ascending. There is, however, a new order of insurgent thought, of the excelsior cast, which seeks to climb the heights. Distinguished writers against theology in the past have regarded destructive criticism as preparing the way to higher conceptions of life and duty. If so little has been done in this direction among working-class thinkers, it is because destructiveness is more easy. It needs only indignation to perfect it, and indignation requires no effort. The faculty of constructiveness is more arduous in exercise, and is later in germination. More men are able to take a state than to make a state. Hence Secularism, though inevitable as the next stage of militant progress, more slowly wins adherents and appreciation.

GEORGE JACOB HOLYOAKE.

(To be continued.)

THE DEATH OF CHRIST.

(Concluded from page 262.)

THE orthodox idea of the object of Christ's death involves the committal of a gross act of injustice upon the part of God in making the declared innocent suffer for the avowed guilty. Justice has been defined to "consist in rendering to everyone according to his moral deserts; good if he be good, and evil if evil—for the purpose of promoting goodness and discouraging guilt." If this be a recognised standard of right in human affairs, surely it should not be ignored in dealing with "divine" actions. Suppose, therefore, that Christ was "without sin," as stated in the New Testament (Hebrews iv. 15), was it not unjust to punish him for the wrong-doing of others? Let us take the case of an earthly father, who had, say, seven children, six of whom were thoroughly bad, and the seventh as good as human nature could possibly be. Now, would it be considered just upon the part of that father to punish the one good child for the misdeeds of the six bad ones? Such conduct would ensure for its perpetrator a general and an emphatic condemnation. If a judge were knowingly to sentence to death an innocent man as a substitute for a criminal, the act would provoke universal detestation, and the judge's judicial position would in all probability be forfeited. No Christian would think it just to imprison and torture priests to-day simply because their predecessors, under the influence of fanaticism, defiled portions of the earth with human slaughter. Is it consistent for Christians to ascribe an act to their God which good men would refuse to perform? We think not.

Besides, the alleged redeeming feature in the death of Christ manifests cruelty to the human race in asserting that, although its members had no control over the acts of Eve and Adam, still, in consequence of what they did, we are all "born in sin and shapened in iniquity." Upon what principle of justice can such merciless treatment be defended? According to this orthodox notion, the moment we enter life, in our infantile helplessness and childish innocence, we are thought to be deserving of the wrath of God. Even if it were true that sin was committed in the Garden of Eden, will that justify wrong being done to us? Are we on that account to be rendered liable to be doomed to eternal torment? If so, a God who could either arrange or permit such cruel injustice will never be recognised by Secularists as a kind and loving father. We know that the Bible, on more than one occasion, represents its God as punishing the innocent for the guilty. For instance, we read that he is "a jealous God, visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children" (Exodus xx. 5); that he cut off seventy thousand men in Israel by a pestilence, on account of the sin of David in numbering the people (2 Samuel xxiv. 15); and that he deprived an innocent child of life to show his displeasure of a crime committed by this "man

after God's own heart" (2 Samuel xii. 14). It is such actions as these, which, contrary to all true standards of right, are performed by the Christian Deity, that impel us to prefer Atheism to the belief in a being who could inflict such wrongs upon the human family.

Attempts have been made to palliate these "divine acts" by asserting that in the course of nature the innocent have to suffer for the guilty, as in the case of drunkards and debauchees, who transmit disease and debility to their offspring. But two wrongs cannot make one right; besides, if God was the author of Nature, could he not have so arranged her operations that this evil of transmission would have been avoided? The two cases, however, are not analogous, inasmuch as the children referred to do not suffer *for*, but *through*, the vices of their parents; and, moreover, in such suffering there is no punishment intended; it is a consequence, not a penalty. The children of criminal parents are not blamed, but are rather pitied, for being innocent victims of the guilt of others. This was not the case, according to orthodox teaching, with Christ, who was punished for the sins of others.

The theory that the death of Christ was an atonement to God for actual sins committed is so glaringly inconsistent that it is really marvellous how it can be regarded as true by sensible men and women. It is stated that the death of Christ was ordained before the foundation of the world, and, at the same time, we are informed that man was created perfect and immortal. If it were ordained that Christ should die for the redemption of the world, the transgressions of Eve and Adam were only a part of God's plan, and certainly did not deserve any curse, but rather merited a blessing. As we have already pointed out, there was no free-will in the case, for it was originally arranged that but one course had to be followed—namely, the one that led to the sacrifice of Christ. If Adam and Eve had adopted any other course, God's plans would have been thwarted, for we read in the fourth Gospel that Christ knew from the beginning that he would be betrayed; and this betrayal was the first act in the tragedy of the cross. Now, if the death of Christ were preordained, so also was the "Fall of Man," for the one depends upon the other, as the Bible says: "For as in Adam all died, so in Christ shall all be made alive." Assuming this to be true, man could not have been created perfect; the very fact of his "falling," or giving way to temptation, was a proof of his imperfection. The truth is, the Bible story of the fall of man is a phase of an ancient myth; and, as Dr. Kalisch observes, it is "no exclusive feature of the Hebrews." Professor Jowett considered the account, as given in the Bible, "a grand Hebrew poem." Similar stories were current among the Greeks, the Egyptians, and the Persians. The Hindoos had a "tree of life," which was said to be guarded by spirits, and contained a juice that was thought to impart to those who partook of it immortality. It is time that the belief in this fiction of the Fall as being a reality should cease. The lesson of history and experience is that the career of man has been one of ascent, not descent; of progression, not retrogression.

Further inconsistencies in this scheme of redemption through the death of Christ are the allegation that he came to save the whole world, and his reported conduct while on earth. If universal salvation were the object of his mission, it proved a decided failure. But Christ did not attempt to achieve such a result, for he stated himself that he came to the Jews, and to the Jews alone; and even among them his labors were not crowned with success. Following Christ to the close of his career, we behold the culmination of inconsistency in the manner in which he acted in the garden of Gethsemane. Here was a man who had preached upon the utility of a faith which, it was said, not only afforded consolation through life, but was capable of robbing death of its terrors; yet when the hour of death approached, when the period had arrived for him to prove to the world the efficacy of this faith, he was tortured with doubt and racked with fear. In that scene, which was not only to rivet the attention of an amazed multitude, but was also to consecrate a life of divinity—a scene which was not only to be the great climax to the scheme of redemption, but was to afford an example that should remain as a lasting monument of greatness to a wondering people; at this moment, when it was expected that the hopes of his followers were about to be sealed, when he should have maintained his position with unsurpassed bravery, he was weak and vacillating, and in bitter despair

he prayed that the cup might pass from him. Where can we recognise consistency and heroism in the death of Christ? Is it in the conduct of one who came to die for man, yet who, when about to fulfil his destiny, implored to be allowed to escape the death? Is it in teaching that Christ came as a voluntary sacrifice, yet had to be betrayed by man? Is it in a Father of reputed love and kindness inflicting unnecessary torture upon his sensitive son? Is it in the statement that Christ, by asking, could obtain an answer to any request made to his father; yet his fervent supplications were unheeded, and his dying prayers were unanswered? Finally, is it in the act of a God who, having allowed his son to be placed upon a felon's cross, permits him to yield up a sorrowful life, after uttering unavailing reproaches in those memorable words: "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?"

In conclusion, let us remember that from the Christian's standpoint the object of the death of Christ has not been attained. That object was to make a complete satisfaction for all sin, and to remove such sin from the world. But these objects have not been attained, for mankind has still to secure its own exemption from the supposed effects of sin; and, further, sin still surrounds us. If Christ, by his death, paid the debt that is said to have been incurred through sin entering into the world, why should man be required to make a second payment? As to the boasted victories of the cross, where are they? We have still misery, pain, folly, ignorance, crime, and injustice in the world. The erection of the cross has not frightened the miscreant nor appalled the tyrant. The voice from the height of Calvary has not destroyed error nor cemented truth; neither has the death of Christ produced that condition of society in which it is impossible for man to be depraved and poor. If, as we are told, the Saviour has come, it may be fairly asked, "Whence comes salvation?"

CHARLES WATTS.

SOCIALISM AND SECULARISM.

IN conformity with the rule followed by our editor not to raise political issues, as such, in these columns, save when they have a bearing on the fortunes of Freethought, I write in what follows, not as a politician, but as a Freethinker. It has always seemed to me that Secularism stands for political emancipation in the abstract, just as surely as it logically implies, not only the rejection of so-called Revelation, but also Atheism in principle. It ought not to be necessary to argue that this does not mean that Secularism is bound to identify itself with any particular body of social reformers, or any specific form of Atheism. Secularism is more than a makeshift for the times; it is really the spirit of reason and of humanity; not merely the after-birth of civilisation, but its vital source and principle. Historically, we find that the master-spirits of Freethought have invariably proved themselves to be the best friends of liberty, and this holds good of the greatest contemporary Rationalists, as it does of Freethinkers in general; but so long as the idea of the real nature of progress continues to be so obscure, and so much uncertainty prevails as to the most eligible means of promoting it, we shall see staunch Freethinkers apparently paltering with their principles, and playing into the hands of the party of political reaction, and sincerely believing all the while that they are serving Freethought and forwarding social development. And really there are some very hard cases of conscience for the Secularist, in whose mind the new-born grace of magnanimity is sorely beset by a robust remnant of the old, ingrained Christian vindictiveness. The French Freethinker, while affirming equal liberty for all, often draws the line at the Jesuits, on the ground that, as they deny, in theory, the common rights of citizenship, and, *à fortiori*, the claim of heresy even to sufferance, it is quite just to hoist the disciple of Loyola with his own petard. Similarly, the north-country Irish Freethinker is usually a Unionist, not because he objects to Home Rule in the abstract, but out of a not entirely unreasonable fear that the first effect of giving Ireland a measure of autonomy would be a temporary accession of Rome Rule. We have also heard Secularists urge that, as an extension of the franchise to women would inevitably aggrandise clericalism, it should be postponed until women are more independent

of ecclesiastical influence. I need not stop to expose the fallacy that vitiates all reasoning of this kind, which, in the hands of Catholics, has been made an excuse for outlawing Protestants, and *vice versa*. The question for the consistent Freethinker must always be, "Is this just, or is it not?" And, having answered the question, he will know exactly what to do.

