

The Free Thinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

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

VOL. XVI.—No. 22.

SUNDAY, MAY 31, 1896.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

CHRIST OR JUDAS—WHICH?

IN Shakespeare's tragedy of *Othello* there are two characters, the Moor of Venice and Iago, his Ancient, who are of about the same value in representing the plot of the play. Indeed, among members of the theatrical profession it is a matter of opinion which is the leading part; hence all our great actors have usually alternated playing *Othello* on one night and Iago on the next. There is a like similitude between Christ and Judas in their relation to the tragedy of the Cross. We do not refer to the supposed life of Jesus, but to the episode of his death, as recorded in the New Testament. In Matthew (cxxvi.) we read that Judas, who was one of the twelve Apostles, betrayed his Master with a kiss, and thus gave him into the hands of the chief priests who sought his arrest. This was the first of the acts which led to the crucifixion of Christ; and we are told "that thus it must be, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled" (Matthew xxvi. 54, 56). It, therefore, appears that Judas was originally "cast" for the part he played in the "Sign of the Cross," and to him may be ascribed the taking of the initiation in the arrest, trial, condemnation, and execution of the "Savior of the world." If this be so, we fail to see that Christians are justified in abusing, as they do, the man Judas. In betraying Jesus he was only doing what had been arranged, not *by* him, but *for* him. It might have happened that, if Judas had not acted as he did, there would have been no arrest, and consequently no crucifixion and no "redeeming sacrifice."

We have been induced to consider this subject through a sermon which was delivered at Clapham by Dr. Guinness Rogers (who is described as "the grand old man of modern evangelical thought"), a report of which appeared in a recent issue of the *London Daily Chronicle*. The Doctor, having taken for his text verses 3 and 5 in Matthew xxvii., wherein it is recorded that Judas, finding he was condemned for betraying Jesus, "went and hanged himself," "pictured the awful fate of the betrayer of his Lord" in thus ending his life. But if Dr. Rogers had taken for his text the account of the death of Judas as given in the first chapter of Acts (verse 18), he might have pictured a still more "awful fate" of Judas. The two accounts are entirely contradictory; in the one it is said that he hanged himself, while in the other it is stated that, "falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out." Now, a man cannot commit suicide in two different ways, and it would be interesting to know which account given in "God's word" can be relied upon as being the true one. Both records cannot be accurate. It may be "awful" to see a man dangling at the end of a rope, but that is not nearly so "awful" as to behold the disgusting scene as pictured in Acts. It may be urged that the important point in the story is that Judas did put an end to himself, and that it does not matter how he did so. We maintain, however, that it does matter, and that very much; for, according to orthodox Christianity, the Holy Ghost inspired the writers to pen both accounts, which are totally different. It is therefore open to grave doubt if either record is trustworthy.

We have not space here to discuss the various theories that have been held in reference to the alleged conduct of Judas. Dr. Rogers mentions, among others, the German theory, which is, "that Judas was not so bad as he had been represented; that he had no intention to betray his Lord; that, in short, he thought the Master slow and

back ward; and that he would help the Master to assert his power and royalty and supremacy." This theory the Doctor thinks "very ingenious," but he adds that he does not see why it should be accepted. But surely this theory is as reasonable as the one held by orthodox Christians? What is Dr. Rogers's theory upon the matter? Simply this, that, although Judas was one of Christ's chosen Apostles, he was a very wicked man; that it was arranged that he should betray his Master, yet for doing so he deserves the severest condemnation; that, according to the New Testament, it appears that the betrayal was a necessary feature of the redemption scheme, yet because Judas played the part assigned to him the Doctor terms him a "thief" and a "villain"; that the chief priests had to give Judas "thirty pieces of silver" (Matthew xxvi. 14, 15) to enable them to recognise Jesus, who was then the best known man in Bethany; and, finally, that the very book upon which the Doctor relies for the whole story gives two contradictory accounts of the death of the betrayer. Such a theory as this is the very essence of inconsistency. In our opinion, no theory that has hitherto been propounded is sufficiently reasonable to justify us in believing it to be true. Further, we regard the whole narrative of the betrayal and crucifixion to be untrue, for we have never seen any trustworthy history that gives an account of such events.

Dr. Rogers says: "At any rate, we have the fact that the remorse of Judas was so great that he went out and hanged himself." Now, the word "fact" here should read "assertion," and, instead of saying that Judas "hanged himself," the statement should be that he fell down, etc. Those persons who differ from us upon this point must doubt the veracity of the "inspired" recorder of the speech of Peter, as given in Acts (i.). He there mentions the surviving potter's field (see Matthew xxvii.) in confirmation of his allegations. Moreover, he says that it (the suicide of Judas by falling headlong, etc.) "was known to all the dwellers in Jerusalem." But the most powerful blow is dealt at the root of the salvation scheme by Dr. Rogers quoting approvingly the following words ascribed to Christ: "Good were it for that man if he had never been born" (Mark xiv. 21). Now, inasmuch as the betrayal was as important a part of the tragedy as any act upon the part of the betrayed, we fail to see how the death of Christ to save sinners could have been effected without Judas. Besides, Peter, in his speech, points out that "the Holy Ghost, by the mouth of David, spake before concerning Judas, who was to guide them that took Jesus" (Acts i. 16). In the face of this plain statement by Peter, the severe condemnation of Judas, and his awful example to us, as given by Dr. Rogers, seem really farcical in the extreme. How could the man meditate and act upon his own account if he had been appointed to do what he did so far back as the time of "the mouth of David"? If Judas had "sold" his "Master" without having been selected for the transaction, his case might have been different. We submit that, if the story in the New Testament be true, it is the height of absurdity to speak of the instrument of God, in aiding the salvation of the world, as if he were a low villain engaged in some unholy undertaking.

But even if we admit that it would have been better for Judas if he had not been one of the twelve apostles selected by his omniscient master, it is clear that some other victim would have been chosen to carry out the plot of the piece. Dr. Rogers appears to us not to recognise the position, for if the betrayer "had better not have been born," the same would apply to the one betrayed, and, in that case, the

whole plan of the crucifixion was a gigantic blunder. Whatever is condemnable in Judas is equally so in all the other agencies invoked in the tragedy. If Dr. Rogers's theory be accepted, it seems to us that there is no escape from the conclusion that it would have been a fortunate thing for the world if no such mode of redemption as the one in which Christ and Judas played such prominent parts had been arranged for its special benefit. The entire scheme is as inconsistent and absurd as it has proved itself to be useless to achieve its avowed object. No marvel that this orthodox plan of salvation fails to win the assent, at the present day, of many intelligent minds, even of those within the Christian fold. Most of those believers who profess to give it their adherence do so without considering its improbable and contradictory nature. Their position is precisely similar to that of the thousands of easily-satisfied persons who have witnessed the performance of the much-talked-of drama of *The Sign of the Cross*. They are caught by the exciting incidents of the story, overlooking its many incoherent and unhistorical features.

Dr. Rogers concludes his sermon, as reported in the *Daily Chronicle*, by denouncing Judas as a thief and a villain, and declaring that "our only security is in God." Is it possible that Judas, who was selected by Jesus to be one of his twelve apostles, was destitute of such security? Can we conceive of a more direct instance of the dismal failure of Christianity than the one set forth by Dr. Rogers? Here was a man who lived with Jesus, walked with him, talked with him, heard his exhortations, and saw his wonderful miracles; yet we are told this very man proved himself at the end to be a thief, a villain, and a deceitful rascal! Truly it says but little for the ennobling character of Christ's personal influence. If such of his daily companions as Judas and Peter were not affected by his example, and by listening to the teachings from his own mouth, it is not surprising that to-day so many who profess to follow Jesus make no serious efforts to emulate what he is supposed to have done. Let the truth be told: orthodox Christianity is a disgraceful sham and a humiliating hypocrisy.

CHARLES WATTS.

THE ORIGIN AND NATURE OF SECULARISM.

CHAPTER XIII.

SELF-DEFENSIVE FOR THE PEOPLE.

What suits the gods above
Only the gods can know;
What we want is This World's sense
How to live below.

By its nature, Secularism is tolerant with regard to religions. I once drew up a code of rules for an Atheistic school. One rule was that the children should be taught the tenets of the Christian, Catholic, Moslem, Jewish, and the leading theological systems of the world, as well as Secularistic and Atheistic forms of thought; so that, when the pupil came to years of discretion, he might be able intelligently to choose a faith for himself. Less than this would be a fraud upon the understanding of a man. In matters which concern himself alone, he must be free to choose for himself, and know what he is choosing from. That form of belief which has misgivings as to whether it can stand by itself is to be distrusted.

It is the scandal of Christianity that for twenty-five years it has paralysed School Board instruction by its discord of opinion as to the religious tenets to be imparted. In secularity there is no disunity. Everybody is agreed upon the rules of arithmetic. The laws of grammar command general assent. There are no rival schools upon the interpretation of geometrical problems. It is only in divinity that irreconcilable diversity exists. When secular instruction is conceded, denominational differences will be respected, as aspects of the integrity of conscience, which no longer obstruct the intellectual progress of the people.

But there are graver issues than the pride and preference of the preacher—namely, the welfare of the children of the people. What the working classes want is an industrial education. Poverty is a battle, and the poor are always in a conflict—a conflict in which the most ignorant ever go to the wall. The accented policy of the State leaves the

increase of population to chance. It suffers none to be killed; it compels people to be kept alive, and abandons their subsistence to the accident of capitalists requiring to hire their services. Thus our great towns are crowded with families, impelled there by the wild forces of hunger and of passion. From the working man thus situated the governing class exact four duties:—

(1) That he shall give the parish no disquietude by asking it to maintain his family.

(2) That he shall pay whatever taxes are levied upon him.

(3) That he shall give no trouble to the police.

(4) That he shall fight generally whomsoever the Government may see fit to involve the nation in war with.

Whatever knowledge is necessary to enable the future workman to do these things is his right, and should be given to him in his youth in the speediest manner; and any other inculcation which shall delay this knowledge on its way, or confuse the learner in acquiring it, is a cruelty to him and a peril to the community which permits it; and the State, were it discerning and just, would forbid it.

In April, 1870, in a letter which appeared in the *Spectator*, I wrote as follows:—

"In the speech of the Bishop of Peterborough, delivered at the Educational Conference at Leicester, and published in a separate form by the National Education Union, his Lordship quotes from a recent letter of mine to the *Daily News* some words in which I explained that 'unsectarian education amounts to a new species of parliamentary piety.' It is a satisfaction to find that the Bishop of Peterborough is able to 'entirely endorse these words.' The Bishop asks: 'Whose words do you suppose they are? They are the words of that reactionary maintainer of creeds and dogmas—Mr. Holyoake.' So far from being a 'reactionary' in this matter, I have always maintained that every form of sincere opinion, religious or secular, should have free play and fair play. I have never varied in advocating the right of free utterance and free action of all earnest conviction. The State requires a self-supporting and tax-paying population. But the State cannot insure this, except by imparting *productive* knowledge to the people. It is necessary for the people to receive, it is the interest of the State to give, *productive* instruction in national schools."

If people realised how much extended secular instruction is needed, they would be impatient with the obstruction of it by contending sects. Children want industrial education to fit them for emigrants. A knowledge of soils, of cattle, of climate, and crops, and how to nail up a wigwam and grow pork and corn, is what they need. For want of such knowledge Clerkenwell watch-makers, Northampton shoemakers, Lancashire weavers, and Durham miners perish as emigrants, and their bones bleach the prairies. Yet all orthodox teaching turns out its pupils uninstructed, for, as Tillottson has said, "He that does not know those things which are of use and necessity for him to know is but an ignorant man, whatever he may know beside." To know this world, and the secular conditions of prosperity in it, is indispensable to the people.

Christianity is entirely futile in industry. If a workman cannot pay his taxes, the most devout Chancellor of the Exchequer will not abate sixpence in consideration of the defaulter's piety. The poor man may believe in the Thirty-nine Articles, be able to recite all the Collects; he may spend his Sundays at church, and his evenings at prayer-meeting; but the reverend magistrate, who has confirmed him and preached to him, will send him to gaol if he does not pay. The sooner workmen understand that Christianity has no commercial value, the better for them.

Why should purely secular instruction be regarded with distrust, when purely religious education does not answer? It does not appear in human experience that purely religious teaching, even when dispensed in a clergyman's family, is a security for good conduct. It is matter of common remark that the sons of clergymen turn out worse than the sons of parents in other professions.

We want no whining or puling population. The elements of science and morality will give children the use of their minds, and minds to use, and teach justice and kindness, self-direction, self-reliance, fortitude, and truth. There is piety in this instruction—piety to mankind—exactly that sort of piety for the want of which society suffers.

The principles for which during two centuries Nonconformity in England has contended are, that the State should forbid no religion, impose no religion, teach no religion, pay

no religion. In 1870, the year in which Mr. Forster's Act came into operation, I was the only person who issued a public address to the "School Board Electors" in favor of free, compulsory, and secular instruction. Two of the proposals, the least likely to be favorably received, have since been adopted. The turn of the third must be near, unless fools are always at the polls.

G. J. HOLYOAKE.

(To be continued.)

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY'S CONFERENCE.

SOME visitors from the South to Glasgow find the city grey and gloomy. The Brunswick-street Hall, however, in which the delegates of the National Secular Society assembled last Sunday, was bright and gay with floral and other decorations. Portraits in oil of Robert Owen and Alexander Campbell, and other large-size portraits of Paine, G. J. Holyoake, Charles Bradlaugh, and Colonel Ingersoll, adorned the walls around, which were emblazoned with mottoes from Hobbes, Hume, Voltaire, Burns, Paine, Carlile, and Ingersoll.

There was a good muster of delegates and friends, the following Branches being represented:—Barnsley, T. Wombwell, C. Birdsall; Bethnal Green, C. Cohen; Bolton, T. Holstead, C. N. Atkinson; Bedlington, R. Forder; Bristol, W. Hawker, M. Kay; Blackburn, J. Umpleby, J. Titherington; Birmingham, R. Taylor, S. Armfield; Bradford, J. Sunderland; Camberwell, S. Hartmann; Derby, F. Swain, W. H. Whitney; Edinburgh, J. F. Dewar, R. Brown; Finsbury, E. Bater; Finsbury Park, Miss E. Robins, G. Ward; Glasgow, J. P. Gilmour, T. Robertson, D. Black; Heckmondwike, H. Long, Mrs. Long; Huddersfield, W. H. Spivey, T. Ollerenshaw; Hull, R. Forder; Islington, R. Forder; East London, G. Ward; West London, Miss Brown; North-West London, Miss A. Brown; Liverpool, J. Ross, J. Billing; Leeds, E. Roberts, J. Badlay; Manchester, S. Hunter, C. Pegg, Mrs. Pegg, E. G. Taylor; Paisley, W. McLean, J. R. McLellan; Plymouth, C. Watts; Stockton, J. G. Dobson; South Shields, R. Chapman, J. T. Horsman; Stanningley, J. W. Gott, W. Ray; Todmorden, E. Stansfield, J. W. Gott; Westminster, H. J. Stace.

In addition there were present individual friends from Blackburn, Cupar Fife, Carlisle, Coatbridge, Dundee, Dunoon, Greenock, Hamilton, Hull, Kilmarnock, London, Motherwell, Paisley, Wolverhampton, etc.

Mr. FOOTE took the chair at 10.30, and Mr. C. Watts, Mr. R. Forder, Mr. J. M. Wheeler, and Miss Vance accompanied him on the platform. The PRESIDENT, in formally opening the proceedings, expressed a hope that differences of opinion would not interfere with harmony of work towards their common object. The minutes of the last Conference having been taken as read, the PRESIDENT read the Executive's Annual Report, as under:—

It will be graceful to begin this Annual Report by referring to an incident at the last Conference of the National Secular Society. A gentleman was present on that occasion who spoke in the name of the Freethinkers of America, and he was elected a vice-president of our Society. Since then Mr. Putnam has returned to his own country, where he has been particularly active in opposing the orthodox attempt to insert a Christian declaration in the preamble to the United States' Constitution. During his trip to Great Britain our American visitor won all hearts by his genial character. He bade us farewell at a public dinner, organised in his honor at London, and since his return to America he has expressed his delight at the reception he met with on this side of the Atlantic.

Mr. Putnam sends an official letter to this Conference, which will be read presently. On behalf of the American Secular Union he invites two of your officers to visit the United States in the fall of this year, and to attend the Annual Convention at Chicago. Should the Conference respond to this appeal, it will doubtless be a leading object of those two officers to bring about a visit from Colonel Ingersoll. The presence of that illustrious Freethought advocate in this country, if only for a brief while, would certainly give a great impetus to the Secular movement. (Applause.)

Some months ago the English newspapers gravely reported the conversion of Colonel Ingersoll. The best contradiction of this *canard* is the extraordinary activity which Ingersoll has since displayed in the lecture-field. His tours have covered thousands of miles, and night after night he has addressed great crowds of people in large halls and theatres. His movements are well reported in the newspapers, and eminent ministers of religion are trying to answer his discourses. Among these ministers may be mentioned the Rev. Dr. John, ex-President of De Pau University, who replied to Ingersoll's famous address to the members and friends of the Church Militant at Chicago. It is

worthy of note, as illustrating the strong hold which religious bigotry still has upon women, even when they regard themselves as advanced reformers, that the Women's Temperance Union refused to let the Church Militant (which was using their Temple for Sunday services) bring Ingersoll to speak on any subject whatever in their holy building, and his address had, therefore, to be delivered in the Columbia Theatre, where it attracted an audience which included the greater part of the foremost public men in Chicago. On the other hand, it is also noteworthy that Ingersoll's address was telegraphed verbatim all over the United States, four hundred copies being taken by the newspapers, involving several millions of readers.

Before turning to home affairs, it may be well to mention here that two of your vice-presidents are zealously advocating Secularism at the Antipodes. Mr. Joseph Symes appears to have surmounted the grave difficulties which beset him last year, and which threatened the extinction of his journal, *The Liberator*. He will be glad to see by this Report that he lives as ever in the recollection of his old friends and colleagues in the mother country. Mr. W. W. Collins, who is a busy member of Parliament, does not slacken his Freethought propaganda. He lectures every Sunday at Christchurch, New Zealand, and is supported by an apparently strong society.

The International Federation of Freethinkers held its triennial Congress at Brussels in September. Messrs. Robert Forder and George Ward attended it as representatives of your society. These gatherings cannot, in the present condition of things, be of much practical service to the Freethought movement in the various countries of Europe, but they serve to show that the movement is international, and thus supply a certain stimulus to the workers in all lands.

Turning now to home affairs, we take first the resolution carried at the last Conference, appointing a sub-committee to consider the possible improvement of our lecture system. The sub-committee met, and, after receiving from the President an outline of what he proposed to do in this matter, decided to adjourn *sine die*. This was communicated to the Executive, who resolved to give the President's scheme its moral support, and to leave him a free hand in carrying it into execution. At a later stage of this Conference the President will make a statement upon his Lecture Scheme. Meanwhile, it must be observed that the scheme has undoubtedly quickened Freethought in the provinces, besides maintaining the platforms at the Foresters' Hall, the Athenæum Hall, and St. James's Hall, in London. Messrs. Watts and Cohen have been the principal lecturers under the scheme in the provinces, though some of the work has been done by the President and by Mr. Heaford. New ground has been broken, unusually large audiences have been secured, and several new branches have been established, while others are in process of formation. The branches established are at Paisley, Heckmondwike, Bingley, Stanningley, Todmorden, Leeds, Carlton and Netherfield, Motherwell, and Northampton. Branches have also been established independently at Newark and Rochdale. The Northampton Branch is, perhaps, worth a special mention. For many years local political reasons have been allowed to interfere with Secular activity in that borough. During the lifetime of our great leader, Charles Bradlaugh, there was some reason in this policy; but no such reason exists now, and your President felt justified in making a descent upon Northampton, with a view to re-organising its Freethought forces. There are many Freethinkers in the town, and, with careful nursing during its infancy, the new branch should become strong in itself, and a source of strength to the surrounding district.

Wherever the Lecture Scheme has been applied, it has done more than carry our flag into fresh territory. It has supplied a new motive to the existing Branches that have undertaken the local arrangements; it has extended their horizon, broadened the field of their operations, and given them a larger hope. Change and variety are as necessary to movements as to men, and in helping others we strengthen ourselves.

Several debates have been held during the year by Messrs. Watts and Cohen, and meetings of this kind are always serviceable to Freethought, which is thus introduced to fresh hearers, who would otherwise be deaf to its advocates.

With respect to London, it is necessary for provincial Secularists to be on their guard against interested and misleading statements. Freethought activity has not been so dreadfully affected by the loss of the Hall of Science—a matter which has been sufficiently explained to the Secular party, but which the Christian public naturally refuses to understand. A change of address is not a funeral, and the shifting of platforms is not an earthquake. The very first Sunday after the cessation of lectures at the Hall of Science, lectures were begun at Milton Hall, and afterwards in the large Foresters' Hall. An attack was also made upon the West-end of London, which was almost virgin soil, and successful courses of lectures were delivered at St. James's Hall. The Athenæum Hall, in Tottenham Court-road, has now been taken for regular Sunday evening lectures; and

for some months a Freethought platform has been maintained in connection with the new Club and Institute in North London. There has been simply a change of scene, in consequence of material misfortunes, which are directly due to the villainous laws which Christians maintain for the oppression of Freethinkers. (Applause.)

Those villainous laws are responsible for the failure of all efforts to raise a Freethought Memorial to Charles Bradlaugh. On a commercial basis this enterprise has been demonstrated to be impossible. Whether the proposal on the Agenda for circumventing these laws will avail, discussion, inquiry, and, above all, experience must decide. In any case an *alteration* of the law is not to be expected in the immediate future. Neither the Liberty of Bequest Bill nor the larger Bill for Abolishing Prosecutions for Religious Opinion has had a very illustrious history. Both are now practically dead, or at least in a state of indefinitely suspended animation; and who can hope for any act of justice to Freethought from the present reactionary House of Commons?

The shameless way in which Christians abuse law and equity to their own selfish advantage is conspicuously exhibited in the history of the Gifford Trust. The late Lord Gifford, an eminent Scottish judge, and a man of great attainments and liberality, left a considerable sum of money to found Natural Theology lectureships in the Universities of his native land. He distinctly forbade all appeal to Revelation; he insisted that the subject should be treated in a purely scientific spirit; and he stipulated that the most extreme unbelievers should not be debarred from access to the lectureships. But no unbeliever has been invited to lecture, the Christians have monopolised the endowment, and they have even defied the founder's intentions by having sectarian lectures delivered at Glasgow in a church, and as part of a denominational service.

It may be noticed, however, in this connection that the unjust policy of Christians does not prevent the growth of a certain liberal spirit amongst the general public. There is, for instance, a marked decrease of Sabbatarianism. The National Museums are now opened on Sunday in England, and the public baths are open on Sunday morning in Glasgow, so that cleanliness may have a chance as well as godliness. It is obvious, too, in all parts of the country, that people are more and more enjoying themselves on "the Lord's Day." Cyclists spin along the country roads in thousands; excursions are run to the seaside, and steamers ply on rivers and along the coast. All this must lead to a diminution of worship, and worship is the essence of religion.

The new Education Bill, for endowing Denominational Schools and smothering School Boards, is a well-matured piece of priestcraft, fathered by Tory statesmen in the interest of the faith which enslaves children, and makes it easy to rob and govern adults. Such, at least, is the opinion of your Executive. We were therefore glad to receive an invitation from the London Trades Council to take part in a Conference on the subject. We signified our readiness to participate in such a Conference, and to bear our share of its expenses; but we have heard nothing further of this proposal. It seems to us that the tight corner into which the Nonconformists are driven by their treachery to their old principle of absolute separation between Religion and the State creates an opportunity for showing them the error of their ways, and of demonstrating that nothing but Secular Education will bring peace and goodwill into the public schoolrooms. (Applause.)

We conclude this report with two items of domestic interest. A committee was appointed at the last conference to consider a proposal by Mr. George Anderson that a sum should be raised in order to save the President from absolute loss in attending to the Society's business. The committee issued an appeal for £100 for the current year, leaving the matter to be further dealt with by the Conference. £86 has been subscribed to the President's Honorarium Fund, and has been paid over to him from time to time by the committee. The other item is this: We are strongly of opinion that the Society would much profit, financially as well as otherwise, by having good offices in London, where visitors could depend on finding one or other of the Society's officers, where Executive and other business meetings could be held, and where the President, or any of the vice-presidents, could make appointments with members of the party, or with other persons interested in the Society's progress. If this can be managed, we feel it will be of great advantage to the movement.

And now, in the name of the whole Society, we express our satisfaction that the Annual Conference, after a revolution of ten years, once more meets in the great commercial capital of Scotland. On the previous occasion a testimonial was presented to Robert Ferguson, then an old man, who undauntedly faced prison in defence of his right to sell Freethought literature. Robert Ferguson only died this very year, worn out with sheer old age, but true as steel to the very last. That brave man's hour of trial proved that a host of Glasgow Freethinkers were ready to share his defiance of bigotry and persecution. It is Glasgow, too,

which has most cordially welcomed our Forward Movement, and cheerfully labored at its extension to the whole south-west of Scotland. On behalf of the entire National Secular Society, then, we wish the Glasgow Branch good-speed; and may its honorable past be but the earnest of a more glorious future. (Applause.)

Mr. E. G. TAYLOR (Manchester) moved that the Report be adopted. Mr. SUNDERLAND (Bradford) seconded, and the motion was carried unanimously.

In connection with an item in the Report, the following letter from Mr. GEORGE ANDERSON was read:—

"You will remember that at last annual meeting a conversation arose as to procuring some annual remuneration to the President, and it was arranged that a Committee should meet to consider it.

"That Committee met, and unanimously decided that, for the current year, the sum should be limited to £100, leaving the future to be decided at next congress.

"As the Society is about to meet, I beg to remind you of the arrangement, and I trust the members present will consider the expenses the President is put to, both in time and money, for our benefit.

"I object to any man working for me for the mere honor of the thing."

Mr. WATTS moved, and Mr. BATER seconded, that the Committee appointed at the previous Conference to look after this matter be re-appointed. Mr. FORRESTER suggested its reference to the Executive, and this was carried unanimously.

The Financial Report was then taken, and several delegates expressed the opinion that it should be sent out earlier. Mr. FORRESTER (Glasgow) thought that there was no other way in a voluntary association. Miss VANCE explained that this was owing to the secretaries failing to send in earlier, and the auditor having to come up to London.

On the motion for the election of President, the chair was taken by Mr. C. Watts.

Mr. BLACK, on behalf of the Glasgow Branch, moved that Mr. G. W. Foote be re-elected President for 1896-7. They would find it very difficult to get another such good fighter.

Mr. DEWAR, of Edinburgh, seconded. Messrs. BATER, of Finsbury, and WARD, of Finsbury Park, explained that their Branches had, as previously, set down this motion; but, under the circumstances, gave place to the Glasgow Branch.

Mr. WATTS, in putting the motion, said he had been connected with the Society from the beginning, and knew from experience of intimacy the trouble, expense, and anxiety connected with that office. He was quite sure it could not be better filled, and testified to the thoroughness with which Mr. Foote carried out his labors.

The motion was carried with acclamation.