It has been a favorite maxim with us that not to have the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, and that wits sharpened by the dissection of the body of Christian dogma are the strongest and keenest instruments for laying bare the bases and ramifications of political and social tumors. History abounds in illustrations of the truth of this maxim. The Renaissance, that many-sided movement which suffered arrest of development at the very points where its expansion would have most helped civilisation, only retained the measure of Freethought that produced the side issue of the Reformation. Nevertheless, maimed as it was by Protestant limitations, the seminal principle of the right of private judgment did its work, and prepared the way for the slow but inevitable disintegration, not only of Christian dogma, but also of the political despotisms that superseded the feudal system. In France last century the scepticism diffused by the writings of Rabelais and Montaigne was vivified and organised by the glowing humanity and the lambent wit of Voltaire, and the perfervid sentiment of Rousseau; and, having discredited "the Infamous," it boldly assailed the authority of an effete and corrupt Government. Thus we may fairly claim that the man who has acquired the habit of close and fearless thinking touching things "spiritual," and who has detached himself from the racial and sectarian antipathies which religious belief either begets or embitters, is more likely to reason justly on political questions than the average pietist. One would naturally expect that, of all men in the world, Socialists would most readily concur in this view, since most of them profess to be Freethinkers, and many of them have actually been Secularists; but, oddly enough, if we may judge by the deliverances of some leading Socialists, who are aped in this respect by the rank and file, Secularism is little better than an anachronism. Theology is dead, and the Secularist does but waste his energy in watching and doing battle with an imaginary foe. Indeed, Freethought was always wide of the mark in attributing such paramount importance to the anti-social influence of religion. The real hindrance to the attainment of the democratic ideal of human freedom and happiness is, and always has been, the unscientific and immoral economic condition of society. Religious beliefs and customs count for very little compared with the imperious, physical needs of man; and, as the satisfaction of these is necessarily his first concern, all his thought and action as an individual in society must turn upon the issue of the struggle for bare animal existence. If man is born into a community where access to the means of livelihood is made conditional upon the acceptance of a given creed or convention, he must needs conform or perish; and, in such a case, it is a mockery to say he is free. And yet this is the fate of every human being ushered into the world. And if we do enjoy any degree of freedom whatever, it is the direct result of the acquirement of some measure of economic independence. If Secularism tends to ensure economic liberty, it has some humanitarian value; but if it is mainly an attack upon religion, and its history goes to prove the alternative inference, then it is practically worthless from a Meliorist point of view.

I do not dispute the dominating influence of the so-called economic factor, but I submit that it is not a simple but a compound cause, and that the belief in the supernatural has always formed a decisive part of it. In the rudimentary stages of human society, as these are still represented among the aborigines of the present day, nearly all the energies of man are absorbed in the quest for food. But even the miserable Digger Indian or Fuegian has some thoughts above his stomach and the reproductive function. In his dream life, the concomitant of his enforced fastings or occasional surfeits, we can trace the rude beginnings of the hallucination as to the supernatural, and already in fetishism and the taboo we see how religious belief can modify social life and deflect it from the path of progress. In the great primary civilisations, with their cheap and abundant food-supply and consequent populousness, we find, as a result of the necessary organisation of the overgrown tribe, or group of tribes, the groundwork of a leisured and ruling class who begin to exploit the proletariat. From

this point onwards we are no longer contemplating a society in which simple economic causes determine all its other movements. What we have to reckon with is a complex of forces, partly the resultant of the controlling need for sustenance, and partly of the play of human passion inflamed by the lust of power, or the frenzy of religious fanaticism. Take some concrete examples. The rise and diffusion of the civilisation of the Arabs was one of the most remarkable phenomena in human history. According to the Marxist theory of Economic Determinism, we ought to be able to explain it as a case of scarcity of food-supply among the Arab tribes, which formed Mohammed's first converts. But, as a matter of fact, such a failure was only too familiar an experience to the nomadic Bedouin, and he knew how to meet it by migrating swiftly to fresh pastures. It is quite probable that Mohammed, in order to win them to his purpose, may have spurred his followers on to their holy wars of conquest and proselytisation by the promise of booty from treasure cities, and of settlement in fair and fertile lands; but these motives were all subordinated to the appeal to the religious instincts of savage and barbarous races, and, if there were any economic consideration in the matter, it lay in the bribe that those who died fighting for Allah and his Prophet should enjoy immortality in a paradise of guzzling, swilling, and unbounded sensuality. As for the magnificent civilisations of Bagdad and of Spain under the Saracens, it is clear that they prospered precisely to the extent to which they left behind the crudities and asperities of the primitive Islamic tradition. Where they allowed themselves to be trammelled by it, as in their art, it entailed arrest of development, just in the same way as Christianity conventionalised mediæval painting, sculpture, and music. The overthrow of the Moorish civilisation and the expulsion of the Moors from Spain by Ferdinand and Isabella, with all its disastrous consequences to the industry and capital of that good Catholic country, is a typical example, not of the pressure of adverse economic conditions, but rather of the wantonly disruptive action of an insensate bigotry.

J. P. GILMOUR.

(To be concluded.)

ACID DROPS.

GLASGOW bodies don't go to kirk with the old-fashioned regularity. Out of 835,000 inhabitants, 500,000 have no church connection. This awful fact was admitted and deplored at the recent annual meeting of the Glasgow Home Mission Union. An effort is to be made to recapture these "lapsed masses," who are all going to hell without knowing it. Perhaps a big expenditure of cash will convert one per cent. of the 500,000 in half a century, by which time there will be ever so many more departed from the sheep to the goats. You can't catch up with them when they once begin to emigrate.

Mr. George Riddock, formerly clerk to the Deacons' Court of Ellon Free Church, having accused the Rev. A. Reid of falsifying a minute of the meeting, was three times summoned to attend the Presbytery, but he never made an appearance, and is now excommunicated. Mr. Riddock is solemnly banished from Ellon Free Church, but as all the rest of the world is open to him, he has still plenty of room to imitate Satan in the book of Job.

The Rev. A. Robinson, the Kilmun heretic, has appealed in vain to the Dunoon Presbytery. In the ordinary course of things he should be immediately suspended, but he has given notice of appeal to the General Assembly. It is reported that he has withdrawn the book which occasioned all this rumpus. We hope it is not true, however; for it is always unpleasant to witness cowardice, even in Churches.

Mr. Isaac Foot, a Plymouth undertaker, connected with the Nettle-street Mission Hall, received an invitation (which was issued wholesale to clergymen and ministers) to attend the performance of *The Sign of the Cross* at the Theatre Royal. He replied to Miss Greet's invitation: "I am not a reverend, but I am a Christian, and for that reason I cannot accept your invitation. I am sorry I cannot thank you for the invitation, because, had I been weak enough, I may have been caught. Having really been to the Cross, I can, like Paul, 'glory in it,' and therefore do not need the sign, as I have the substance." Mr. Barrett's play has been hailed as a great religious agency, but the fact that it is a play is quite sufficient for this self-satisfied Christian.

Anent *The Sign of the Cross*, "Dagonet" says, in the *Referee*: "Clergymen are at present as common in the stalls of the Lyric as the dudes in the stalls of the Gaiety, and the Rev. William Greet gazes with rapture nightly on a vast white-chokered audience. The free list is entirely suspended. Holy orders are the only ones admitted."

In Jammu the blue bull, or nilgai, is *taboo*, doubtless representing a totem ancestor. To kill a nilgai in Jammu is a serious crime, visited with severe punishment. As a consequence, the animals have increased to such an extent as to jostle their human neighbors out of the country. But the matter is religious, and the people of Jammu will suffer from their sacred god until some Freethinker arises to take the blue bull by the horns and let him know he must go elsewhere.

That dear old Victoria Institute is the Mrs. Partington among the learned societies. It is always furbishing up some antediluvian relics to confirm the truth of the Bible. Its latest feat was to bring Dr. Cleland from Glasgow to disprove the theory of natural selection by the comparison of the human backbone with that of the gorilla. Dr. Cleland pointed triumphantly to the greater prolongation of the *os coccygis* in chimpanzees, to the immense delight of the few old women of both sexes, as well as the clerical members of the Victoria Institute. Dr. Cleland teaches anatomy to the Scotch students, and, we suppose, tells them that Adam had an extra rib before the creation of Eve. He will stand a chance of being remembered when Darwin is forgotten.