Mr. FOOTE, in responding, said he valued this honor above any other that could be conferred upon him. When other calls were made for his services he answered that he was pledged to Secularism. His life was given to it, and, as long as he could, his devotion should continue to be given. Any society that has a president is sure to have a little sport of president-baiting. He, however, was entitled as much as the humblest member to fair consideration. Any member in doubt should plainly ask him, Is so and so true that is said about you? He expected to be treated frankly and openly. He thanked the Society for the great, loyal, not servile, but manly support accorded to its officers. Everything was open and above board, and there was no need for accusation of despotism or servility.

On behalf of the Executive the following gentlemen were nominated for re-election as Vice-Presidents: Dr. T. R. Allinson, G. Anderson, D. Baker, E. Bater, N. B. Billany, J. E. Brumage, Dr. L. Buchner, C. Cohen, W. W. Collins, J. F. Dewar, R. Forder, J. P. Gilmour, S. Hartmann, W. Heaford, P. A. Le Lubez, A. B. Moss, T. Parris, S. M. Peacock, W. Pratt, S. P. Putnam, J. H. Ridgway, V. Roger, J. Samson, Dr. E. Schlaeger, J. Symes, E. Truelove, J. Umpleby, Miss E. M. Vance, C. Watts, J. M. Wheeler.

These names were seconded and carried. The following were also nominated by the Executive for election: John Grange (Bradford), T. Gorniot (North-West London), F. Schaller (West London), H. J. Stace (Westminster), S. R. Thompson (Manchester, late Wood Green), G. J. Warren (East London).

On the motion of Mr. Hunter (Manchester), the standing orders were suspended, and the names of Mr. Charles Pegg and Mr. E. G. Taylor, of Manchester, added to the list of Vice-Presidents.

A letter from Mr. Putnam was then read, as under:—

"AMERICAN SECULAR UNION AND FREETHOUGHT FEDERATION.
"April 18, 1896.
"To the Members and Friends and Delegates of National Secular Society and Conference of Great Britain.

"I wish to greet you in your work in the Old World, and to assure you of the hearty sympathy of the Freethinkers of the New World. We feel that we are one in this universal cause of freedom and humanity.

"I shall never forget the cordial welcome I received from so many of you during my visit to your country. I feel that it has made more close and beautiful the association of British and American Freethought. As pioneers of human progress we need this broad and stimulating companionship.

"We in America desire to respond to your generous and splendid welcome. We desire to hail your representatives on this side of the Atlantic, to let them know what America is, and through them also to give you the hand of friendship and loyalty.

"I hope, therefore, that, as the united band of British Freethinkers, you will send Mr. G. W. Foote, your President, and Mr. Charles Watts, your Vice-President, to America, that they may help us here in our great struggle for human rights. I desire this visit to be memorable as an exhibition of British and American comradeship, and, therefore, I desire them to be your official delegates and representatives to our National American Congress, that in every way our common work can be recognised, and also the alliance of our forces.

"For their own sake we would give to Mr. Foote and Mr. Watts the heartiest welcome, for simply as men their labors are grand and significant; but we wish to feel that in them, as your chosen representatives, we give a welcome to every member of the National Secular Society. We wish to feel that in organisation we are associated; that the two great Freethought organisations of the English-speaking world are officially united in a cosmopolitan fellowship broader than the oceans that separate or the skies that span.

"I ask you, then, as a Conference of the British Freethinkers, to give us for a while your noble workers and officers, that, not only to their fame and merits, but to you, one and all, we can give honor and welcome, and that the thousands in Great Britain and the thousands in America may form one grand army of Freethought and progress. I believe that the greatest issues are now before the world. I believe there was never a greater necessity for co-operation. Never was it so apparent that the world's reformers must be united. The vast conflict is by no means ended. Even despotisms are combining and making common cause. Let us join heart and hand, and as Freethinkers proclaim to the world that between Great Britain and America there shall be peace, friendship, the noblest sympathies, and one purpose—liberty and justice to all mankind.—Yours truly,

(Signed) SAMUEL P. PUTNAM,
"President of American Secular Union."

The letter was received with much applause, and it was moved and seconded that the request of the American Secular Union should be assented to. The motion was carried with one dissident, Mr. Black, who held that the gentlemen named were wanted at home; Mr. SWAIN (Derby) supporting, on the understanding that Colonel Ingersoll should visit England.

Mr. R. TAYLOR then moved, on behalf of the Birmingham Branch: "That the position of President of the N.S.S. shall not be held by one person more than three years in succession, and that two years at least shall elapse from such term of office before he become again eligible for election." He disclaimed any personality in the matter, which he regarded as one of principle. Mr. ROBERTSON (Glasgow), in seconding the motion on behalf of his Branch, said that, personally, he was opposed to tying their own hands. Mr. SUNDERLAND (Bradford), Mr. BROWN (Edinburgh), and other delegates, spoke in opposition, and on a vote being taken the motion was lost.

Mr. R. TAYLOR then moved: "That the first Sunday in November in each year be fixed as a special day on which all Branches shall make their annual collection for the Benevolent Fund." He thought a common fixed day would ensure the work being done. Mr. SWAIN (Derby) seconded.

Mr. TAYLOR (Manchester) thought the local Branches best able to determine for themselves when collections should be taken.

Mr. STACE (Westminster) pointed out that in London many Branches met only in the open air, and a Sunday in November would mean no collection.

Mr. BATES endorsed this, but would have no objection to two Sunday collections—one in winter and one in summer.

Mr. HARTMANN (Camberwell) and Mr. ROSS (Liverpool) held that the societies were the best judges, and, on the motion being put, it was defeated by a considerable majority.

This concluded the morning sitting, and the delegates adjourned to the North British Hotel, where a good luncheon was provided. A tasteful menu, with views of Glasgow, was specially designed by one of the local members.

Upon reassembling, Mr. WATTS arose in reference to the resolution standing in his name: "That, in the interest of vigor and continuity of action, it is advisable that, without any interference with the autonomy of the Branches, the Central Executive, which transacts all general business, should consist of a definite number of persons well known to the party at large; that these persons should be the President and Vice-Presidents elected yearly at the annual Conference; and that such Vice-Presidents as, by reason of distance, cannot often attend the Executive meetings should be communicated with in regard to any matters of exceptional importance."

He felt great responsibility with regard to this resolution, as he found it had been much misunderstood. He had never believed in the power of the Society being in one or two hands, but in that of the collective wisdom of the whole body. He thought the Executive required strengthening; the delegates were constantly changing, with the result that the work was left to a few. It was with a view of increased efficiency he brought this forward, and should again bring it forward; but, as he had been accused of raising a storm at the Conference, he should, in the interests of harmony, decline to move the resolution, and would give them a year to think over it.

Mr. THURLOW said, although what was proposed was a new departure, he had never heard anything against Mr. Watts for proposing it, and he asked him to go on and let it be thrashed out now.

The PRESIDENT said the sum and substance of Mr. Watts's statement was, that the time was not opportune. If defeated now, it would not be easy to bring it on again. He (the President) had heard much of one-man government, but should hardly have thought this would have been said of a proposal to form the Executive from the pick of the party.

A delegate asked that a tell-tale of the attendance at the Executive should be published, and this was assented to.

On behalf of the East London Branch, Mr. WARD moved the resolution standing in the name of G. J. Warren: "That the Organisation Committee be not re-appointed." The reason assigned for this was that it never had been called. Mr. Warren himself had been a member of that body, and thought, if there was no business, it should not be re-appointed.

Mr. FOOTE stated that, although he attended the meetings of the Committee *ex-officio*, it was no part of his duty to call Committees together. The Secretary was always at the service of any Committee.

Mr. BATER thought the Committee should lapse, since the real power was with the Executive. Mr. STACE concurred.

On the resolution being put to the meeting, it was carried by a narrow majority.

Mr. CHAPMAN, on behalf of the South Shields Branch, moved: "That the Conference consider the possibility of arranging for a special lecturer permanently stationed in the North." He thought this desirable from the difficulty of keeping up the supply of lecturers as in London. Mr. E. G. TAYLOR seconded the motion.

Mr. COHEN said it was valuable if it could be carried out. The difficulty was to make it practical.

Mr. PEGG thought such men should be at the service of the whole Society.

Mr. SWAIN (Derby) wanted the North defined. He thought they should do their best to strengthen Mr. Foote's scheme.

Mr. CHAPMAN considered too much attention was paid to London.

Mr. BATER (Finsbury) referred to the immense population of London and the little-cultivated fields for Freethought in the West of England.

On the motion being put, it was supported by a fair minority.

Mr. FOOTE's Lecture Scheme was the subject of a statement by himself. He related how in past years he had endeavored to promote the enterprise as well as the organisation of the Society, and how good resolutions had been carried by Conferences, which, however, were but words on paper until someone had resolution to carry them into effect. At last, as his own life was slipping away year by year, and he saw himself on the wrong side of forty-five, he determined to wait no longer for others, but to see what he could do himself. His lecture scheme was not a hard-and-fast plan; he had worked along the line of least resistance. Still, it had a leading idea. It was perhaps the germ of the elaborate lecture scheme which some hoped to see realised in the future. Mr. Foote then told what had been done by means of his scheme, both in the provinces and in London. Mr. Watts had taken up the work with the greatest loyalty and devotion, as those who knew him might expect. He had carried the torch of Freethought into places where its light had never gleamed before. Mr. Cohen, a younger man, who was winning golden opinions, had delivered no less than sixty-six lectures under the scheme since the middle of November, in addition to the many lectures delivered under private arrangement with Branches. Mr. Heaford had lectured under the scheme occasionally as he was able, and the President had also taken a share in the work. Several courses of week-night free lectures had been given in London, unfortunately at considerable expense. The Sunday platform (with free admission) had also been maintained for many months in the Metropolis. And in all cases the lecturers had been paid, if not adequately, yet reasonably. It was not consistent with the dignity of Freethought that lecturers should work without even an assurance of bread. When he (Mr. Foote) first started the scheme the Executive resolved to give him moral support and a free hand. Of course he could not take responsibility without control. When the scheme was so developed as to be almost self-working, it might be handed over to a committee, but at present it required careful nursing. If the

Conference thought otherwise, or had not sufficient trust in him, he would not stand in the way of any plan it might decide upon. In that case he would write "finis" to his scheme as President, while reserving whatever right he had to act as an individual, and make a last statement in the *Freethinker* for the benefit of subscribers. The vote on the next motion on the agenda would decide his position in the matter.

Mr. FORDER, on behalf of the Islington Branch, moved: "That the President be asked to allow his Lecture Scheme to be continued in future under the control of the National Secular Society." This was asked on the ground of its giving greater confidence. Mr. ROBERTSON seconded. Upon being put to the meeting it was lost by an overwhelming majority.

Mr. WARD then moved the resolution standing in the name of Mr. Warren: "That this Conference urges Branches to register the names and addresses of all Secularists residing in their respective districts (who are not members of the Society) for the purposes of organisation and united effort at School Board and other elections." This was seconded and carried without any dissentient.

The next item on the Agenda stood in Mr. Foote's name. It was a brief sketch of a scheme for defeating the Blasphemy Laws as affecting the right of Freethought Societies to hold property with full legal security. Mr. FOOTE said that the legal disability of Freethought Societies was too well known to the Conference to require any explanation. What he wished to emphasise was the fact (as he conceived it) that there was little prospect of any real improvement in this odious state of things in the immediate future; indeed, he doubted whether any of them would live to see the Christians perform this act of justice to Secularists. Meanwhile it was certain that the Secular movement was losing heavily in consequence of legal disabilities. To his personal knowledge thousands of pounds had been lost in this way during the six years of his Presidency. At present, if anyone wished to leave money for Freethought purposes, he could only do so by leaving it absolutely to one or more persons, in the expectation that it would be used in accordance with his private directions. But this was very unsatisfactory; for, in the first place, the person or persons might, at least conceivably, depart from those directions, and, in the next place, a leading Freethinker, who had money left him by another Freethinker for his own private use, might always be liable to the insinuation of having appropriated what was meant for a public purpose. Nor was this the end of the difficulty. Even if the testator had the most complete reliance on the discretion and integrity of the legatee, still the legatee was himself mortal and liable to the accidents of life, and his death or his bankruptcy would throw all his estate into the hands of others. Even his executors, if they shared his convictions and were willing to carry out his private engagements, would be unable to do so, as they were bound by the law in all their actions. Besides, a legacy might be contingent on the deaths of other persons than the testator himself, such as a wife, or child, or other dependent; and in that case it might not accrue to the legatee at all, as he might by that time be dead, and if it accrued to his heirs or executors it would almost certainly fall into private hands for private purposes. In these circumstances he (Mr. Foote) had long been considering whether it was possible to circumvent the law by which Freethought Societies were oppressed and plundered. At length he had hit upon a plan which he submitted to a very capable lawyer, who had frequently acted for the late Charles Bradlaugh. After much discussion and reflection, the plan had been worked out so that it could be presented in outline to the National Secular Society's Conference. First of all, there was no "one man" element in it, as some of his "candid friends" had been suggesting. A Society could be formed and registered, so as to enjoy full legal rights; its objects could be stated in a way to satisfy Secularists: its members might number tens, hundreds, or thousands, if they would pay the annual subscription after going through the careful forms of election; the articles of association could prevent the members, as such, from deriving any profit whatever, in the shape of dividend or otherwise, from the Society; and the rules as to the Board of Directors could be of such a nature as to secure the thoroughly proper and efficient control of the Society's affairs in the interest of Secularism. The Society itself would not necessarily carry on any propaganda, but would be a pecuniary feeder of the National Secular Society. It would, so to speak, provide many, instead of one or a few, trustees for property given or bequeathed for Secular objects. This was a rough outline of the Scheme which he (Mr. Foote) regarded as tremendously important, if it could, as he believed it could, be carried out. If the Conference endorsed it, as he hoped it would, at least in principle, he would have the Articles of Association drawn up immediately, and, after the fullest consideration and possible amendment, they might be printed and circulated, while a few trusted Secularists became the first members, so as to control the admission of subsequent candidates for membership. Mr. Foote concluded by moving the resolution standing in his name: "That as there seems no immediate probability of any

alteration in the law by which Secular Societies are denied the common right to hold property and receive gifts and legacies, and as the National Secular Society continues to suffer very great financial loss in consequence, it is necessary that some indirect means be taken whereby property could, with reasonable security, be devoted to the Society's objects; and to this end the Conference endorses the plan just sketched out, and authorises the President, with what assistance he may require from the Executive, to carry the said plan into realisation with the utmost possible dispatch."