Trilbymania has been used at Suffern, New York, for the purpose of raising the Methodist pastor's salary. It was arranged that the young women in the connection were to be placed behind a curtain, and were to thrust their shapely right feet out from under the curtain, which would be raised just a trifle, and the young men were to bid for them. The ones who made the highest offer were to have the honor of escorting the fair possessor of the feet to supper. It was not quite *a la* Mary Magdalene, but it rejoiced the hearts of the young men and the old minister.

Claude Falls Wright, an American Theosophist, who is expected to step into the sandals of the late W. Q. Judge, declares that the Mahatmas or Christs are forty-eight in number. He believes that Madame Blavatsky and the late William Q. were of that number. But Mrs. Annie Besant has lost her chance of joining the spiritual messengers by her practice of black magic.

The *Vaccination Inquirer*, a journal opposed to compulsory vaccination, sees, "with the utmost disgust," that the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge has published a pamphlet on Vaccination. It says: "We are lost in wonder as to where the propagation of reckless inaccuracy comes into the program of Christian propaganda." Surely the *V. I.* cannot have had much experience of that propaganda. But it is learning; it points out that the pamphlet in question cites "the published opinion of Mr. Peter Taylor, the great anti-vaccinator," that the danger of vaccino-syphilis was "infinitesimal." This is founded on the fact that Mr. Taylor signed the report of the 1871 Committee, in which this statement appeared. But it was after this he became an anti-vaccinator, and declared: "I am performing an almost sacred duty in doing all that in me lies to atone for the mistake I made in signing the Report of the Select Committee in 1871." So, as the *V. I.* says, the citation of Mr. Taylor in the Christian Knowledge pamphlet is like an appeal to the opinion of Paul that Christ was an impostor.

The Rev. Charles Paterson, curate of Harpenden, has been ordered to pay 5s. per week towards the support of a child of Lizzie Reeves, a servant in his employ. He has a wife and seven grown-up daughters.

The Rev. Donald Mackay, an ex-Roman Catholic priest, has been sentenced to three months' imprisonment with hard labor for obtaining charitable contributions under false pretences. Like some other reverends, Mr. Mackay ran a society of his own. It was called the Fraternal Society of Converts. During the next three months this society will present the unusual spectacle of a teetotal body.

Mdlle. Couedon, the Paris prophetess who claims to be inspired by the angel Gabriel, has prognosticated that England will be dismembered because of her universal usurpations, while a savior-king is to be raised up for France. First, however, Paris will be devastated, the *Hôtel de Ville* burnt to the ground, the Bourse closed, whole quarters reduced to cinders, and a fearful plague will rage among its inhabitants. The calamity howlers, from Jeremiah downwards, always seem to run on well-worn lines.

Marie Corelli, the lady novelist, having made a successful book out of the adventures of Jesus Christ, and another out of the adventures of the Devil, has now burst upon the world

with another piece of sensation called *The Mighty Atom*. The dedication of this new work is—"To those self-styled Progressists who, by Precept and Example, assist the Infamous Cause of Education without Religion." The piety of some of these lady novelists is astonishing—only a little less so than their ignorance.

President H. A. Buttz, D.D., LL.D., of Drew Theological Seminary, says in the *Methodist Review*: "The divinity of our Savior and his absolute knowledge of all questions of fact is an axiom as fundamental to Christian truth as the axioms of mathematics are to mathematical science. There is no point on which negative criticism, in the view of Christians, has found more embarrassment than in its effect on our faith in the infallibility of Jesus Christ as a teacher. Thus far no satisfactory harmony has been established between the results of radical advanced criticism and Christ's endorsement of the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch."

Dr. Buttz may be reminded that this is not the solitary error of Jesus. He endorsed the prophecies of Daniel, the story of Jonah being three days in a whale's belly, the tale of Lot's wife, and ascribed the 110th Psalm wrongly to David. Worse than this, he inculcated belief in demoniacal possession, and taught that the end of the world would come in the lifetime of the fanatics around him—errors which have led to an incalculable amount of human misery.

The National Reform Association of America is employing the same tactics to get God into the Constitution that the bigots here tried to keep Charles Bradlaugh out of Parliament. They have been sending in petitions largely signed by Sunday-school children. By such means they seek to alter the very basis of the Republic as laid by men like Franklin, Paine, Washington, and Jefferson, who held none of the distinctive tenets of the Christian creed. This attempt to alter the Constitution of the Republic 120 years after its formation is of sinister import. Even the Unitarians, as represented by the Rev. Jenkin Lloyd Jones, see this, and are with Mr. Putnam opposing the amendment.

This God-in-the-Constitution amendment, if carried, would practically make a religious test for members of Congress, and for all civil or military officers who are required to take an oath to support the Constitution. The test would bar not only Atheists and Agnostics, but Jews and Unitarians, all who do not subscribe to the divine authority of both the Old and the New Testament, and all who do not recognise the divinity of Christ—that is, unless they should take the oath to support the Constitution, as the abolitionists used to do, "with a mental reservation."

The American Freethinkers know full well that eternal vigilance is the price of liberty, and Mr. Putnam has been active at Washington in marshalling the opposition to the innovation. The New York Sunday law, and this recent attempt to Christianise the legislature, are warnings that religion may convert even the boasted land of freedom into a stronghold of bigotry.

The Rev. E. Mansel Townsend, curate of St. Mary's, Reading, writes to the *Reading Observer*: "I feel sure there must be very many in this town, besides the writer of this letter, who have felt pained almost beyond expression on seeing with their own eyes the grievous and inexpressibly disloyal attack upon the supreme authority and incomparable preciousness of God's sacred word, which has been allowed to appear under the auspices of certain clergy of the Church of England in the pages of a localised parochial magazine." The curate is superlatively pained to find the clergy assisting "the infidel," but he takes comfort that his dean gave "such a magnificent testimony to the unanimously accepted authority of all the books of the Bible by the Christian Church at large, on the authority of no mere man, but of Christ himself, who repeatedly endorsed the Old Testament before and after his death and resurrection." The dean, in turn, may take comfort from the eulogy of the curate.

The *Independent*, the leading non-sectarian Christian weekly of New York, says: "Not only in this country, but in Canada, the various missionary funds show a falling off." This applies both to the home and to the foreign missions.

The Salvation Army in America now has another rival besides Ballington Booth's "God's American Volunteers." The new organisation is said to be "semi-military," and is called "The American League of the Grand Army of the Cross." The members will not be required to subscribe to any creed, but must believe the Bible, from the creation in six days to the lake of fire and brimstone in the Apocalypse.

Billy Booth offers Bally Booth that he will kill a fatted calf for him (there are a large stock of fat calves at headquarters) if only he will return to his beloved parent.

Billy seems to be a little previous. The time to offer the veal is not when the prodigal son is wallowing in riotous living among American millionaires. Wait until he feeds on the husks, then he may be in a repentant frame of mind, and inclined to return home to the fatted calf.

Bally is mad with Commander Glen, who has returned to the Army. Just before he resigned from the Army he went to a friend of Mrs. Bally Booth and cried, and told how badly the Salvationists had treated the commanders, and how he never could forgive it; but, as he had a little family to support, he couldn't help himself. Then that lady said, Of course, if he felt that way he couldn't stay in the Army, and she gave him her cheque for \$400, saying it would keep him for four months. Glen was getting a salary of \$25 a week from the Salvation Army. He was in their pay while he was abusing them, and now he is the first to go back and kiss their toes.

It appears that Father Billy said to son Bally, when in the States: "I'm not going to let you suck all the juice out of this plum." "This," says the *Daily News* New York correspondent, "confirms the very general view that the trouble has really grown out of the large sums of money raised by the Army in America, and is far more mercenary than spiritual. Indeed, the Americans view the quarrel with weariness, strongly tintured with the suspicion that there is a good deal of humbug on both sides. There is little doubt that the ultimate result will be the gradual disappearance of the Salvation Army in this country, both in the original and Mr. Ballington Booth's Volunteer form. The whole movement has become an object of ridicule, and nothing which excites the American sense of the ridiculous can survive long."

The May edition of *Boot's Review of Charities and Missions* (published at 24 Old Bailey) says of the Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews: "The abstracts of accounts show that, of the £35,648 expended for general purposes, £17,294 was in respect of foreign missions, of which Jerusalem absorbs some £6,500. The remainder went in miscellaneous home expenditure. We look in vain, however, for any statistics showing the number of converted Jews at home or abroad—Spitalfields, Palestine-place, Jerusalem, or anywhere else. We think, considering the eighty-seven years of the society's activity, and the huge sum spent on the work, the time has now arrived when the society should call a mass meeting of the converts (not inquirers), say in the Great Assembly Hall, Mile-end, and that the subscribers may see what they are getting for their money." This last suggestion is a very cruel one, as everyone knows that a converted Jew usually travels from place to place and gets re-converted wherever he goes. It may be doubted if all the converts in England would make up a mass meeting.

Dr. Lyman Abbott, the well-known successor to Henry Ward Beecher at Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, has been repudiating the Old Testament miracles. He is reported in the *New York Herald* (April 13) as saying: "The stars in their courses did not fight for or against Sisera; Jonah was not swallowed by a whale, or any other big fish; there was no interference with the orderly processes of planets or satellites when Joshua was helped in Ajalon; and the division of the Red Sea, which allowed the Israelites to cross in safety and overwhelmed the host of Pharaoh, was as much a miracle as the fog that gave Washington an opportunity to rescue the American forces after the disastrous battle of Long Island."

Dr. Abbott can be critical in regard to the Old Testament stories, for they belong to the old dispensation; but he is silent as to the quite as stupid stories of the New, barring his finding a parallel to the story of the Resurrection in a recent case of suspended animation in New Jersey. Dr. Abbott is like a number of other sky-pilots. He does not want to be encumbered with any more of the old rubbish than carries his stipend with it.

High Churchism reigns in Matlock. Frederick Downs, the manager of the Pavilion Gardens, has been fined £3 and costs for permitting a pantomime to be performed there during Lent. The licence was also forfeited. It is to be hoped that Mr. Downs will appeal, for it is monstrous that such performances should be lawful in one part of the country, and not in another.

Auent the rows in Hyde Park the *Joker* perpetrates the following:—

Onward, Christian soldiers; hit him in the eye:
He's a disbeliever, so we'll make him fly.
Smash him all to atoms, jump upon his chest;
'Tis the holy Sabbath—day of peace and rest.

A question of religion *versus* fishing ended somewhat disastrously for the principals in the affair. At Noree a small boy preferred going fishing on Sunday morning instead

of to mass, and Father McGuinness took upon himself, on the following Sunday, when the delinquent *did* come to mass, to thrash him severely with a stirrup leather. At the police-court the cleric was mulcted in a fine and costs totalling six pounds, the magistrate declining to allow him to arrogate the power of punishing people for not going to church.

According to the *Jewish Messenger*, King Menelek, of Abyssinia, does not want any missionaries in his country. He contrasts the condition of the two hundred thousand Jews in his own realm with their treatment in other Christian states. Abyssinia claims to have been Christian since the days of Constantine.

A portable crematory for military purposes has been invented by a Polish engineer. It has the appearance of the army baking oven, but is much higher and heavier, and is drawn by eight horses. It is intended for the disposal of the bodies of soldiers killed in battle, so as to avoid the danger of epidemics from the burial of great numbers of men. Each German army corps, it is said, will be equipped with one.

According to a writer in *Pearson's Weekly*, the prejudice against horseflesh is "solely due to the influence of the Church. The clergy did everything possible to prevent the newly-converted Saxons from returning to their heathenish practices, and prohibited the use of horseflesh to stop the sacrifices to Odin and Thor."

According to the *Yachting World*, yacht racing on Sunday may soon be tried. It says: "If the owners of British boats now in the Mediterranean consent to race their craft on the day of the week when the most enjoyment can be given to the most people, why should they not also give the British working classes an opportunity of seeing the cracks race in home waters on the same day of the week? Just imagine the opening of the Thames season taking place on a Sunday! What a brilliant scene it would be, and what enjoyment it would give to thousands who have never seen, and probably under present conditions will never have an opportunity of witnessing, a first-class yacht race?"

A man named Perkins was baptised in the county gaol bath-tub in Atlanta, Ga., the other day. He had committed a murderous assault, and his victim came near dying unprepared. Baptism is supposed to wash out the iniquity of the sinner, while the conversion by which it is preceded secures the forgiveness of God. But the question is whether God, in so pardoning a man accused of crime, is not guilty of contempt of court.

The Rev. Rufus S. Green, editor of the *Assembly Herald*, of New York City, the organ of the general assembly of the Presbyterian church of the United States, has startled the Presbyterian world by going into the stock business, and by inviting and urging his pious brethren and sisters to join him by taking stock in the Investment Association of New York, of which he has just become the president, promising them large profits on their investments. This may not exactly square with the injunction of Jesus Christ to "Lay not up treasures on earth"; but the Rev. Rufus S. Green doubtless holds with John P. Robinson that "they didn't know everything down in Judee."

Religion is a lovely thing, but it does not do to take too much of it. At East Waterford, Pa., on a recent Sunday evening, Charles B. Ramsey, "while he was in a frenzy induced by religious fervor," and believing that as "one of the chosen of God" he was called upon to make a "human sacrifice," killed his wife, Effie, aged thirty-five years, by beating her, and then shooting her, and then pouring boiling water on her, and dragging her around by the hair; after which he drank her blood.

The *New York Tribune*, noticing Ingersoll's lectures at Washington, recalls his criticism on a musical composition during a recent visit to Washington. The music was by a Washington author—a woman, who wrote a song of the pathetic order, which she dedicated to the lately deceased wife of a prominent official, and then submitted it to Colonel Ingersoll, asking him whether he thought it would prove a success. "Success," replied the Agnostic, "why not? Songs with coffin attachments always find a ready market."

Heredity is the scientific doctrine that "like begets like"—in other words, that what we are, that in a measure will our children be.

So many gods, so many creeds,
So many paths that wind and wind,
While just the art of being kind
Is all the sad world needs.—*Ella Wheeler Wilcock.*

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

May 3, Northampton; 10, Manchester; 17, Liverpool.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—May 3, 4, and 5, Birmingham; 10, Plymouth; 11, Devonport; 12, Liskeard; 13, Tavistock; 15, Plymton; 17, Plymouth; 24, Glasgow—the Annual Conference of the N.S.S. June 7, Manchester.—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.

JOHN TANNER.—Pleased to receive your card and verses. Hope to see you at Liverpool shortly.

A LIVERPOOL FRIEND congratulates us on the artistic get-up of Mr. Foote's *Sign of the Cross*. Extra money has been spent upon it in order to make its way easier in outside directions.

W. DYSON.—We believe Mrs. Besant is in London at present. Theology is excluded from the public schools in the colony of Victoria. Keep pegging away.

F. J. BOORMAN.—Sorry to hear the Chatham Branch has decided not to send a delegate to Glasgow "on account of the distance." We have hoped that the English Branches would make a special effort out of regard to their Scottish brethren.

A PAISLEY correspondent sends us a long letter about the old Branch and the new one, but omits to give his name and precise address—quite inadvertently, we imagine. We beg to assure him that the formation of the new Branch is not a measure of disrespect to the old one, which had merely a nominal existence for a long time. The great thing is to carry on the movement.

ANGUS.—*The Bible of Reason* is not now in print, and would be very difficult to obtain second-hand.

G. WELLER.—Mr. Foote is anxious to get Freethought propaganda resumed at Portsmouth, where it never ought to have been dropped. Cannot a few of the old members combine for this object, and arrange for some public meetings under the Lecture Scheme?

CORRESPONDENTS who think of sending us that artist's bill for repairing the properties of an old church are informed that we printed it many years ago in the *Freethinker*, and that we have received copies nearly every month ever since. We don't want any more.

N.S.S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss Vance acknowledges:—Nottingham (per Charles Watts), £1 4s.

W. CALDER.—Much pleased to hear from the Aberdeen friends again, and wish we could see them oftener. Mr. Foote is in good health at present, and deep in work.

PYBITES.—Shall appear.

P. DICKINSON.—White's *Warfare of Science* is published by Appleton & Co. We have not the price at hand.

J. DUNSMURE.—A good idea, but not so well worked out.

A. B. MOSS.—Pleased to hear you had two such fine out-door audiences last Sunday.

E. SMEDLEY.—Persecution is not unscriptural. It has always been justified from Scripture. Salvation by faith is essential to Christianity as a distinct system, and if it be abandoned Christianity will perish. We have before asked: If an Atheist can go to heaven, why should anyone take the trouble to be a Christian?

THE PRESIDENT'S LECTURE SCHEME.—T. E. M., 1s.; G. Weller, 5s. Aberdeen: J. M. McFarlane, 3d.; A. Martin, 3d.; F. M. Grijer, 1s.; F. G. Grijer, 1s.; D. K., 6d.; C. W. Daniel, 1s.; W. Howie, 6d.; W. Thompson, 2s.; A. M., 6d.; Mr. Taylor, 1s.; Mrs. H., 6d.; Mr. Ross, 1s.; S. Cruickshank, 6d.; E. Calder, 1s.; W. Calder, 2s. Per R. Forder: Peter Weston, 5s.; J. C. M., 10s. Per Miss Vance: C. Smith, 1s.; Mrs. McMillian, 2s. 6d.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Consett News—Isle of Man Times—Echo—Aberdeen Journal—Reading Observer—Western Independent—Torquay Times—Glasgow Herald—Echo—Liberator—Secular Thought—Progressive Thinker—Truthseeker—Liberty—Boston Investigator—Freidenker—Der Arme Teufel—Hucknall Morning Star—Academy—Blue Grass Blade—Freethought Ideal—Nya Sanningar—Referee.

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

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.

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

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.

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.

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

SUGAR PLUMS.

THERE was an improved audience at St. James's Hall on Sunday evening, and Mr. Foote's lecture on "The Irreligion of Shakespeare" was listened to for an hour and a half with the profoundest attention, and at the close most enthusiastically applauded. Mr. Charles Watts made (of course) an admirable chairman, and his announcement of the lecturer's *Sign of the Cross* sent off every copy on the bookstall.