Mr. HARTMANN, after some questions, seconded, and the resolution was carried unanimously.

The final resolution, with reference to the new Education Bill, and desiring the Executive to issue a Manifesto on the lines agreed to, was also unanimously adopted.

A very hearty vote of thanks to the Glasgow Branch for the excellent arrangements made for the Conference, and for the comfort of visitors, was proposed by Mr. WARD, of London, seconded by Mr. ROSS, of Liverpool, and carried unanimously with much acclamation. In briefly closing the proceedings, Mr. FOOTE expressed a hope that next year's Conference might prove as large, harmonious, resolute, and useful.

The evening meeting was held in the large Waterloo Hall near the Central Station. There was a good attendance. The President was supported on the platform by Messrs. Bater, Cohen, Dewar, Forder, Gilmour, Hartmann, Pegg, Stace, Taylor, Thurlow, Watts, and Wheeler. The Chairman, after adverting to the proceedings of the earlier part of the day, first called on a local gentleman, Mr. J. P. Gilmour, who gave a first-rate brief discourse on the successive phases of religious thought in Scotland. Mr. Forder followed with a good speech, in which he referred to the services of Mr. Bradlaugh, the attitude of the Church to education, and the duty of Freethinkers not to let the Church instil its dogmas into the defenceless minds of children.

Mr. COHEN gave a pithy address on the fight between science and theology and the triumphs of Freethought, which was everywhere growing. Our policy, he urged, was not to establish a sect, but to spread principles. We must beware of the folly of underrating the strength of the enemy, and the real fight, that with the Catholic Church, has yet to come.

Mr. THURLOW spoke of the advance made by Freethought. What would Luther or Knox say of praying for infidels? They would say, Burn them. But it was the sceptics who were best able to appreciate these men, who were earnest in what they thought right, despite their limitations and the intolerance of their time.

Mr. WATTS, in view of those who might never have understood the Secular position, expounded it in an eloquent speech. He referred to the dense ignorance and bigotry still found in parts of Devonshire and Cornwall, where he had just been, and concluded with a stirring appeal to all Freethinkers to rally round the President.

Mr. FOOTE remarked that he was no stranger to Scotland. As a boy he had read Scott and Burns, and plunged in the wake of Hume, Mill, and Bain, so that when he first came to Scotland long ago he felt, as it were, on his native heath. He then referred to the necessity of Freethought in Ireland. There were many movements of progress, but Freethought was the most tabooed, because the privileged knew that Freethought was the real danger. As the German invested, not every little town, but Paris, so our business was to carry the citadel, to overcome the historic enemy of humanity cheating men out of pleasant life here with promises of another world. We want men to make the most of this life, so that of each it might be said, as Burns wrote of his friend:—

If there's another life, he lives in bliss;
If not, at least he made the best of this.

On Monday morning a large party left Queen-street Station on an excursion to Loch Lomond. It included a considerable number of delegates from the provinces, and many London friends, amongst them being Messrs. Foote, Watts, Cohen, Forder, Ward, Stace, and Bater, and Miss Vance and Miss Brown. From Balloch Pier the party went by steamer to Tarbet. The sail over the lake in such fine weather was inexpressibly delightful, and the Englishmen were loud in their praises of the grand scenery. The water was hardly rippled, the islands were radiant with young summer greenery, and Ben Lomond stood out in the clear air with magnificent boldness. From Tarbet some walked and some drove to Arrochar, where the rest of the day was spent. A luncheon was prepared for the party at one o'clock, and a tea at five, and at seven the return was made to Glasgow by train along another route, past Loch Long, Gareloch, and the estuary of the Clyde. Altogether, it was a great treat to the Englishmen, and also to the one Irishman, Mr. Knox, of Belfast. Messrs. Gilmour and Black worked very hard for the comfort of the whole party, and are entitled to warm thanks for their ungrudging exertions. Of course, they were assisted by other Glasgow friends, too numerous to mention individually.

ACID DROPS.

THE Rev. Joseph Pullman, D.D., pastor of the First Methodist Episcopal Church in Bridgeport, Connecticut, against whom a suit for \$25,000 damages for slander was recently brought by Mdle. Jane May, a French actress, he having denounced her in his pulpit as "a low, brilliant, swell, Parisian courtesan," published a full retraction of these defamatory words, admitting that at the time when he uttered them he had no knowledge whatever of the actress, and that he had never heard a word uttered by anyone against her character. With the man of God, till pulled up for slander, to be an actress was synonymous with being a courtesan. Mdle. May is to be congratulated upon her courageous vindication, and it is to be hoped the Lord's own will take warning.

A dispute between the elders of Zion Baptist Chapel, Chatham, and the pastor, the Rev. W. Osborne, was recently referred to the Baptist Board of Arbitration. The arbitrators are of opinion that the sermon of the pastor which caused the rupture was unwise and injudicious, and calculated to annoy innocent persons; but they blame the dissentient deacons for withdrawing from the church and absenting themselves from the services. They recommend the discontinuance of services in another building in the town; that, in consequence of the divided state of the church, the pastor should remove; that all interested should try to promote this object as speedily as practicable; and that in future the church secretary should not take minutes of conversations at meetings which were calculated to create misunderstanding and perpetuate strife.

Since Freethinkers have exposed the errors and contradictions of the Bible, it has been a great point with liberal theologians that the Bible is not the complete word of God, but contains it. In arguing against the right of Mr. J. B. Wise, of Kansas, to send a postcard with a Bible text through the public mails, the prosecutor seems to have taken the position that the Bible is not a book of filth, but it contains it.

This May pilgrims have flocked in large numbers to the Holy House at Loretto, special indulgences being given to pilgrims in the month of Mary. The Church still profits by this notorious fraud, full particulars of which are given in *Crimes of Christianity*.

The British and Foreign Bible Society has issued nearly 140,000,000 Bibles, Testaments, and portions of the Scriptures. This has undoubtedly brought some business to printers, paper-makers, etc.; but otherwise the good done by this quality of literature is very questionable.

In the case of John Jones, of Anna, Ill., sentenced to be hanged for the murder of Mrs. Mendenhall, it seems that the jury which convicted him remained, for one night, eight for hanging and four for life imprisonment. The next morning one juror, of a religious turn of mind, sent out by the bailiff for a Bible, which was taken into the jury-room, and a sermon delivered from the law of Moses, whereupon the jury returned a verdict of hanging. The attorneys for Jones will go before Governor Altgeld and see what he thinks of the law of Moses, and if he will not commute Jones's sentence to a life imprisonment.

Mdle. Couédon, whose prophecies were said to have been inspired by the angel Gabriel, has been investigated by Canon Brettes, of Notre Dame, who reports that the spirit that speaks through her mouth is not the angel Gabriel, but the Devil. This is evident, because the spirit says the Pope talks drivel and is often mistaken. Evidently the evil spirit knows a thing or two, though, according to Canon Brettes, he did not understand the word "Labarum." The Devil is said to have promised Mdle. Couédon, who is on the shady side of thirty, a husband; and Gabriel, or the Devil, true to his word, has found for the lady the long-desired person.

This case may suggest the difficulty of deciding what is a test of divine inspiration. If something is prophesied, and it comes true, that may only be an instance of the Devil's artfulness to deceive the elect. In fact, if you once introduce devils, angels, or gods, there is always a difficulty to tell the other from which.

God, as Cowper informs us, moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform. He plants his footsteps on the sea, and rides upon the storm. One would fancy that the cyclone in Texas, which lifted houses bodily from their foundations and left them in ruins, killing some hundred and twenty persons, and injuring a hundred others, must be rather the work of a fiend than of a father.

On Thursday, the 23rd ult., at Maysville, Kentucky, the

Rev. James C. Caywood, aged sixty years, a distinguished clergyman of the Southern Methodist Episcopal Church, committed suicide by hanging while insane, his particular hallucination being that he must hang himself in order to save his soul.

A Theosophic lady journalist is responsible for the statement in the *New York Journal* that a child has been born with three eyes in Portland, Oregon. The eye is in the middle of the forehead, and is supposed to be a development of the pineal gland, and the organ of a new faculty for seeing into the middle of next week. We wonder if Miss Olds, of the Portland Secular Sunday-schools, has heard of this phenomenon.

A pious congregation in Hartford, Conn., recently imported a barrel of "holy water" from Rome, the fluid having been blessed by the Pope. The "bar'l" bothered Uncle Sam's collector at New York. He didn't know under what head the stuff could be admitted. It wasn't Apollinaris or any mineral water, and it wasn't ardent spirits. He finally gave it up, and passed the problem on to Secretary Carlisle, who was puzzled at first, but eventually called it an "unenumerated article," and put on a duty of 10 per cent. for luck. This happened in the year of enlightenment 1896.

Father Logan reminds the faithful that cremation is condemned by the Church. The practice of corpse-burning might upset the doctrine of the resurrection of the body. Most Christians, by the way, fancy it is their souls that are going to be resurrected, and they appeal to the resurrection of Christ's body in attestation.

Talmage says: "The grave is only the place where we go to dress for the glorious resurrection." Talmage will take care that he steps out of his dressing-room with his necktie neatly arranged, as he is going to act as M.C. on the occasion.

Dr. Hoch gives the following criminal statistics with regard to the religions of India:—There is one criminal to every 274 European Christians, one to every 509 Eurasians, one to every 709 native Christians, one in 1361 Hindus who follow Brahmanism, and one in 3,787 Buddhists.

A good story from Canada is going the rounds of the American press, as follows:—An infidel at Qu'Appelle was dying, and two well-known men of that place were watching at his bed-side. Suddenly those in the adjoining room heard a piercing cry, and, rushing into the sick room, found the two watchers insensible and the infidel dead. The men have never since been able to speak of what they saw, and cannot refer to the matter. One of them is not expected to live. It is believed they saw the Evil One. This smacks of Catholic origin, and is doubtless as true as it is well authenticated.

The following pretty Christian story appears in *The Signal and Gospel Union Gazette*, for May 20, under the caption, "An Infidel Struck Dead": "A young man, entering upon the practice of medicine, had become a scoffing infidel through the reading of wretched books. He seized every opportunity to pour forth a tide of shocking blasphemy against Christ, and held up the Bible among his companions to coarse and obscene ridicule. At length he went so far as to perpetrate a monstrous fraud. In order to express his contempt for Christianity, he pretended to be converted, and asked permission, in a meeting of the Young Men's Christian Association, to confess the Lord Jesus publicly by leading in prayer. Of course his request was gladly granted, but meanwhile he had prepared a prayer addressed to the 'unknown God.' It was filled with horrible irreverence and thoughtfully planned insult to the Savior. Spreading the manuscript before him on a seat, he knelt down and commenced to read his ribaldry, when his voice was suddenly hushed, and his body was heard to fall upon the floor. The young men who were present hastened to him, but found that he was dead." It would be impertinent to inquire the name of the infidel, or even that of the Young Men's Christian Association. The place and date of this event, and the observations of the coroner at the inquest, may be left to the imagination. All we should like to know is, what became of the manuscript prayer that provoked the Almighty to murder?

Another item of death-bed mythology is reported in the *New York Truthseeker*. The "great Atlanta divine," Rev. J. B. Hawthorne, preached a sermon on infidelity recently, in which he said that "Ingersoll was not an honest infidel, like one who, when he was on his death-bed, confessed that he had been mistaken, that he had given his children nothing but stones, and that if he had his life to live over he would do differently." As Dr. Hawthorne failed to give the name of the repentant infidel, he was written to on the subject. He replied: "The infidel referred to in my sermon was Francis Newport. I saw the quotation in the published

sermons of Rev. Daniel Baker, D.D., more than thirty years ago. I had the volume in my library, but it has disappeared." As with our contemporary, we have never heard of Francis Newport. The unbelievers we have heard of and known died as they had lived. When a man has to go back more than thirty years and quote a book that has "disappeared" about a man of whom the infidels to-day have never heard, in order to find a case to illustrate his point, it is, as our contemporary says, quite possible that as an infidel Francis Newport is a myth.

Reuben May, whose proceedings were mercilessly exposed in *Truth* some years ago, is still at Golden Lane. A bill is sent us with his signature, in which he says: "Whit Sunday is Holy Ghost Day. On the first Whitsuntide 3,000 unbelievers were converted to Christ (see Acts ii.). Why should there not be 3,000 or more become Christians here about this Whitsuntide?" Reuben's cant and rant appear in his very handbills.

The requests for prayer in Christian papers sometimes make the profane smile. In the *Life of Faith* one following the craving of blessing on a mission, which is an advertisement in disguise, is as under: "For the conversion of a young man who has fallen into a habit of betting that he may kiss the Savior's feet." Of course there should be a comma after "betting."

Mr. Joseph Collinson, of the Humanitarian League, is very much dissatisfied with the Howard Association and its work. There is certainly too much Lord Jesus Christ about the Society, and much too little genuine humanitarianism, for it to be in touch with the spirit of the times.

Please to pity the indigent clergy! Sir Francis Powell, who has not hitherto been regarded as a humorist, asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether his attention had been drawn to the numerous complaints that had come from the clergy in all parts of the country as to the exceedingly heavy incidence of rates and taxes upon their incomes; and whether he could see his way to affording them any relief in the Budget beyond the general reduction of the land-tax in which they would participate. This was rather good. But it was not quite good enough. The clergy, having secured relief for their land and doles for their schools, are quarrelling with their rates and their income-tax. Times have changed with a vengeance since the Teacher of Christianity had not where to lay his head.—*Star*.