Mr. Foote has taken the Athenæum, in Tottenham Court-road, for Sunday evening lectures for six months. This is the largest hall available regularly in the West-end on anything like reasonable terms. Mr. Foote has given the proprietor a guarantee against any prosecution on account of a charge for admission, and money will be taken at the doors. The occupancy will begin on May 31, the Sunday after the Glasgow Conference. Mr. Foote and Mr. Watts will both be present on that evening.

On Thursday, May 21, a Dramatic Performance will take place at this same Athenæum, in aid of the Lecture Fund, in which Mr. Charles Watts will take part, as well as Miss Vance, Miss Brown, and other ladies. Mr. Foote will give a dramatic reading. The tickets are sixpence and one shilling, and can be obtained at 28 Stonecutter-street, E.C.

Freethinkers all over the country are once more reminded that the National Secular Society's Conference will be held at Glasgow on Whit-Sunday. Lancashire, Yorkshire, and the Tyneside ought to send a large number of delegates, and the South of England and the Midlands ought to be fairly represented. Of course, the Scottish Branches, especially the new ones formed through Mr. Foote's Lecture Scheme, will send many of their members to Glasgow on this occasion. The Conference *Agenda* will be printed in the *Freethinker* for May 12.

Mr. Charles Watts lectures to-day, Sunday, May 3, morning and evening, in the Alexandra Hall, Hope-street, Birmingham. He also lectures in the same town on Monday evening in the Bristol-street Board school, and on Tuesday evening in the Albert-road, Aston, Board school, under Mr. Foote's Lecture Scheme.

Mr. A. B. Moss, at a recent meeting of the Camberwell Vestry, speaking on the application by Canon McGrath for a new cassock and surplice for the Catholic clergy performing the burial service at the cemetery, urged that better provision should be made for Secular funerals, and said there ought to be a special house in the cemetery for funeral parties that had nothing to do with any religious denomination. The National Secular Society, the Ethical Societies and other such bodies, should be considered as well as Protestants and Catholics. Men of all beliefs had to die, and at the graveside all were equal. Mr. Moss's speech was well applauded, but Mr. Legg could not help being facetious, and remarked that he thought "the members of those societies preferred to be cremated." Mr. Towler wished to know if they "would not be better cremated before they died." This provoked laughter, which does not cut deeply. Not so long ago the Christians used to cremate Freethinkers in the way suggested by Mr. Towler.

Mr. C. Cohen will devote the principal part of his time during the summer to open-air work in London. By arrangement with Mr. Foote, under the Lecture Scheme, Mr. Cohen will receive a living wage for his work, and the collections taken at his lectures must be forwarded to Mr. Foote (per Miss Vance). As the Branches are charged nothing for Mr. Cohen's services, it can hardly be said that the conditions are very onerous.

Mr. Cohen inaugurates the summer work of the Finsbury Branch on Clerkenwell Green. He lectures there this morning (May 3rd) on "Is the Belief in God Reasonable?" We hope the local Freethinkers will rally round the platform and do their best to bring a large number of Christians.

Mr. Cohen's lecture at Blackburn on "Christianity and Medical Science" is admirably reported in a local paper. We cannot give the name of it, as it is not written on the cutting. The Blackburn Branch is making good progress. Its social gathering on April 18 in the Spinners' Institute was largely attended. The secretary of this Branch is a lady—Mrs. Knowles.

Last Sunday, April 24, Mr. Touzeau Parris lectured three times in Glasgow, after an absence of nearly three years. All the meetings, especially the evening one, were well attended, and Mr. Parris received a cordial welcome from many old friends and new acquaintances, who were alike charmed and instructed by his fresh and scholarly treatment of the subjects of his addresses. An announcement from

the chair that in future Mr. Parris would endeavor to return more frequently was greeted with great enthusiasm.

Mr. Parris lectures to-day at the Failsworth Secular Schools, both in the afternoon and evening. Hymns and choruses will be sung by the choir, assisted by the Failsworth String Band. There will be a collection in aid of the School Funds. Tea will be provided for friends from a distance, who, it is hoped, will attend in large numbers.

The Finsbury Park Branch commences its sixth season of open-air lectures in Finsbury Park this Sunday, when there will be lectures at 11.15 and 3.15 by Mr. Calvert and Mr. Rowney respectively. The monthly general meeting takes place the same evening at the Bradlaugh Club and Institute, at nine o'clock.

Mr. Symes has been twelve years in Australia. They have been years of incessant work and many worries. He says, in his *Liberator*: "What then? His work has told; the Bible is discredited, God dethroned and rendered ridiculous, priests and parsons turned inside out, public officials gone down 90 per cent. in value, the tribe of journalists rendered objects of distrust, and popular demagogues things to suspect rather than follow. You cannot restore those idols; people see through them, walk round them, and sneer or laugh, as their mood may dictate."

We have just heard from our far-off colleague, Mr. W. W. Collins, who is at Christchurch, New Zealand, where he serves the public in general as a member of parliament, and Freethought in particular by regular Sunday lectures. "You will be glad to know," Mr. Collins writes, "that we are still pegging away in this part of the world. Although my parliamentary duties have added considerably to an anything but idle life, I still lecture every Sunday; indeed, I have done this without a single break ever since I left you nearly eleven years ago. The clerics here are trying to break into our Education System by introducing a Scripture Text Book into the State schools. Last season I had the pleasure of moving the rejection of the Bill, and I am ready whenever it is again introduced."

"I often wish I could be with you," Mr. Collins says, "if only for a week or two." We assure him that we share the wish. It would be a very great pleasure to shake hands once more with our old friend, and to congratulate him in person on the brave fight he has made for the good old cause.

The *Crescent* (April 22) reports a lecture on Thomas Paine, the Thinker, by Sheikh Abdullah Quilliam, who gives a fair account of Paine's career, and says of his Deistic position, as expressed in his *Age of Reason*: "Had Paine made such a declaration in any country where the banner of Islam floated, there is not a Muslim who would not have clasped him by the hand and wished him a fraternal *Salaam alaikoum*."

The *Echo* says, with much truth: "As a moral teacher and preacher, the journalist has supplanted the parson—or, more correctly speaking, he performs a duty which the parson, confining himself to what he has been pleased to call religion, has scarcely thought of attempting. Loud in religious formularies, he has been a dumb dog as regards public morals. He behaves rather differently now, but that is because the progressive world sweeps him along."

The *Free Review* for May opens with a paper on Friedrich Nietzsche, by Ernest Newman. "Chilperic" follows, dealing with Archdeacon Farrar's admissions with regard to the book ascribed to Daniel, under the title of "An Orthodox Surrender." He says: "After centuries of reckless special pleading, and vehement denunciations of all criticism, orthodoxy has been compelled to surrender its position; and the book of Daniel, instead of being held the palladium of the Church, stands branded as a convicted fraud. The arguments which were dismissed a generation ago as having no basis except 'infidel' depravity are now put forward by the foremost Christian writers as the latest results of modern scholarship."

It is announced that the arrangements are almost completed for the opening of the British Museum on Sunday. When the date is fixed Mr. Wheeler, and probably "Chilperic" also, will be happy to escort readers of the *Freethinker* who care to arrange for a Sabbath afternoon among the national treasures.

Mr. Richard Davy, writing in the *Catholic Union Gazette*, says: "I am well aware that there are many English Freemasons who can scarcely credit that the Masonic body on the Continent is seriously engaged in a warfare against Christianity. They forget that their own body has severed its connection with the French lodges. The French Masonic body no longer masks its intentions. It openly declares

that it has only one object—the destruction of the Catholic Church." This is a Catholic way of putting it; but the fact is certain. The Masonic organisation seeks to spread light and universal brotherhood, and it finds the Catholic Church its greatest hindrance.

The good old *Boston Investigator* has entered on its sixty-sixth yearly volume. It has seen two generations of men depart, but the Freethought flag is still in the hands of a Mendum, the son of J. P. Mendum, who upheld Abner Kneeland when he first started the paper. May it continue to enlighten the generations yet to come!

The Christian Evidence Society (according to the *Daily News*) is asking for more money in order to counteract the increased activity of the National Secular Society. This is an undesigned compliment to the President's Lecture Scheme.

Professor Bain, of Aberdeen, speaking on the occasion of the retirement of Dr. W. A. Hunter from the representation of that city, highly eulogised the intellectual and literary ability of Dr. Hunter. He expressed the opinion that "since John Stuart Mill's day no such acute mind as Dr. Hunter's had entered the House of Commons."

The *Freidenker*, of Milwaukee (April 5), noticing the invitation of the American Secular Union to Mr. Foote to visit the other side of the Atlantic, pays its tribute of esteem to Mr. Foote for the way in which he conducts the Freethought propaganda, and, after many compliments, assures him he will be heartily welcomed by the German American Freethinkers in the Republic.

The Annual Children's Party was a great success, in spite of many disadvantageous circumstances. Unfortunately, however, the Committee report a balance on the wrong side. The expenses were about £20, and the subscriptions about £15. Is there no Freethinker who can afford to wipe out that deficit?

The *Consett Chronicle* for April 17 gives a long report of Mr. Charles Watts's recent lecture in Stanley on "Does Death End All?" The editor devotes two leading articles to the lecture, to which Mr. Watts will reply in our next issue.

Colonel Ingersoll's *Foundations of Faith* is now on sale at our publishing office, price threepence. It is a neatly-printed pamphlet, stitched in a wrapper.

Lying For God's Glory.

I have been repeatedly told by the most zealous, aged, and experienced Christians, who were my personal friends, that if they were to find out that the Christian religion is false they would never tell anybody so, because, they say, even if it is false it does great good. I suppose there is hardly any matured person who reads this who has not, some time, heard some Christian say that, who was, in other respects, a truthful and good citizen. But the very best of Christians, like their great leader, St. Paul, believe that it is morally and religiously right to lie for their religion; and they will do it. And they will lie, and connive at lies, to defend things that tend to establish a belief in the supernatural, simply because they think those things are training the minds of the people in the direction of belief in religion.—C. Moore.

To the Front.

Men of thought, with iron nerve
Fronting error take your stand;
Never from your purpose swerve
Till it cease throughout the land.
Long and dread the strife may be—
Ye yet shall have the mastery.

—W. S. Landor.

There are many millions of people who believe the Bible to be the inspired word of God—millions who think that this book is staff and guide, counsellor and consoler; that it fills the present with peace and the future with hope—millions who believe that it is the fountain of law, justice, and mercy, and that to its wise and benign teachings the world is indebted for its liberty, wealth, and civilisation—millions who imagine that this book is a revelation from the wisdom and love of God to the brain and heart of man—millions who regard this book as the torch that conquers the darkness of death, and pours its radiance on another world—a world without a tear. They forget its ignorance and savagery, its hatred of liberty, its religious persecution; they remember heaven, but they forget the dungeon of eternal pain.—Ingersoll.

DIVINE DIVERSION.

WHEN God—or Christ, as Christians say—
Perceived himself on Christmas Day
To be a chubby clod of clay,
He must have thought it funny.

When Jahveh's colleague—poor old Joe—
Dreamt Poll and God had formed a Co.
To meet a long-felt want, we know
He *should* have thought it funny.

But no, he never seemed to doubt
The truth of what he dreamt about—
That Poll with God was "walking out";
He didn't think it funny.

When Jahveh focussed all his stare,
And looked on earth from ev'rywhere,
And saw himself in Mary's care,
He must have thought it funny.

To see his Lordship munching bread,
With shavings on his tousled head,
Or being washed and put to bed,
He must have thought it funny.

To see the little lad, J. C.,
Perched cock-a-hoop on Joseph's knee,
And say, "He's I, and I am he,"
He must have thought it funny.

When God performed his famous trick
On God as Christ, through God as Nick,
And set him on a spike to stick,
He must have thought it funny.

When Christ changed water into port,
And knew that we'd the fact retort
On "'tot'lers" of the goody sort,
He must have thought it funny.

When gentle Jesus jostled Jews
Because the Joss-house they did use
For buying cash and selling "doos,"
He must have thought it funny.

When Christ in fish for cash did look,
And thought how saints their coin would hook
By "fishy" means, by "hook or crook,"
He must have thought it funny.

When Jesus walked upon the sea,
It seemed to him so odd that he
Entirely lost his *gravitee*—
It certainly was funny.

When God, as Christ, was crucified,
With mirth he must have fairly cried;
Of laughing, "two to one," he died—
The notion was so funny.

When God played "dying" on the tree,
And asked his mumming self why he
Had left himself, we're bound to see
He *must* have thought it funny.

When God perceived himself as dead—
Himself of life the Fountain-head,
The First and Last, the A and Z,
He must have thought it funny.

As God declared three days he'd be
Within the grave, and yet that he
Did not keep *grave* so long, we see
He *must* have thought it funny.

When God, as flesh, soared through the air,
Through either air or ether rare,
And vaporised to ev'rywhere,
He must have thought it funny.

No doubt, the son of Joseph's lass—
Like any other carnos mass—
When "high" enough went back to gas;
But, still, it's rather funny.

When Jahveh, Jesus, Nick, and Ghost
Declared to all, "Believe or roast!"
The simple, compound, carnal Ghost
Had surely thought it funny.

This, these, discrete, four, concrete, one
Are, is, an endless source of fun
To all with brains beneath the sun
Who know when things are funny.

And now, to Jahveh, Son, and Co.,
And their creators years ago,
Our thanks for mirthful hours we owe;
They are so very funny!

G. L. MACKENZIE.

THOMAS PAINE AGAIN.

STUDENTS in Paine may be interested in some further additions to Paineiana gleaned from another volume of the Historical Manuscripts Commission—viz., the 14th Report, Appendix, Part IV., manuscript of Lord Kenyon; published 1894. These papers cover a very long period, ranging from July 15, 1524, to December 5, 1837. The first is the testimony sworn "upon a boke" before the Prior and Convent, by William Nicholson and others, to a miracle worked upon them by which they escaped drowning. It is almost funny enough to publish in these pages; but for the moment we are concerned only with Paine. Seeing the part played by Lord Kenyon in the legal iniquities of the close of the eighteenth century, it was with very great hopes of finding some good material that we turned to the Kenyon volume, only to be disappointed; for, for some special reason surely, there are only two references to Paine, and not any to the trials. The first is from Peter Whitehall Davies to Lord Kenyon:—

"1792; December 19; Broughton.—I take the liberty to trouble your Lordship with another letter, in which I have enclosed an *assignat*, made payable at Bersham Furnace, endorsed 'Gilbert Gilpin.' I am informed he is the first clerk of Mr. Wilkinson, whose sister married Dr. Priestley. With what view Mr. Wilkinson circulates *assignats* is best known to himself. It appears to me that good consequences cannot arise from their being made currant [*sic*], and that very pernicious effects may. Mr. Wilkinson, at his foundry at Bersham (where, I am informed, he has now a very large number of cannon), and in his coal and lead mines, employs a considerable number of men. They are regularly paid every Saturday with *assignats*. The Presbyterian tradesmen receive them in payment for goods, by which intercourse they have frequent opportunities to corrupt the principles of that description of men, by infusing into their minds the pernicious tenets of Paine's *Rights of Man*, upon whose book, I am told, publick lectures are delivered to a considerable number in the neighborhood of Wrexham, by a Methodist. The bad effects of them are too evident in that parish."

"*Note in the handwriting of Chief Justice Kenyon.*—This letter occasioned the Act of Parliament passed in January, 1793, for preventing the negotiation of French paper money in England."

If this endorsement of Kenyon's be true, this letter may be noted as probably the slightest basis for an Act of Parliament on record; certainly the letter is another proof of the state of scare into which Paine's work had thrown some people. The strange intermingling of names and doings makes a very thought-provoking chain.

Dr. Priestley, Thomas Paine, a cannon founder using a paper currency, a Methodist preacher delivering lectures on the Rights of Man, Presbyterian shopkeepers dilating on the advantages of free banking, while changing pounds of butter for rag money, and then a special Act of Parliament to damage the value of French notes, which an infamous English Government was forging by the million, is altogether a theme worth working out some day.

The next reference to Paine is rather more suited to the pages of some Christian evidences organ, as, with a good headline such as "The Christian Princess's Rebuke to a Christless Courtier" or "Christian Charlotte and Damned Drummond," it would be sure to catch on with those good people who take in the parson's fables as to the Queen and Bible.

Memorandum by Lord Kenyon :—

"1821; February 5.—The Bishop of Salisbury (Dr. Fisher) has just left me; he mentioned to me the following instances of conversations which took place at the table of the Princess of Wales, the Princess Charlotte sitting between her and Sir William Drummond: 'Sir William Drummond told Princess Charlotte he understood she was reading history, and asked what history it was that most interested her. Without waiting for her reply, he went on, and said that he had latterly been in the habit of reading Oriental history as the most amusing, and added—as to what is called Scripture history, I can assure your Royal Highness there is nothing in it; it is all an allegory, and nothing more. The next time of his being by Princess Charlotte, he brought forward several of Paine's objections to Christianity, which she met and confuted, and Lady E. Lindsay said she never saw any man in her life so completely thrown upon his back. The third time of their meeting, Sir William Drummond was beginning again in the same style, by saying that the education of the nobility, and of all ranks, even the highest in this country, was on a very bad plan, all in the hands of priests; and, addressing her Royal Highness, he said: You know that the priests have always been the most corrupt and contemptible of mankind. She replied: Sir William, you are now for the third time so good as to be giving me instruction in the same way; I do not know what your object can be; you seem to be an Atheist, or at least a Deist, and I must beg to refrain from holding any more such conversation with you. I will, therefore, take my leave, and have only to thank you for the pains you have been so good as to take to enlighten my darkened understanding—and so withdrew.'"

The anecdote is marked as "communicated to the Bishop of Salisbury by Lady E. Lindsay and Lady de Clifford, and confirmed by the Princess Charlotte, then about fourteen years old. The Bishop informed the Prince, and the intercourse lessened."