Lord Salisbury and Mr. Gladstone unite in one thing. Both are High Churchmen, and have given their patronage to that section of the Church. A petition has been presented by the evangelical party, urging upon the Prime Minister the importance of appointing to positions of ecclesiastical authority those prepared to uphold the character of the Church of England as settled at the Reformation, and declaring that "it has long been felt that this section of the Church has not of late years received the recognition and representation in the government of the Church that might reasonably and justly be expected." The petitioners ask Lord Salisbury to give such consideration to their memorial "as may tend to remove just ground of complaint from a large and most loyal body of Churchmen." The petition comes too late. Nearly the entire bench of bishops are of the sacerdotal Romanising party, and of course the best livings go to those of their own views.

Prophet Baxter has a great supporter in the Rev. Webb Peplow, who, we are informed, after having assured his hearers of the speedy coming of the long-delayed Christ, closed with an appeal for a liberal contribution towards erecting a new church.

The Pool of Siloam has been much investigated by Palestine explorers. It is an insignificant well, but the water came, from an unknown source, sometimes more copiously than at others. This probably gave rise to the yarn about an angel coming down to trouble the water. The idea of crowds waiting can hardly have suggested itself to those who know the spot, which measures 14 feet by 18.

Some of the Methodists attribute the decline in their membership to the "Pleasant Sunday Afternoons," which, they say, draw only a pleasure-loving following. But, then, all the churches and chapels must do something to compete with Sunday secular attractions.

A writer in the *Methodist Recorder*, who has occupied his brain with attempted solutions of the "slump," has come to the sage conclusion that probably bicycles have a deal to do with it.

Brother C. C. Moore, the infidel Prohibitionist editor of the *Blue Grass Blade*, said roughly that Jesus manufactured thirty gallons of wine at the Cana marriage feast. Brother

Councilman takes him to task and reckons 136 gallons. Dr. F. A. Paley, in his notes to the Gospel of St. John, says between sixty and seventy gallons. There is a controversy as to how much the Greek measure, *metretes*—translated firkins—represented. A usual computation makes a measure equal to five gallons, so that Jesus made from sixty to ninety gallons. As the guests had well drunk all originally provided, and the new brew was better stuff, nothing can be said against the thaumaturgist on the score of generosity.

A minister was reported as speaking of the harrowing influence of the Cross. He wrote to say that he used the word "hallowing." But readers of *The Sign of the Cross* may find that the first word was by far the more appropriate.

A writer in the *English Churchman* complains that, while there is a royal box at most of the West-end theatres for the royal family to enjoy the drama, there is no royal box at Exeter Hall that they may hear the stories of the missionaries. Perhaps the Prince of Wales would find some of them quite as amusing as the drama.

The Rev. W. Bayard Hale, noticing in the *Forum* the robust candor of a clergyman, who, in his speech at the opening of a church bazaar, said, "They come to be cheated—(laughter and applause)—and if they don't come to be cheated a little, they deserve to be cheated a good deal"—(renewed applause)—remarks: "It is a matter of common knowledge that churches have methods of raising money which are fraudulent, and nobody is horrified by the knowledge, because nobody to-day takes the churches any more seriously than they take themselves."

In the land of liberty, and the free state of Arkansas, a man and woman have been kept in irons for keeping the Sabbath as commanded in the Bible, and working on the Sunday established by the Church. They were Adventists, who observe the same Sabbath as that observed, or not particularly observed, by Jesus, and they are kept in prison and in shackles by their fellow Christians, who are doubtless "persuaded all the Apostles would have done as they did."

The *Daily Chronicle* recently declared that "if there be any highway of faith known to Christendom at all, it is that which leads to Rome." Mr. Massingham, the editor, has recently been to Rome, and had an interview with the Pope, and so now people are asking if he went on the highway of faith.

The *English Churchman* called the Czar's coronation "a function of extraordinary magnificence." "A most imposing imposition," added a reader.

The Rev. J. Guinness Rogers rounds nicely upon Dr. Parker. Joseph wrote to the *Times* mentioning that in 1872 the Congregational Union passed a resolution in favor of purely secular education, and that all subsequent trouble had come from deserting that principle. "Yes," says the Rev. J. G. R., "but I supported that resolution, and you, Joseph Parker, moved an amendment." It is amusing to see the Nonconformists either blaming each other for the desertion of principle for which they will now have to suffer, or, like the editor of the *Methodist Times*, trying to put all the blame on the Irish party.

Another religious riot has occurred in India. The trouble arose from the Moslem hands at a jute mill wishing to sacrifice a cow for the Bakrid festival in sight of the Hindoo hands at a paper mill at Tittaghur. The Hindoos could not see their sacred animal slaughtered calmly, and, but for the arrival of a military detachment, the ructions would have been serious. As it was, fifteen persons were injured, and a company of soldiers had to take possession of the paper mill.

William Coppin stood before the Hull Police-court in the character of a Messiah. Accused of taking sheets from the house where he lodged, he said: "I cannot steal. I stand before God as His son, so that all the world belongs to me." Dr. Mason examined the prisoner, but would not write a certificate that he was insane, and he was committed to prison for thirty days.

The *Sunday Companion* is giving "Stories from the Diary of a Chaplain." Chapter vii., which appears in the number for May 23, is "How I Met the Infidel." The Atheist of the story, which is doubtless as true as gospel, is an ex-convict, who attempts to murder the chaplain who seeks to befriend him, but is providentially stricken with paralysis at the very moment when he fired at him. The romancer says: "One simple explanation is enough for me—that He whom the infidel despised had stood by me in that hour of greatest peril, and had rendered impotent both the weapon and the arm which had been turned against me." At the conclusion we read, *Another grand story next week*. These tales about infidels are usually grand stories.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, May 31, Athenæum Hall, Tottenham Court-road, at 7.30, "Priests and Children: and the Quarrel between Nonconformists and Irish Nationalists."

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—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.

A. G. LEVETT.—Thanks for cuttings, etc.

L. LEVINE (Charleston).—Mr. Foote is very busy, but the pamphlet, *Did Jesus Christ Ever Live?* will not be lost sight of. Thanks for papers.

W. B.—We are always pleased when little-known Freethinkers of talent are made known to us.

H. GILL.—We see from the papers that the Theosophists report 13 lodges and 231 members—guinea ones, we presume.

J. GRANDON.—Mr. W. T. Lee is not bound to debate with everyone who challenges him. He is arranging to debate shortly in Wales and elsewhere with Mr. G. W. Foote, and that will keep him pretty well occupied. Detailed announcements will soon appear in our columns.

OWING to the Glasgow Conference, and Mr. Foote's absence from London, much correspondence stands over till next week.

DISGUSTED.—What else could be expected in Russia, and at Moscow, its orthodox old capital? After all, is it not natural that the Czar's coronation should be accompanied by the ringing of church bells and the booming of cannon? Those two sounds have always gone well together in Christendom. The worshippers of God have always been particularly ready to slay their fellow men.

DANIEL BAKER, of Birmingham, was unable to attend the Glasgow Conference, much to his regret. His many friends will be pleased to hear that he is in fair health for a man of his advanced age. Mr. Baker sends £2, being his subscription for May and June to Mr. Foote's Lecture Scheme.

POSITIVIST.—Mr. Holyoake appears to have been mistaken about the cheap edition of Pearson's book on *Infidelity*. It is long ago to trust entirely to memory.

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.

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

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, 5s. 3d.; Three Months, 2s. 8d.

SUGAR PLUMS.

MR. FOOTE opens the ball this evening (May 31) at the Athenæum Hall, Tottenham Court-road, and Mr. Watts will take the chair and make a speech on Secular work in London, with special reference to this new departure and its probable developments. Mr. Foote's subject will be "Priests and Children; or, the Curse of Religion in Schools; with special reference to the quarrel between the Nonconformists and the Irish Nationalists." As this is a subject which possesses "actuality," as the French say, it ought to attract a crowded audience. Freethinkers should endeavor to bring their more orthodox friends on this special occasion.

Mr. Foote returns from the Glasgow Conference once more President of the National Secular Society. There was not a sound or a sign of opposition to his re-election, and he received a particularly warm greeting on his resumption of the chair. Mr. Foote will write a special address to the Secular party for next week's *Freethinker*.

The Conference was in every way a great success. The utmost good-temper prevailed at both sessions, and there was an exceptionally large attendance of delegates and members from all parts of the kingdom. One delegate came all the way from Bristol. The one expected from

Plymouth did not arrive. Belfast was represented by Mr. Knox, who lost an eye a few years ago through preaching Freethought in the open-air to his intolerant fellow-citizens. Mr. Knox is inclined to take up the work again, and Mr. Foote has promised to revisit the Ulster capital.

Mr. J. Umpleby, of Blackburn, the oldest N.S.S. vice-president after Mr. Truelove and Mr. Daniel Baker, was present at the Conference, and seemed to be bearing his age remarkably well. His mind is as bright as ever, and he emits his old, humorous flashes. Mr. Holstead, of Bolton, who is over seventy, was also present. He is as active as a youth. Mr. Daniel Baker, of Birmingham, was unfortunately prevented from attending by domestic reasons. His name was applauded on being mentioned by the President. Mr. George Anderson, of London, was of course in the minds of the delegates. His letter to the Conference was listened to with profound respect.

A very agreeable feature of the Conference was the presence of a number of ladies, who helped to brighten the tables at the luncheon. Miss Vance had less to do than usual, owing to the zeal of Mr. Gilmour and other Glasgow friends; but some of her duties required a good deal of tact and attention, and she performed them most admirably.

Mr. Watts's genial face and jolly figure were an ornament to the platform. We entirely agree with him as to the policy of not moving the resolution which stood in his name. There certainly had been some misrepresentation, and it is just as well that the resolution stands over till the next Conference, when it can be discussed in an equable temper, and when justice may be done to its object and method.

Mr. Watts spoke with great power and eloquence at the evening meeting, and was enthusiastically applauded. Mr. Gilmour's speech was a fine mixture of logic and poetry. Mr. Cohen's sentences were full of good matter, and admirably turned. Altogether, the meeting was treated to a fine display of oratory, and the audience was evidently in strong sympathy with the speakers.

On Thursday, May 21, the Athenæum Hall was opened for a dramatic performance and social entertainment. The program was good and well carried out. The opening piece was Buckstone's *Good for Nothing*, in which the character of "Nan" was admirably sustained by Miss Katie Watts; Messrs. Reynolds, Bell, Cotterell, and Angel contributing to the humor of the piece. A pianoforte solo by Miss A. Butland made one wish that so brilliant an executant had a grand instrument to display her abilities, which are of the highest order. Mr. Foote gave a soliloquy from *Hamlet*, which excited the enthusiastic applause of the audience; and Madame Burgwitz sang some ballads in a charming manner. The performance concluded with the screen scene from *The School for Scandal*, Miss Brown enacting "Lady Teazle," Mr. G. T. Reynolds "Sir Peter Teazle," Mr. Charles Watts "Joseph Surface," Mr. Percy Bell "Charles Surface," and Mr. F. Cotterell "Joseph's" servant. All the parts were creditably sustained, and the audience seemed very well pleased with the entertainment.

The Manchester Branch holds its annual picnic to Chester (for Eaton Hall and neighborhood) on Sunday, June 14. The railway fare is 2s. 9d. return; children half-price. Members and friends will please give in their names to the secretary at once, so that a saloon may be secured if possible. Further particulars will be announced later.

The *Wallasey Times* devotes two columns and a half to a report of the lecture by Mr. Foote in the Picton Hall, Liverpool. *Daylight*, of Norwich, has a well-merited rebuke to Miss Marie Corelli for her nonsense about "the infamous cause of education without religion."

The late Baron Hirsch, the millionaire philanthropist, was, as everyone knows, a Jew by birth. It appears, however, from an article in the *English Illustrated Magazine*, by a personal friend, that he was not one by conviction. The writer says: "He told me that he never entered a synagogue for worship."

The *Free Review* for June opens with an article on "Robert Burns and the Church." E. S. Galbraith writes on "The Holocaust of Infants"; J. M. Robertson resumes his papers on "The Revival of Phrenology"; Mr. Stanley takes up "Miscarriage of Justice in England"; Florence Edgar Hobson "The Decline of Literary Taste." She finds prevalent a lack of sincerity and earnestness, and a pursuit of cheap fame. Mr. J. P. Gilmour, under the title "A New Sciotheistic Theory," concludes his review of a work on *God and Science Reconciled*. His contribution is valuable and full of point. Fred Wilson has a contribution on "Foreign Missions," which Freethinkers should also read, and Geoffrey Mortimer writes capably on "The Higher Music Hall Art."

THE SHEEP AND THE GOATS.

IN Matthew xxv. there is a vivid representation of the final judgment, with the son of man sitting upon his throne, and all the holy angels around him; and before him are to be gathered all the countless millions of people that have ever lived upon this mundane sphere. He will divide them as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. He will set the sheep on the right hand, and the goats on the left; the former, presumably, representing all the good people, who are to be welcomed into the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world; but to the goats he will say: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels."

We are told by those disinterested friends of ours, the clergy, that there is to be found in the teaching of Jesus the purest system of morality ever taught to man; let us see if we can find the moral lesson that underlies this fable of the sheep and the goats.

First, then, be a sheep! Not that a sheep is any better than a goat, but by being a sheep you will get penned in the kingdom of heaven, and save your mutton and fleece from everlasting fire.

No matter who else gets scorched, your wife and children, your dearest friends, all that is dear to you, may be goats ranged on the left; leave them all, and be a sheep. God made them all, both sheep and goats, for his own glory; but he has found out that he can get no glory from having made goats, as they have no wool to shear. His agents and representatives, the clergy, discovered that long ago when they commenced the shearing process. The inducement held out to be a sheep may be an appeal to your selfishness; but remember that it comes from God, and is intended to increase his glory, not your own comfort or happiness, except as it enables you to escape the long cooking process in the everlasting fire.