There, now, is not that a sweet thing in anecdotes, worthy the inventive powers of Hugh Price Hughes, or any other manufacturer of evidences and Atheistic conversions? In every detail it is perfect. The careful, insidious suggestion of Paine's objections, and their successful refutation by the good Princess, and the supporting evidence of Sister E. L., "who never saw a man so completely on his back." Oh for the brush of the historical painter! It seems just a trifle weak that this royal champion of the priests should, after such a victory, so soon funk, as she seems to have done. It is, however, perhaps not much to be wondered at, when one tries to figure the thing out. As in all these things, there are vacancies which one would like to fill up; but these parson fellows never care to be too exact in chronology or geography. It may be noted that Sir William Drummond was born about 1770. Charlotte Augusta was born 1796; at the time of the encounter she was, according to the Bishop, fourteen; and, therefore, it took place in 1810, when Drummond was forty, and just before he published his examination of the Old Testament, (*Edipus Judaicus* (1811). Evidently he was just the sort of man to be put on his back by the royal child of fourteen. This good young woman died in 1817, after giving birth to a still-born child. One of her biographers winds up his notice by saying: "Numerous anecdotes of Her Royal Highness were related with incredible industry, and swallowed with equal avidity after her demise; but the memoirs of her that were then published were for the most part made up of pure invention" (Thompson Cooper's *Biographical Dictionary*).

This sounds a bit rough on Dr. Fisher, but really nothing more seems needed to round it off, so we quit the Kenyon report.

THOMAS SHORE.

Mr. E. Pownceby, as honorary secretary, writes on behalf of a Committee formed to raise pecuniary assistance for Mr. W. J. Ramsey and Mr. H. A Kemp, both of whom suffered imprisonment for "blasphemy" in 1883. Mr. Ramsey is "reduced to very straitened circumstances through an unfortunate failure in business," and it is intended to "enable him to make a fresh start." Collecting-sheets can be obtained from Mr. Pownceby, at the Bradlaugh Club and Institute, 36 Newington Green-road, N., and subscriptions can be sent to Mr. George Ward (treasurer) at the same address. Mr. Pownceby asks whether acknowledgment of donations can be made through the *Freethinker*, to which we reply, "Yes."

THE WORK AHEAD.

SAYS G. W. Foote, President of the National Secular Society of England: "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." This is truth proved by all the testimony of experience. No religionist who could see his way clear to introduce anywhere the doctrines of his sect ever doubted the value of sectarian education, or his duty to promote it. With believers in Christianity unsectarian education is a compromise, and is consented to, not because Christians think it is a good thing, but because no sect is strong enough to exclude all the rest. The Catholic may admit that the unsectarian institutions of this country are the best under the circumstances; but the circumstances to which he refers are that the institutions, if made sectarian, would necessarily be Protestant. And then he denies that the Catholic Church is a sect—it is the Church itself; the Protestant division, he holds, is a sect, and the various denominations are subsets. But churches, like some other primitive forms, propagate by fission, or separation, and the part which calls itself the parent is such only by accidentally retaining the name. The right of the Church of Rome to the title of "Catholic" is disputed by the Church of England, and Rome must submit to be called a sect.

The compromise of which we have spoken may insure us institutions that are unsectarian up to the point where all Christians agree, but it will not give us Secularism; for, with education in the hands of local boards, the majority will dictate teaching to the minority; and the minority, being Christian, will submit, because it thinks "any religion is better than none." This sort of abuse can be abolished only by making Freethinkers of the people. We are glad to be able to object to religious education because it is unconstitutional and illegal; but, after all, the real objection to it is that it is untrue, and equally harmful wherever found. Our legal charters give us warrant for fighting this falsehood and delusion in public, but reason brings a still stronger indictment against inculcating it in private. Only half, and perhaps the lesser half, is done when government is made entirely secular. There will still remain the duty of secularising the governed, and banishing superstition from the head and heart.

Nothing is more certain than that religion founded on belief in gods and saviors, heavens and hells, is a monstrous deception, and that the preachers of that religion are either deluded or are impostors. The whole thing is a nightmare, from which the people cannot be wakened too soon—a dementia for which reason and truth are the only physicians. The differences between Freethinkers and religionists are not intellectual, but mental; the latter are not mistaken, but deluded. Their intellects have never been appealed to; their minds have been warped. They do not of themselves fall into the mistake of accepting religion, but are deceived from the first. It is necessary that the spark of sanity, where it has not been totally extinguished, should be reached and fanned and fed. The fuel provided one hundred years ago in Paine's *Age of Reason* should be supplied to increase the glow, and every Freethinker can at least give the encouragement of his breath. Secular institutions will never be safe in the presence of a fanatical populace.

—*Truthseeker* (New York).

THE HINDU CONVERTED.

"Grog shops exist and flourish in nearly all the large towns of India."—REPORT OF WESLEYAN MISSIONARY CONFERENCE.

BEHOLD, on India's coral strand
The swart Hindu, baptised and bland,
Has changed for fashions fair and new
His reptile gods and crocodilean crew.

Forsaking Ganges' grateful stream,
He seeks of Bass the sparkling gleam;
He scorns the Cows he loved of old,
And worships Britain's sacred Calf of Gold.

He flouts the faith his father taught,
Leaves Juganaut, and cries, "Jug or naught!"
Scouts Buddha and Brahm with scornful jeer,
And cries, "The Bible's great, but greater's beer!"

O, Brahmin-ridden Bengalee,
The scoffers mark thy bended knee,
As pious Bull now tells the tale—
"He reads our Bible—and he drinks our ale!"

BOOK CHAT.

It is only of late years that it has been recognised that in the customs, superstitions, and traditions of our "folk," as well as in those of savages, much light is thrown on the past of those more highly developed. The interesting study of folk-lore is now seen to be an important branch of anthropology, and there is a growing public who will welcome such a work as the *Introduction to Folk-Lore*, by Marian Roalfe Cox, which Messrs. Nutt & Co. have published.

Miss Cox impresses us favorably at the outset. She takes as her motto the famous line of Terence, "*Homo sum nihil humani a me alienum puto.*" Nothing human should be alien to the scientific study of humanity. Her introductory chapter is excellent. The work, indeed, goes beyond its title. Being a good introduction to folk-lore, it is also an introduction to the history of the mental and religious evolution of humanity. Abundant illustrations of folk-lore are given, and proof that "in our lower classes are still to be found sedimentary deposits of the traditions of remotely distant epochs." Many old and obscure customs will be found explained in Miss Cox's volume, which is brightly written and full of information on every page.

The first chapter is entitled "The Separable Soul," and illustrates the belief in a second self or soul—a belief arising from dreams, and giving rise to hosts of legends as to the state of the dead, possession by spirits, transmigration, etc. Then follows a chapter on animal worship and totemism; then on "Animism, Ghosts, and Gods," including sacrifices. Chapter iv. is on "The Other World," chapter v. on "Magic," and chapter vi. on "Myths, Folk Tales, etc." A good deal of the same ground is gone over as in Mr. Wheeler's *Footsteps of the Past*. This is not surprising, as both writers follow on the lines of Dr. Tylor and Mr. Herbert Spencer. Mr. Wheeler has, however, taken many illustrations from Mr. J. G. Frazer, while Miss Cox has gone rather to Mr. Andrew Lang, though in the matter of folk tales she may herself be considered an authority.

An important work on folk-lore has just been issued by Mr. Forder. It is entitled *Segnius Irritant; or, Eight Primitive Folk-Lore Stories*, translated and compared by W. W. Strickland. The word "primitive" may be objected to as not strictly accurate. But the stories, translated from the Czech and Slovenian, are certainly of very archaic character, and, although they have some analogues in Southern and Western Europe, probably represent earlier phases of some better known folk tales. Besides giving the stories themselves as they are still told by the folk, Mr. Strickland comments upon, compares, and explains them. He gives reasons for believing that they originated in the arctic regions, and that they represent in the main the mythology of the seasons, especially the triumph of spring over winter.

Mr. Clodd has recently pointed out that folk-lorists are apt, out of deference to the Christian *taboo*, to avoid the real issue of their studies. This is not the case with Mr. Strickland. He errs, if at all, on the other side. He does not scruple to find in his old folk tales the origin of "the Bethlehem legend." He says: "Just as the hero of the primitive myth leaves home to wander through darkness and bring back the light, so Jesus, the putative child of the Jewish Tvashtar, runs away from home, and, disputing with the doctors of divinity, proves himself to be more enlightened than any of them; and, not long after this, after a forty days' fast, which is perhaps a faint reminiscence of the forty-two days' Arctic winter night, occurs the struggle for the light in its usual triple form, but vulgarised into a trial of moral strength between a devil and a saint, perhaps having been modified by ancient Buddhist legends. Such is the stuff religions and religious thought are formed of." It should be mentioned that Mr. Strickland gives reason to believe that some items of his stories are prior to Virgil, and pre-Christian.

Mr. Strickland has some notable remarks on the mental position of our savage ancestors. He says: "At present, enlightened by science, we refer all the vital phenomena of the surface of our globe to the heat of the sun. But the instinct of savage people is just the other way. There is with them a complete inversion of cause and effect. It is not the sun that creates mankind, but mankind that creates the sun. It is not the sun that brings back the spring, but the gathering vital forces of nature that conjure back the sun. And if this habit of mind, still prevalent among religious folk whose superstitions represent the dying cosmical blunders of primitive barbarism, is still powerful enough to cause hundreds of thousands of Christians to believe that by prayer they can conjure the climatic effects dependent upon the movements of cyclones and anti-cyclones, or thereby

change the course of epidemics or their own lives and conduct, it is not wonderful if savages within the Arctic circle, with few or no means of accurate observation and scanty stores of accumulated knowledge, mistook cause for effect, and imagined it was the cold which killed the sun, and not the sun which killed the cold."

Mr. Strickland gives a number of tables illustrating the connection, variants, development, and meaning of the stories, and has several essays thereon, as well as on "Primitive Lapp and Slav-Myths Compared"; while in an appendix he gives a list of the fairy stories in D. G. Bernoni's collections, showing their relation to similar Slavonic ones. *Segnius Irritant* takes up a little-worked field, and is a contribution to folk-lore, and thereby to ancient beliefs and superstitions, that should by no means be overlooked.

As we have already announced, the Humanitarian League is issuing through Messrs. Bell and Sons (5, York-street, Covent Garden, W.C.) an excellent series of School Readers, especially calculated to foster in the young a love of animals, and teaching the duty of kindness to our fellow creatures; in reference to which an inspector writes to the publishers: "I cannot forbear thanking you for the 'Animal Life Series' which I received yesterday; they seem to me excellent, and to hit the mark very exactly. They are simply and affectingly written, keep an admirable purpose in view, and are at once pleasant and instructive. The type is as good as possible, and the illustrations well done. I shall certainly make them known in the time that remains to me."

Mrs. Bradlaugh-Bonner issues the second volume of a new edition of Paine's works (London: A. & H. Bonner). This volume (3s. 6d.) comprises *The Age of Reason*. Mrs. Bonner contributes an Historical Introduction, which is written carefully, though at least two important facts are omitted. It was the prosecution of Eaton for publishing *The Age of Reason* that drew forth Shelley's noble letter to Lord Ellenborough, and the long imprisonment of Carlile that drew forth J. S. Mill's article on the Blasphemy Laws in the *Westminster Review*. Of course there is nothing new to be said at this time of day about *The Age of Reason* itself; we have, therefore, only to add that the book is decently printed and bound, and that attention has been paid to the text.

PROFANE JOKES.

Ex-baby—"Mamma, where did the baby come from?"
Mamma—"From heaven, my darling." Ex-baby—"It's a pity the kid didn't know when he was well off."

Tommy—"Ma, I know why babies go to heaven when they die." Mother—"Why, my boy?" Tommy—"They haven't any teeth to gnash."

Watts—"So you don't believe the good die young?"
Potts—"That used to worry me a great deal when I was a boy, but I know better now."

Clergyman (examining a Sunday-school class)—"Now, can any one of you tell me what are the sins of omission?"
Small Boy—"Please, sir, they're sins you ought to have committed and haven't."

A titled Englishman was a guest at a Washington house, and a dinner party was given in his honor. The host cautioned the colored butler to address the Englishman always as "My Lord." This he remembered to do until he passed the special dish of the occasion—stewed terrapin. The appearance of this dish is not specially inviting, so, when the butler handed it to him, the Englishman declined it, saying, *sotto voce*: "It looks uncommonly nawsty." The butler was so taken aback at the idea of anyone refusing such a delicacy that he forgot himself and said: "But it's terrapin, my God."

"Yes, Abimelech, you are correct; it was Solomon that wrote, 'All the days of my life will I wait till my change cometh,' and you are probably correct in your suggestion that he wrote it immediately after he had bought something at a church fair."

New Spirit—"Who are those three youngsters who turned up their noses so when I was telling them about the hot weather we had last July?" St. Peter—"They were Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego."

Jones—"It is a fashionable congregation, isn't it?" Smith—"Very! Their minister may believe what he likes about the Bible, but if he should ever advocate the taxation of church property he'd have to go."

Raising Funds.—"I'll give \$10," announced the man in the third pew from the front. The converted counterfeiter rose with emotion. "And I," he exclaimed, "will make it \$100."

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.

BATTERSEA SECULAR HALL (Prince of Wales-road): 8.30, social gathering of members and friends.

BRADLAUGH CLUB AND INSTITUTE (36 Newington Green-road, Balls Pond, N.): 7.15, O. Cohen, "Atheism: Its Meaning, Morality, and Justification."

EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Reform Club, Well-street, Hackney): 7.30, Rev. S. D. Headlam, M.L.S.B., "The Education Bill."

ISLINGTON BRANCH: 8.30, quarterly meeting at the Bradlaugh Club and Institute, 36 Newington Green-road.

PENTON HALL (81 Pentonville-road—Humanitarian Society): 7, Joachim Kaspary, "Voltaire's Work."

WEST HAM SECULAR ETHICAL SOCIETY (61 West Ham-lane): 7, J. W. Martin, B.Sc., "Silas Marner."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Westminster Town Hall, Caxton-street): 11.15, Dr. Stanton Coit, "What Think ye of Christ?"

WEST LONDON BRANCH ("Sun in Splendor," Portobello-road, Notting Hill Gate): Tuesday, at 8.30, business meeting.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, Mrs. Thornton Smith will lecture.

CAMBERWELL (Station-road): 11.30, a lecture.

EDMONTON (corner of Angel-road): 7, W. J. Ramsey will lecture.

FINSBURY PARK (near band-stand): 11.15, E. Calvert, "Is the Exercise of Free Speech Conducive to True Progress?" 3.15, James Rowney, "The Atonement."

HAMMERSMITH BRIDGE (Middlesex side): 7, S. E. Easton will lecture. Thursday, at 8, Stanley Jones, "Jesus Christ."

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 12 and 3.30, lectures. Wednesday, at 7.30, S. E. Easton will lecture.

ISLINGTON (Highbury Fields): 10.45, Lucretius Keen will lecture.

KILBURN (High-road, corner of Victoria-road): 7, William Heaford, "Immortality."

KINGSLAND (Ridley-road): 11.30, S. E. Easton will lecture.

LAMBETH (Kennington Park): 3.30, W. J. Ramsey, "The Resurrection."

MILE END WASTE: 11.30, W. Heaford, "The Ten Commandments."

OLD PIMLICO PIER: 11.30, A. B. Moss, "The Devil's Doom."

REGENT'S PARK: 3, James Rowney will lecture.

VICTORIA PARK (near the fountain): 11.15, Stanley Jones will lecture; 3.15, O. Cohen will lecture.

COUNTRY.

BARNESLEY (Black-a-moor Head Hotel): 8, members' meeting; paper by a recruit on "The Life of Moses."

BIRMINGHAM (Alexandra Hall, Hope-street): 11, Charles Watts, "Is Man a Religious Being?" 7, "The Science of Life from a Secular Standpoint." Monday, at 8, at the Bristol-street Board School, "The Government Education Bill: A Delusion and a Snare." Tuesday, at 8, at Ashton Board School, "Secularism and Christianity: Which is the Superior?"

BRISTOL BRANCH: 12.45, members and friends meet at the terminus, Victoria-street, for ramble to Stantonbury Hill Camp, *via* Keynsham.

CHATHAM SECULAR HALL (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 7, W. B. Thompson, "The New Education Bill: Does it Make for Progress in Popular Education?" Councillor W. J. Levington will also address the meeting.

DERBY (Pollicott's Dining Rooms): 7, Walter Holmes, "Why I am Not a Liberal."

FAILSWORTH SECULAR SUNDAY-SCHOOL (Pole-lane): 2.30, Touzeau Parris, "Some Bible Symbols, their Origin and Meaning"; 6.30, "The Certainties of Religion Worthless." Choir and string band.

GLASGOW (Brunswick Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): 12, discussion—J. Gilbert, "Is Co-operation Socialism?" 6.30, P. MacGivern, "The Evils of Socialism."

HULL (Cobden Hall, Storey-street): 7, Mr. Holditch, "Animal Magnetism *versus* Spiritualism."

LIVERPOOL (Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street): 7, J. Roberts, "Spinoza." Committee meeting after lecture.

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, Lawrence Small, B.Sc., "For God or Man?"

ROCHDALE (Board Room No. 2, Co-operative Building, Toad-lane): 6, business meeting, and short address by S. R. Thompson.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): Excursion of members and friends to Rotherham Museum and Parks; meet at 1.45, near the clock, inside Midland Station.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, King-street): 7, business meeting; 7.30, entertainment.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

BARNESLEY (May, Day Green): 11, W. Dyson, "An Hour with the Bible"; 6.30, "Christian Want of Evidence."

DERBY (Market-place): J. E. Briggs, "Are the Teachings of Jesus Wise?"

ROCHDALE (Town Hall Square): 3, S. R. Thompson, "Choose You this Day Whom Ye Will Serve."

Lecturers' Engagements.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Oredon-road, Rotherhithe, London.—May 3, m. Westminster; 10, m. Mile End, a. Victoria Park; 17, m. Camberwell, a. Hyde Park, e. Hammersmith; 24, New Brompton; 31, m. Wood Green, e. Edmonton.

TOUZEAU PARRIS, 32 Upper Mall, Hammersmith, London, W.—May 3, Failsworth; 10, Balls Pond.

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