Next comes the threat of endless pain to the goats because they are not sheep, though God made them to be goats; and, as the Ethiopian cannot change his skin, or the leopard his spots, so the goat cannot make himself a sheep, and must perforce go into the fire.

Now, God must be supposed to act from some motive, or for some purpose; what is it that actuates him in cursing the goats and sending them into the everlasting fire? It certainly cannot do the goats any good, neither can it benefit the sheep. God himself can derive no good from it. An endless sizzle in the fire, without any hope or chance of escape from it, cannot tend to a reformation, for the time of reformation has passed. It cannot operate as a warning to others, because all things have passed away, and there is nobody left to be benefitted by the example. It must be, then, that God thinks it will redound to his glory, or that he expects to derive pleasure from the gratification of that most degrading of all passions, revenge. God must be short on glory, if he thinks such an exhibition as that is likely to promote it.

Among the old savage barbarians who invented God, revenge was not only a duty, but one of the highest virtues; and as God was, according to their notion, the embodiment of all the virtues, they made him to be fierce, vindictive, and revengeful; and, everlasting fire without hope of respite or mitigation being the worst they could think of, they made God plunging those he didn't like in that ever-burning furnace that they called hell. Now, God never changes; everything develops along the line of knowledge except theology; that remains stationary. Men have become civilised; they have developed a higher conception of humanity, a better system of ethics, and nothing would induce a civilised man to forever torture a fellow creature in such a fire as the inventors of God imagined he would take pleasure in. They pictured him standing upon the ramparts of heaven and looking down upon the writhing bodies of his enemies tortured in the everlasting fire, and rejoicing in their suffering, and laughing at their ineffectual cries for mercy. And that is the God that the Bible has transmitted down to us, in all his primitive savagery, for our worship and admiration.

But when the "Son of Man" takes his seat upon his throne to pass judgment upon the sheep and goats, he may find it difficult to divide and classify them. He will find that they have run together so long that the breeds have got mixed, so that he cannot tell one from the other. He might as well try to pick out an Anglo-Saxon from the

conglomerate population of Britons, Romans, Danes, and Normans that now make up the modern English people. No man is all good nor all bad; it will be found that there is no sheep that has not a considerable mixture of the goat in him; and, on the other hand, there will be no goat found but will be largely sheepish. He will find that a large majority of those who range themselves on the right have nothing of the sheep about them but the skin, while among the goats on the left will be found under the coarse hair of the outside more genuine mutton than can be found in the pet lambs of that sheep-fold, the Church. How can he divide them?

On which side will he rank Jim Bludso, the swearing, drinking, fighting, rowdy engineer of a Mississippi river steamboat, who had a wife in every stopping-place from St. Louis to New Orleans? Bad as he was, when his boat took fire he ran her ashore, and

There was runnin' and cussin', but Jim yelled out
Over all the infernal roar:
"I'll hold her nozzle against the bank
Till the last galoot's ashore."

Through the hot, black breath of the burning boat
Jim Bludso's voice was heard,
And they all had trust in his cussedness,
And knewed he would keep his word.

And sure's you're born, they all got off
Afore the smokestacks fell—
And Bludso's ghost went up alone
In the smoke of the "Prairie Bell."

We all know what the ideal Jesus—the Palestine tramp of nineteen hundred years ago—would have done with such a man as Jim Bludso; he liked that sort of a man; he, no doubt, would have made him one of his apostles, and perhaps the chief of them all, and as Saint Jim he might have ranked Saint Peter, and become the Primate of the holy Catholic Church, the predecessor of all the popes; and who can doubt that, if he had, that Church would have been better, a thousand times better, than it ever has been since?

But the Jesus sitting upon a throne, monarch of all he surveys, may be a very different person from the tramp who was glad to dine with publicans and sinners. A consensus of ecclesiastics, who now claim to hold his power of attorney and speak for him and by his authority, would, no doubt, consign Jim Bludso to the everlasting fire, without benefit of clergy, and without even a chance through *habeas corpus* proceedings to mitigate his sentence. Nay more, if they should find Jim among the sheep on the right of the great white throne, they would sign a protest, and threaten a strike or boycott, if such a fellow was to be admitted among them.

Again, what can the great judge, who sits upon the throne, do with the two Christian Endeavor sheep who went on such a whiz down in Galveston lately? They had been working for Jesus at the great Christian Endeavor meeting in Boston, and no doubt were tired, and needed rest and recreation. The pious work they had done in the good cause entitled them to a little indulgence in sin, which would readily be forgiven if they only prayed for it, asking for it in the name of Jesus. They might have gotten off without detection, and no fuss made about it, if they had not tried to cheat the hackman by jumping out of the hack on the way home. God wouldn't have said anything about it; but the hackman wanted his money. Perhaps they had spent all they had in the houses they had visited during the night, and had nothing left to give the hackman; and, if so, how could they pay him?

These cases show the difficulty the "Son of Man" will meet with when he comes to discriminate between the sheep and goats. Often it happens that the finest wool covers the backs of those who are essentially goatish; and every goat will be found to have some redeeming qualities that will cause the judge to hesitate before consigning them to the irredeemable place on the left.

But, after all, perhaps that everlasting fire may not be so bad as it has been represented. The priests who wrote the Gospels had a personal interest in making it as uncomfortable as possible, but we now know that out in the regions of space, beyond the atmosphere of this earth—which is to be burned up to furnish the fuel for the fire, no doubt—it is intensely cold, much more so than the coldest spot on the earth that has ever been visited by arctic or antarctic explorers. Maybe God is not so wicked and revengeful as the priests have painted him; maybe the everlasting fire will be just what we want to make us perfectly

comfortable and happy. Who knows? Nobody has ever been there and come back to tell us. Who knows where the place is, or anything about its climate? Who knows that the son of man will ever occupy the throne and undertake the impossible job of dividing the sheep and goats? Who can tell us who he is, and by what right he assumes the office of judge, without having been elected to it by the people? We are republicans, and our theory of government is that all power emanates from the people, and is exercised for the good of the people. It surely cannot be for the good of the people to torture ninety-nine one-hundredths of them forever.

Who knows whether this pretended judge has the power to carry his threats and promises into execution? And, finally, who knows that there is any God at all? If there is anybody who has any reliable evidence upon any of these points, let him come forward and settle the questions that the world has quarrelled over ever since the first dawn of history, and upon which nobody has ever offered anything but guesses based upon dreams or imagination.

It is incomprehensible to a rational mind how generation after generation, for so many thousands of years, can be induced to believe in such marvellous stories that have not a particle of evidence to support them, and never had any from first to last. It reminds one of Carlyle's characterisation of the population of England as "thirty-seven millions of people, mostly fools." Not all fools though, for the last census gives seven millions of infidels in England and Wales.

J. P. RICHARDSON.

—*Independent Pulpit.*

FROM HEINE.

(*Aus alten Märcchen winkt es.*)

FROM ancient stories beckons
To me with snowy hand
A singing and a ringing
From an enchanted land,
Where gay, bright flowers are blowing
In evening's golden light,
And fragrantly are glowing
In bridal garments dight.

And leafy trees are singing
The songs of long ago,
The breezes softly ringing
With birdies' warbling flow;
And cloudy pictures greet me
From earth's remotest clime,
And dance in joyous mazes
In wondrous choral time.

And azure sparks are flashing
On all the leafy sprays,
And rosy lights are dashing
In whirling, twirling maze;
And bubbling springs are breaking
From ev'ry rocky height,
And weirdly in the brooklets
Gleams the reflected light.

Ah! could I only reach thee,
And ease my aching heart,
Ah, free from care and sorrow,
I'd never from thee part.
O distant land of rapture,
I see thee in the gloam;
But when the morning breaketh
Thou vanishest like foam.

FRANK PAYNE.

What I must do is all that concerns me, not what the people think. This rule, equally arduous in actual and in intellectual life, may serve for the whole distinction between greatness and meanness. It is the harder, because you will always find those who think they know what is your duty better than you know it. It is easy in the world to live after the world's opinion; it is easy in solitude to live after our own; but the great man is he who, in the midst of the crowd, keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude.—*Ralph Waldo Emerson.*

Any human being, however humble or liable to error, may render an essential service to society by making, through a whole lifetime, a steady, uncompromising, dispassionate declaration of his convictions as they are matured.—*Harriet Martineau.*

BIBLIOLATRY.

THE selection of the various books of the Bible was the work of Church councils. These councils were composed of bishops and other delegates from all parts of the Christian world; men sincere, no doubt, for the most part, but in many cases full of prejudice and bigotry. Not seldom were these members appointed through intrigue and bribery, while at the councils themselves votes were too often extorted by force or won by flattery. Like Church councils ever since, the ecclesiastical gatherings of that day were largely political. The questions upon which the members divided were not so much the genuineness of this book or the authenticity of that, as the East against the West, Rome against Alexandria, the Imperial against the anti-Imperial party. The canon of our New Testament depends, then, upon the action of Church councils, the members of which were men of virtues, vices, strength, and weakness like unto our own. There is, therefore, to one who would fain preserve the Bible in its old status, no way out of the dilemma other than to assume, as do the Roman and Anglican Churches, that these early councils were divinely guarded, so that mistakes were impossible.

From the end of the fourth century to the present has continued this bibliolatry, this worship of the Bible—one of the most pernicious tendencies ever introduced into Christianity. The Bible has been the touchstone, the great test of truth. When Columbus said to the learned doctors, "I will reach the east by sailing to the west," they quoted Revelation, "I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth," and asked: "Can a sphere have four corners?" When Galileo said, "The sun is the centre of our system, and the earth revolves round the sun," the learned doctors replied: "Doth not the Psalmist say, 'The sun ariseth,' and did not Joshua stay the sun in Gibeon, and the moon in the Valley of Ajalon?" When witchcraft was the terror of the world, and every market-place had its fagot and its stake, was there not found in the Bible the command, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live"? When slavery was struggling for its life in all civilised lands, did not earnest ministers of the Gospel quote the Mosaic law as to slaves, and St. Paul's injunction: "Servants [*i.e.*, slaves], be obedient unto your masters according to the flesh"? Does not the Church of Rome to-day rest its claim to supremacy largely upon the text, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it"? Are not ecclesiastical courts still judging men upon Bible texts? What is all this but making an idol of a book? It is exactly what a learned commentator did when he wrote: "We can say nothing against a certain deed of Samson's, because Samson was a divinely-commissioned man; but had anyone else done the deed, he would have deserved to be hanged."

J. H. LONG.

Blasphemy.

It is clear that the good old gods of our race—sun, sky, thunder, and beauty—are to be replaced by philosophic abstractions—substance, energy, and life, under the patronage, respectively, of the persons of the Christian Trinity..... Why this particular trinity of the great Ptah, Horus the Son, and Kneph the Wind-god, retained and refurbished by bishops of Alexandria and Carthage out of the wrecks of the Egyptian superstition? Not because it is contained in the unseen universe, but because we were born in a particular place..... These sickly dreams of hysterical women and half-starved men, what have they to do with the sturdy strength of a wide-eyed hero who fears no foe with pen or club? This sleepless vengeance of fire upon them that have not seen and have not believed, what has it to do with the gentle patience of the investigator?..... That which you keep in your hearts, my brothers, is the slender remnant of a system which has made its red mark on history, and still lives to threaten mankind. The grotesque forms of its intellectual belief have survived the discredit of its moral teaching. Of this, what the kings could bear with the nations have cut down; and what the nations have left, the right heart of man by man revolts against day by day. You have stretched your hands to save the dregs of the sifted sediment of a residuum. Take heed lest you have given soil and shelter to the seed of that awful plague which has destroyed two civilisations, and but barely failed to slay such promise of good as is now struggling to live among men.—*W. K. Clifford.*

THE SKOPTSY.

IN Anatole Leroy Beaulieu's work on *The Empire of the Tsars and the Russians*, translated by Z. A. Ragozin, is an interesting account of the White Doves, or Skoptsy, who, like the early Christian father, Origen, endeavor to find peace for the soul by the emasculation of the body. In their hatred against the senses and the flesh, the Skoptsy go to the root of temptation. They hold that the surest way of attaining ecstasy and the gift of prophecy is to set the spirit free from the body's desires. In order to unite himself with God, man must become similar to the angels, who are sexless. These frenzied dreams and vagaries are poetically developed and set forth in their sectarian hymns. It is in allusion to this ideal purity at which they aim that the Skoptsy give themselves the symbolical appellation of White Doves. In their hymns they boast of being whiter than the driven snow. They are the pure, the saints who walk untainted through this world of sin, the virgin beings who, in the Revelation, follow the Lamb everywhere.

It is pointed out by the author that even in these mystics may be recognised the old Muscovite realism which insinuates itself even into Illuminism, materialising asceticism, and making salvation to depend on a surgical operation. The rock on which the Skoptsy take their stand is the text in Matthew xix. 12: "For there are eunuchs which were so born from their mother's womb; and there are eunuchs which were made eunuchs by men; and there are eunuchs which make themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake; he that is able to receive it, let him receive it." This text is buttressed by that other text: "If thy right eye lead thee into temptation, pluck it out and cast it from thee; if thy right hand leadeth thee into temptation, cut it off and cast it from thee." This advice these modern followers of Origen consider a command.

It appears that it is not usually on children or very young boys that the Skoptsy perform their characteristic rite, but on mature men, when the sacrifice is most grievous and the operation most dangerous. The mutilation is partial or complete, the latter being known among the sectarians as the "royal seal," the former as the "second degree of purity." Women are not always spared the gruesome baptism, but with them it is generally the faculty of nursing children which is destroyed, not that of bearing them. It seems, at first sight, that such a religion can recruit its followers only by means of proselyting. Yet this is not entirely the case. The Skoptsy do not absolutely condemn marriage and generation. Considering themselves as the elect of God, as the keepers of his holy teachings, there are those among them who think it right to bring into the world children, future propagators of the true faith. It is frequently only after the birth of a child that a father enters the purely spiritual state, and the child grows up with a knowledge of the sacrifice which, in his turn, will be demanded of him. The man who, when the hour has struck, would refuse to submit to the baptism of blood would become the target of his co-sectaries' vengeance, and they form a vast association, which spreads like a net over the whole empire, the members of which, like those of political secret societies, take it on themselves to do justice on traitors and deserters. Lugubrious tales are told on this theme. One Skopets, for instance, had a son who, when he reached man's estate, ran away from home, and went abroad and married. Fifteen years later he thought it safe to return to his native land. He was recognised by his father, and presently disappeared.

Whether for the purpose of perpetuating their tenets with their race, or the better to blind the authorities, the Skoptsy frequently marry; and, strange to say, these marriages, though entirely or prematurely barren, frequently appear happy, as though such unions were all the more peaceful from the absence of sexual passion. According to statements made to the author of this book, there are among the White Doves husbands good-natured enough to tolerate that their wives shall bear them children to which they themselves can lay no claim. Married or not, however, and with or without heirs of their own blood, the Skoptsy could not keep up their sect out of their own numbers. They have to look for proselytes, and, to get them, they spare neither pains nor wiles nor money. Wealthy merchants frequently devote their entire fortune to this propaganda, and there is, it seems, a great deal of wealth among these sectaries.

"Were I a banker," a Russian once said to the author of this book, "I should not want anybody for my cashier but a Skopets. For a cash-box, as well as for a harem, there is no safer keeper. At the bottom of every case of defaulting or breach of trust there is a woman. With these people you can sleep soundly and in peace." There is no doubt that millionaires are no rarities among the Skoptsy, and all their riches are devoted to the propagation of their sect. We may say further that these cruel fanatics are in daily life the mildest as well as the most honest of men. They are distinguished for frugality, probity, and simplicity of manners and habits. Their gatherings are harmless. They merely sing hymns and take communion in the shape of

bread made of black rye or purest white wheat flour. There is nothing criminal about them but their doctrine and their rage for making proselytes; yet even that is far less horrible than the greed of those parents in Italy who sell their children to be made soprano singers of. The number of the Skoptsy is said to be on the increase, though at present it is not estimated at over two or three thousand.

FAITH'S REVISION.

Satan.—Biblical translation, *Devil*; literally, an adversary.

Diabolis.—Biblical translation, *Devil*; literally, false accuser, calumniator.

Daimon.—Biblical translation, *Devil*; literally, a departed human spirit.

Sheol.—Biblical translation, *Hell*; literally, a pit or the grave.

THE servants of God have been recently busy—

Deans, bishops, archbishops—with learned research,
Poring over old Greek and Hebraic tomes hazy,
Commenting, connoting,
Discussing and quoting,
Revising "God's Word" for the good of their Church.

The result of their labours is patent before us,
Wherein we now learn the past errors of faith;
Old "Satan" no more lies in wait to devour us,
The rogue is a myth
Like old "Vulcan" the smith,
And his phantom existence on *this side of death*.

"Hell" means but "the grave" when 'tis rightly translated;

That we *all go to hell* cannot now be gainsaid,
Unless we are buried at sea, or cremated:

What frenzy and terror
Were due to this error!

E'en Reason half-stifled with sulphur seem'd dead!

These worthies should now re-revise their revision,

Expunge from its pages those barbarous tales
Of rapine and murder 'neath God's supervision!

Such tales are a libel
On God in the Bible,

Morality shocks, and shames Justice's scales.

Theology frowns on poor Freedom, despondent

Where'er Christianity's flag is unfurl'd;
The present and past furnish proof most abundant

That "priestcraft" 's the "devil"
Most potent for evil,

Sweet Liberty's bane, and the curse of the world.

"Be good and do good" is a creed short and simple;

Love to God and mankind is true happiness' source;
Man's Bible is Nature, the heavens his temple;

Virtue is heaven's jewel;
And Vice, the hell-fuel,

Will consume us to ashes of bitter remorse.

Education and Science march cheerily onward;

Priestcraft is in danger, and nothing can save,
Its course in the future must surely be downward;

The world is progressing
When priests are confessing

Their "Devil's" a phantom and "Hell's" "but the grave"!

Proclaim the glad tidings to every nation,

That man may no more superstitiously dread
The red furnace of "hell" and "eternal damnation";

E'en let the creeds perish,
This truth let us cherish—

Hell-fire is extinct and the Devil is dead.

H. N.

How to Help Us.

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

BOOK CHAT.

Puritanism in the Old World and in the New, by J. Gregory, of Edinburgh, is rather a panegyric than a history. It tells us nothing that is new, but puts things in as favorable a light for Puritanism as possible. Mr. Gregory would fain give the Puritans credit for establishing toleration, but he is forced to admit that Catholics, Anabaptists, and Quakers (he might have added Jews, Freethinkers, and supposed witches) came in for no share of the toleration which the Puritans claimed for themselves. The fact is, as Lecky notices, toleration is the offspring of scepticism. When men really believe in the awful reality of another life, any measure to put people on the right road thitherward becomes justifiable. There was something to admire in the earnestness of Puritanism, but it is false to claim it as a force making for complete enlightenment.

* * *

Volume i. of the new edition of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (Methuen & Co., 36 Essex-street) has a carefully-written Introduction of 36 pages, by the editor, J. B. Bury, whose *Later Roman Empire* has proved his competence for the task. Professor Bury mentions the progress of research since Gibbon. But, he says, "in the main things he is still our master, above and beyond 'date.'" It will be in the next volume that Gibbon's famous fifteenth and sixteenth chapters, on the rise, progress, and alleged early persecutions of Christianity, come under review, and we shall note with interest whatever Professor Bury may have to observe on those topics.

* * *

A curious book is *Without Sin*, by "Mr. Pritchard." The author, or, as we suspect, authoress, pictures a young Jewish girl, Mary Levinge, of the present time, who, like the carpenter's affianced wife, finds herself with child "without sin," and appeals to Isaiah vii. 7, in confirmation that such things may be. But any educated Jewess knows that that passage is a mistranslation, and that a young woman, not a virgin, is alluded to.

* * *

Three penny sixteen-page pamphlets reach us from the Manchester Labor Press, 59, Tib-street—one an address on *Character and Environment*, by Ben Tillett; another address on *The Socialist's Program*, delivered by Tom Mann at Aberdeen; and a thoughtful paper on Co-operation, by Caroline E. D. Martyn, who recommends the co-operative movement to Socialists.

* * *

Jésus Christ est-il un Personnage Historique ou une Fiction? by Citoyen J. Poupin, is a brochure issued by the Freethought Society at Argenteuil (21 Boulevard Thiers). The author, like many others who have seriously examined the question of the existence of Jesus, comes to the conclusion that there is no more evidence of the historic character of the hero of the Gospels than of the actual existence of the heroes of fairy tales.

* * *

The Child: its Origin and Development, by Dora Langlois (W. Reeves, 185 Fleet-street; 1s.), is, as stated on the cover, "a manual enabling mothers to initiate their daughters gradually and modestly into all the mysteries of life." Merely taking exception to the word "all," we should say that Mrs. Langlois carries out her object. Many a girl has had cause to regret that she had not such wise warnings in a serious tone, and from the proper quarter. But why should any mother wish her daughter to read Leviticus xviii.? This reference to the Bible seems to cover a shirking of maternal duty. The object of Mrs. Langlois is, however, excellent, and she will have the commendation of all who do not think that innocence is necessarily bound up with ignorance.

* * *

The Damnation of Theron Ware is an American story of the degradation of a Methodist minister. There is a good sketch of a pious Methodist of the old type, who expresses his views on religion thus:—"They tell me there's some parts where hell's treated as played out, where our ministers don't like to talk much about it, because people don't want to hear about it. *Such preachers ought to be put out. They aint Methodists at all.* What we want here, sir, is straight-out, flat-footed hell; the burnin' lake o' fire an' brimstone. Pour it into 'em, hot an' strong. We can't have too much of it. *Work in them awful deathbeds of Voltaire an' Tom Paine, with the devil right there in the room, reachin' for 'em, an' they yellin' for fright! that's what fills the anxious seat, an' brings in souls hand over fist.*" The Scotch Presbyterian elder expressed it even more pithily when he said: "A kirk wi'out a hell is na' worth a damn."

If a jackass were to describe Deity, he would represent him with long ears and a tail.—*Dod Grile.*

CORRESPONDENCE.

APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—During the last half century I have, in business and other matters, had interviews with several Church of England clergymen, who, without a single exception, claimed to be direct descendants of the Apostles. I sometimes feel disposed to admit of their claim, simply on the ground of their being all professional fishermen; but in other respects they materially differ, as our present-day Apostles, having the advantage of living in a more enlightened age, are not so stupid as to go about preaching gratuitously like their predecessors; neither, like them, are they satisfied with a few small fish only, but, with the aid of all sorts of alluring but questionable bait, they find no difficulty in filling their nets to the brim with both loaves and fishes.

T. DUNBAR HARRIS.

PROFANE JOKES.

"Yes," said the Christian Evidence man, "whenever we look back upon the untrodden paths of the future we see everywhere the footprints of an Almighty hand!"

Little Carrie had been instructed to learn a Scripture verse with the word "good" in it. Accordingly, her parents taught her, "It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath day." The little maid repeated her text many times softly to herself before the beginning of the general exercise, in which all the Sunday-school classes were to join. Then, when her turn came, she sent a ripple over the audience by reciting, in clear but lisping accents, "It is awful to be good on the Sabbath day."

This awful suggestion appears on the book-edges of a suburban church—"All kneelers should be hung up at the end of the service!"

Impecunious Lover—"Be mine, Amanda, and you will be treated like an angel." Wealthy Maiden—"Yes, I suppose so. Nothing to eat and less to wear. No. I thank you."

Bishop—"Do you think it is right to partake of this hash on Friday?" Low Church Clergyman—"Entirely orthodox; it is composed of the Thirty-nine articles."

Teacher—"Why did Joshua make the sun stand still?" Tommy—"I guess it didn't agree with his watch."

Rev. Thirdly—"Did Missionary Goodman succeed in introducing religious practices among the cannibals?" Returned Seaman—"Yes, I think he did. They said grace before they ate him."

There was a Kerry priest named Ned Shea, and he had the fashion of hearing confessions with a slate and a pencil; and he'd write down every sin, and the price of it opposite. Well, one day a big fellow came to him to do duty, and says he: "I bruk a man's head last Hallowe'en." "That's ninepence," says the priest. "I cut the tail off Larry Kelley's cow." "That's a shilling—Oh, begob, a shilling that is." And down it went on the slate. "I nearly murdered me wife twice." "That's threepence. Go on." "I kilt an Orangeman." "Whorro!" says the priest, wiping off his slate. "That clanes out all the rest."

Castleton—"Is it true that Miss Wiberley referred to me as an Agnostic?" Clubberly—"She said you didn't know anything."

A "Salvation Army" Convert.

I'm Scroggins, the noted house-breaker; I was thoroughly bad and depraved

Till I joined the Salvation Army; but now, thank the Lord, I am saved;

I never performed a good action, I always was tricky and mean.

I was always indicted a nuisance in every place I have been; I always was wicked and lazy, I always was drunken and low,

But I'm washed in the blood of my Savior, and now I am whiter than snow.

My parents are dead—they're in heaven—for better no man ever had;

But my mother I sent to the workhouse, and kicked in the street my poor dad;

I murdered my wife by ill-treatment, though a truer the world never saw;

From the time I was only a nipper I've never kept clear of the law;

But Jesus refused not to take me, though vile I had been for so long;

I now am as pure as a baby; if I wanted, I couldn't go wrong.

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.

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, G. W. Foote.
BRADLAUGH CLUB AND INSTITUTE (36 Newington Green-road, Balls Pond): 7.15, Moncure D. Conway, "The Domestication of Conscience." Monday, June 1 (8.30), concert.
CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, O. James, "How Stands Christianity Now?"
EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Reform Club, Well-street, Hackney): 7.30, F. J. Gould, "Mary Carpenter."
FINSBURY PARK (near band-stand): 11.15, E. Calvert, "Is there Design in Nature?" 3.15, A. Guest, "Following God."
KINGSLAND (Ridley-road): 11.30, R. Forder "The Exodus."
SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Surrey Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road): 11.15, Sunday-school; 7, Dr. Stanton Coit, "Ethical Culture as a Religion."
WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Westminster Town Hall, Caxton-street): 11.15, Dr. Stanton Coit, "Evil and Devil."
WEST HAM SECULAR ETHICAL SOCIETY (61 West Ham-lane): 7, Miss Jessie Craigen, "Anti-Vivisection."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

CAMBERWELL (Station-road): 11.30, C. James, "Morality in the Ages of Faith."
CLERKENWELL GREEN: 11.30, W. Ramsey, "Life Beyond the Grave."
EDMONTON (corner of Angel-road): 7, A. B. Moss, "The Devil's Doom."
HAMMERSMITH BRIDGE (Middlesex side): 7, A lecture. Thursday, at 8, Stanley Jones will lecture.
HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, R. P. Edwards will lecture; 3.30, R. P. Edwards will lecture. Wednesday, at 8, S. E. Easton will lecture.
ISLINGTON (Highbury Fields, Highbury Corner): 10.45, E. Pack, "The Confidence Trick."
KILBURN (High-road, corner of Victoria-road): 7, E. Calvert, "Is the Right of Free Speech Conducive to Truth and Progress?"
MILE END WASTE: 11.30, F. Haslam, "Who was Jesus?"
OLD PIMLICO PIER: 11.30, S. E. Easton, "Is the Bible Man's Highest Guide to Morality?"
REGENT'S PARK (near Gloucester Gate): 3.30, Debate, "Which is Better for Mankind—Christianity or Secularism?" Lecture and addresses to follow.
VICTORIA PARK (near the fountain): 11.15, J. Rowney will lecture; 3.15, C. Cohen will lecture.
WOOD GREEN (Jolly Butchers' Hill): 11.30, A. B. Moss will lecture.

COUNTRY.

HECKMONDWIKE (Lumbard's Coffee Palace, Market-place): 2.30, a meeting.
HULL (Cobden Hall, Storey-street): 7, Captain Monro, "Real Blasphemy."
LEEDS (Vulcan Club, Vulcan-street, Benson-street): 7, Report of the delegates to the Conference, and members' meeting.
LIVERPOOL (Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street): 7, J. Read, "God's Goodness."
MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, E. Evans, "Science the Friend of Man."
NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE (Northumberland Hall, High Friar-street): 11, Monthly meeting of members; business, Mr. Cohen's lecture on race week.
PLYMOUTH (Democratic Club, Whimble-street): 7, To receive reports of recent lectures, and of delegate to Conference.
SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street); Members' and friends' Excursion Tour. Meet in front of Victoria Station at 1.5. Train leaves for Wortley at 1.15; from there walk round by Wentworth Castle, and return home by 7.57. Train from Birdwell; return fare, 1s.
SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, King-street): 7, Business meeting.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

NORTHAMPTON (Cow Meadow): W. Heaford—11, "Is the Bible Reliable?" 6.30, "Religion at the Bar of Reason."
ROCHDALE (Town Hall Square): Mr. Thompson—3, "Is the Bible True?" 6.30, "Who are the Infidels?"

"THOROUGH."

The Bradlaugh Club and Institute,

36, NEWINGTON GREEN ROAD, BALL'S POND, N.

The only Freethought Hall and Club North of the Thames. Very easy of access from any part of London—near Mildmay Park, Dalston, and Canonbury Stations (North London Railway); Trams from Moorgate and Aldersgate Street, and Omnibuses from Victoria to Stoke Newington pass the Hall.

Lectures every Sunday evening throughout the year, and Lectures and Discussions on Wednesday evenings during the Winter months. A vigorous open-air propaganda carried on during the Summer months.

A Spacious Hall, comfortably seated, and well lighted. Elegantly appointed Club premises, Reading, Billiard, Coffee, and Committee Rooms.

The Committee Rooms are available for any Branch of the N.S.S. at a nominal rental of Sixpence. Several Branches now regularly hold their meetings here.

Over three hundred members have been enrolled. Terms of membership: Entrance fee one shilling, subscription four shillings per annum. Freethinkers in the country can become associate members for one shilling per annum.

All Freethinkers are invited to inspect the premises—Open from 7 p.m. every evening.

R. FORDER, *Hon. Sec.* | G. WARD, *Hon. Treasurer.*

Works by Colonel R. G. Ingersoll.

SOME MISTAKES OF MOSES. The only complete edition in England. Accurate as Colenso, and fascinating as a novel. 132 pp. 1s. Superior paper, cloth 1s. 6d.
DEFENCE OF FREETHOUGHT. A Five Hours' Speech at the Trial of C. B. Reynolds for Blasphemy. 6d.
THE GODS. 6d.
THE HOLY BIBLE. 6d.
REPLY TO GLADSTONE. With a Biography by J. M. Wheeler. 4d.
ROME OR REASON? A Reply to Cardinal Manning. 4d.
CRIMES AGAINST CRIMINALS. 3d.
ORATION ON WALT WHITMAN. 3d.
ORATION ON VOLTAIRE. 3d.
ABRAHAM LINCOLN. 3d.
PAINE THE PIONEER. 2d.
HUMANITY'S DEBT TO THOMAS PAINE. 2d.
ERNEST RENAN AND JESUS CHRIST. 2d.
TRUE RELIGION. 2d.
THE THREE PHILANTHROPISTS. 2d.
LOVE THE REDEEMER. 2d.
IS SUICIDE A SIN? 2d.

LAST WORDS ON SUICIDE. 2d.
GOD AND THE STATE. 2d.
WHY AM I AN AGNOSTIC? Part I. 2d.
WHY AM I AN AGNOSTIC? Part II. 2d.
FAITH AND FACT. Reply to Dr. Field. 2d.
GOD AND MAN. Second reply to Dr. Field. 2d.
THE DYING CREED. 2d.
THE LIMITS OF TOLERATION. A Discussion with the Hon. F. D. Coudert and Gov. S. L. Woodford. 2d.
THE HOUSEHOLD OF FAITH. 2d.
ART AND MORALITY. 2d.
DO I BLASPHEME? 2d.
THE CLERGY AND COMMON SENSE. 2d.
SOCIAL SALVATION. 2d.
MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE. 2d.
SKULLS. 2d.
THE GREAT MISTAKE. 1d.
LIVE TOPICS. 1d.
MYTH AND MIRACLE. 1d.
REAL BLASPHEMY. 1d.
REPAIRING THE IDOLS. 1d.
CHRIST AND MIRACLES. 1d.
CREEDS & SPIRITUALITY. 1d.

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

Superior edition, superfine paper, cloth, 2s., post free,

The Bible Handbook

FOR FREETHINKERS & INQUIRING CHRISTIANS

BY

G. W. FOOTE AND W. P. BALL.

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

Read "THE TRUTH SEEKER."

MONTHLY, PRICE 1D.

Edited by JOHN GRANGE.

Of all Newsagents to order. Wholesale, Mr. Forder.

POSITIVISM.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE.—Church of Humanity, St. Mary's-place. Service and Discourse every Sunday evening at 7.

SUNDERLAND.—Conversational meetings, open to all, at Mr. Coates's, 13 Derby-street, every Sunday, at 7.

Information and literature may be obtained from Mr. Malcolm Quin, Church of Humanity, Newcastle-on-Tyne, who will be willing to consider applications to deliver lectures on Positivism gratuitously and without expense, where such lectures may be desired.

ALLINSON FOR HEALTH.

IF YOUR BABY WON'T THRIVE,
YOUR BOY OR GIRL IS DELICATE,
YOU ARE ILL AND CAN'T GET WELL,
YOU WISH A SOUND BRAIN IN A HEALTHY BODY,

Consult DR. T. R. ALLINSON,

4 SPANISH PLACE, MANCHESTER SQUARE, LONDON, W.

Fee 10s. 6d. from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. To working classes, 5s., from 6 to 8 p.m.
DR. ALLINSON cures without drugs or operations. He has 10,000 consultations yearly. Send 10s. for his "Book of Health."

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

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

WHITE HART, ABRIDGE, ESSEX; thirteen miles from London. Cyclists and Beanfeasts specially catered for. T. MOODY, Proprietor.

☞ NOW READY, PRICE ONE SHILLING. ☞

THEISM OR ATHEISM:

WHICH IS THE MORE REASONABLE?

A PUBLIC DEBATE

BETWEEN

Mr. W. T. LEE, Lecturer to the Christian Evidence Society,

AND

Mr. G. W. FOOTE, President of the National Secular Society.

HELD IN THE

TEMPERANCE HALL, DERBY, MAY 15 and 16, 1895.

CHAIRMAN—J. W. PIPER, Esq., Editor of the *Derby Daily Telegraph*.

REVISED BY BOTH DISPUTANTS.

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

THE BEST BOOK

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

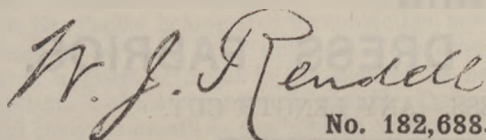
W. J. Rendell's "Wife's Friend"

Recommended by Mrs. Besant in *Law of Population*, p. 32, and Dr. Allbutt in *Wife's Handbook*, p. 51. Made ONLY at No. 15 Chadwell-street, Clerkenwell; 2s. per doz., post free (reduction in larger quantities). For particulars send stamped envelope.

IMPORTANT CAUTION.

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

LOOK FOR AUTOGRAPH REGISTERED TRADE MARK


No. 182,688.

IN RED INK ON EACH BOX, WITHOUT WHICH NONE ARE GENUINE
Higginson's Syringe, with Vertical and Reverse Current, 3s. 6d., 4s. 6d., and 5s. 6d. Dr. Palfrey's Powder, 1s. 2d. Quinine Compound, 1s. 2d. Dr. Allbutt's Quinine Powders, 3s. per doz. All prices post free.

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

WORKS BY CHARLES WATTS.

THE CLAIMS OF CHRISTIANITY EXAMINED FROM
A RATIONALIST STANDPOINT. 64 pp., 6d., by post 7d.

THE TEACHINGS OF SECULARISM COMPARED
WITH ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY. 1s., by post 1s. 2d.

CHRISTIANITY: ITS ORIGIN, NATURE, AND IN-
FLUENCE. 4d., by post 5d.

SECULARISM: DESTRUCTIVE AND CONSTRUCTIVE.
3d., by post 4d.

AGNOSTICISM AND CHRISTIAN THEISM: WHICH
IS THE MORE REASONABLE? 3d., by post 4d.

A REPLY TO FATHER LAMBERT'S "TACTICS OF
INFIDELS." 6d., by post 7d.

THEOLOGICAL PRESUMPTION. An Open Letter to
the Rev. Dr. R. F. Burns, of Halifax, N.S. 2d., by post 2½d.

THE NATURAL AND THE SUPERNATURAL; OR,
BELIEF AND KNOWLEDGE. 3d., by post 4d.

EVOLUTION AND SPECIAL CREATION. 3d., by post
4d.

HAPPINESS IN HELL AND MISERY IN HEAVEN.
3d., by post 4d.

SCIENCE AND THE BIBLE. 4d., by post 5d.

BIBLE MORALITY: Its Teachings Shown to be Contra-
dictory and Defective as an Ethical Guide. 3d., by post 3½d.

SECULARISM: IS IT FOUNDED ON REASON, AND
IS IT SUFFICIENT TO MEET THE WANTS OF MANKIND?
Debate between the Editor of the *Evening Mail* (Halifax, N.S.) and
Charles Watts. With Prefatory Letters by G. J. Holyoake and
Colonel R. G. Ingersoll, and an Introduction by Helen H. Gardener.
1s., by post 1s. 2d.

SECULARISM: ITS RELATION TO THE SOCIAL
PROBLEMS OF THE DAY. 2d., by post 2½d.

IS THERE A LIFE BEYOND THE GRAVE? Reply to
Dr. R. B. Westbrook. 3d., by post 4d.

SAINTS AND SINNERS: WHICH? 3d., by post 4d.

EDUCATION: TRUE AND FALSE. 2d., by post 2½d.

THE SUPERSTITION OF THE CHRISTIAN SUNDAY.
A Plea for Liberty and Justice. 3d., by post 4d.

THE EXISTENCE OF GOD; OR, QUESTIONS FOR
THEISTS. 2d., by post 2½d.

CHRISTIANITY AND CIVILISATION. 3d., by post 4d.

THE BIBLE UP TO DATE. 2d., by post 2½d.

WHY DO RIGHT? A Secularist's Answer. 3d., by post 4d.

WAS CHRIST A POLITICAL AND SOCIAL RE-
FORMER? 4d., by post 5d.

MISCELLANEOUS PAMPHLETS, Cloth 2s., by post 2s. 3d.

London: Watts & Co., 17, Johnson's-court, Fleet-street, E.C.

Two New Pamphlets by Ingersoll

Now Ready, price Threepence,

The Coming Civilisation.

An ADDRESS delivered in the Columbia Theatre, Chicago, on Sunday, April 12, 1896, to Members and Friends of "THE CHURCH MILITANT,"

BY

COLONEL R. G. INGERSOLL.

Also, by the same Author, price Threepence,

THE

FOUNDATIONS OF FAITH.

CONTENTS :—

1. The Old Testament.
2. The New Testament.
3. Jehovah.
4. The Trinity.
5. The Theological Christ.
6. The "Scheme."
7. Belief.
8. Conclusion.

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

48 Pages, beautifully printed and elegantly bound, price Sixpence,

THE

SIGN OF THE CROSS

A CANDID CRITICISM

OF

MR. WILSON BARRETT'S PLAY

BY

G. W. FOOTE

CONTENTS :—

- A Pious Play
- Blasphemous Abuse
- Melodrama
- "Claudian"
- Pagan and Christian Morality
- Pagan and Christian Torture
- Nero and His Vices
- Faith and Filth
- The Primitive Christians and the Roman Empire
- Fabulous Persecutions
- Paul at Rome
- The Neronic Persecution
- The Forged Passage in Tacitus : its History and Probable Origin
- Mr. Barrett's Cant
- The Real Sign of the Cross

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


BUY DIRECT FROM THE WAREHOUSE.

SPECIAL PURCHASE OF REAL BEAR FURS (Dark Brown). £2 each ; well worth £3.	This speaks for itself. 20 yards of BLACK ALPACA <i>For 21s. Carriage Paid.</i> We have only 500 yards left ; so hurry up.	BLOUSES (Beautiful Styles and Colors). ALL THE NEWEST GOODS. <i>Three for 5s. 6d. Carriage Paid.</i>
---	---	--

Mr. John M. Robertson's Great Speech

ON

"The Future of Liberalism" included in each parcel.

MEN'S SUITS 42s. to Measure.  WONDERFUL VALUE.	AGENTS WANTED EVERYWHERE TO Offer our Bargains.	MEN'S TROUSERS 10s. 6d. to 12s. 6d. to Measure. Worth nearly double.
--	---	---

GENTLEMEN'S CLOTHS and LADIES' DRESS FABRICS.

PATTERNS POST FREE TO ANY ADDRESS. ANY LENGTH CUT.

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