

# The Free Thinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

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## GOD'S WAYS.

SUPERNATURALISTS are usually strong in appeals to sentiment, and prefer abstract arguments to the common ground of hard facts. This is no wonder, for it is difficult to reconcile the facts with their theories. Every day the newspapers contain records of accidents and atrocities, the very existence of which seems incompatible with the divine government of all things as postulated by theologians. Optimists, who believe that everything is for the best, and who hold that all things work together for good to those who love God, usually shut their eyes to these aspects. Always evident to those who choose to look, such untoward events have crowded upon our attention within the last few weeks as should compel the most thoughtless to ask themselves if they are indeed in a world where all has been designed with a view to human good. The destruction of St. Louis and the horrors at the Czar's coronation have been followed by a fresh earthquake in Japan, destroying many towns and taking over ten thousand lives; and, since a small disaster near affects us more than a large one among a remote people, I must mention also the terrible shipwreck of the "Drummond Castle" off Ushant.

If you call the attention of the ordinary Christian to such disasters as these, he stands aghast, or, perhaps, utters some unsatisfying form of words such as Cowper's well-known verse:—

God moves in a mysterious way  
His wonders to perform;  
He plants his footsteps on the sea,  
And rides upon the storm.

Or he may indulge in some amiable imbecility about its being for the best if we knew all, which is poor consolation to fallible beings who cannot attain omniscience; or may advert to the few "providentially saved" as an offset to the number providentially slaughtered. I can envy neither the head nor the heart of those who are so wrapt up in saving souls as to be oblivious of the misery and suffering of this life that we actually know; and, since the doctrine of God's providence often makes people feel hardly towards those upon whom his judgments are supposed to have fallen, and stands in the way of self-reliant endeavor to remedy evils, it is the duty of those who do not believe in this providence, but do earnestly believe in human endeavor and mutual human helpfulness, to frankly say so.

God does indeed move in a mysterious way, if the recent disasters are samples of his movements. His ways are by no means ways of pleasantness, and if his paths are peace it is the peace of death. It may be said the Japanese are heathens, to whom God gave a warning to become Christians by his previous earthquake. But this cannot be said of the people of St. Louis, of the crowds trampled to death at Moscow, or of the passengers of the Cape liner. God can hardly have had any special anger against these. Nor is it easy to see why he should send most diseases and the heaviest mortality to little children. But, then, we are told that God is Love, and these are but his mysterious ways of manifesting his fatherly care. "The Lord loveth whom he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." This but tempts me to say that I hope this God will not get enamored of those I care for, and I shall try to avoid receiving any marks of his affection. Do not ask me to worship or pretend to love a being who has such very mysterious ways of displaying his love. When he is

out for a ride on a storm it is a caution to others to be out of his way. His ways should certainly not be our ways.

Some may say, "God does not send cyclones and earthquakes. They come in the ordinary course of nature." Does not, then, nature come from God? If we are to thank him for what we consider good, is he not responsible for that which we consider evil? Others may fall back upon the Devil; and, in truth, if what is advantageous to man is to be ascribed to a personal, good God, what is disastrous may as justly be ascribed to a devil, who shows himself not merely wickedly cruel and brutal, but utterly mad and senseless. But Christians may be reminded that it is their God who is said to have declared: "I will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh" (Proverbs i. 26); who says in the New Testament that he will come "in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. i. 8); and who is said to have made an eternal hell, and proclaimed "he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark xvi. 16).

No man—not the veriest Nero, or any monster of iniquity ever imagined—would do what is ascribed to God, nor, indeed, what are nature's everyday performances. For, from the human point of view, these disasters are purposeless. No man would suddenly gulf others in despair and death, wreaking most injury on the weak and helpless, on women and children. If a cyclone, sweeping through the States, were to leave untouched all the houses and churches, only rooting up the Paine Memorial Hall at Boston, and then passing to New York to blow down the *Truthseeker* office, and carry up Colonel Ingersoll and friend Putnam and land them on St. Helena; or if, when indulging in earthquakes and shipwrecks, God sank the synagogue wherein the infidels assembled in conference at Glasgow, or the boat on which they sailed up Loch Lomond, we might forgive Christians for finding something providential in the judgment. Since he does none of these things, we may be tempted to go on in our wicked ways, disregarding the threats of an eternal hell which he is said to have in store for us hereafter.

The recent disasters strikingly display the impotence of prayer. Thousands of prayers and cries of agony ascended to the throne of heaven, with no response. Is there a human being who would not have done his uttermost to save? Even when man takes life he does it with some discrimination. But what discrimination is shown in wholesale slaughter of men, women, and children? If God could select in Bible times, why not now? If he could destroy blasphemers in the days of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, why not to-day? If he could multiply one widow's cruse, why should any starve? If he answered the prayers of the prophets for rain, why should not people have the weather they desire now? It may be said it is lack of faith, but this means really increase of knowledge, that the meteorological conditions cannot be altered by human will.

Some Christians say that calamities are sent as "warnings." God kills so many people to warn others to repent of their sins. Would any man or woman act in this way? A lesson may indeed be derived from such events, and it is for this reason that we allude to them. That lesson is that it does not do to trust to any heavenly eye to pity, or to any celestial arm to save. Only in human thought and human endeavor is there salvation from the ills which afflict humanity. Shipwrecks, diseases, cyclones, and earthquakes are natural. Prayers and curses are alike

vain. But human study, science, forethought, and sympathy are of some avail. The natural state of things, the condition of mankind and of our surroundings as left by God, is simply horrible. It is human thought and human care that alone make life worth living, and separate civilisation from barbarism. The rough Breton fisher folk who aided the living and tended the dead washed up from the wreck of the ocean liner are more worthy of our reverence and regard than any fabled God.

J. M. WHEELER.

## THE ORIGIN AND NATURE OF SECULARISM.

### CHAPTER XIX.

#### APART FROM CHRISTIANISM.

"What is written by Moses can only be read by God."—*Bihar Proverb.*

SECULARISM differs from Christianity in so far as it accepts only the teachings which pertain to man, and which are consonant with reason and experience.

Parts of the Bible have moral splendor in them, but no Christian will allow anyone to take the parts he deems true, and reject as untrue those he deems false. He who ventured to be thus eclectic would be defamed as Paine was. Thus Christians compel those who would stand by reason to stand apart from them.

To accept a part, and put that forward as the whole—is to pretend or even to assume it to be the whole—is dishonest. To retain a portion, and reject what you leave, and not say so, is deceiving. To contend that what you accept as the spirit of Christianity is in accordance with all that contradicts it is to spend your days in harmonising opposite statements—a pursuit demoralising to the understanding. The Secularist has, therefore, to choose between dishonesty, the deception of others and deception of himself, or ethical principles independent of Christianity—and this is what he does :—

The Bible being a bundle of Hebrew tracts on tribal life and tribal spite, its assumed infallibility is a burden, contradicting and misleading to all who accept it as a divine handbook of duty.

In papers issued by religious societies upon the Bible it is declared to be "so complete a system that nothing can be added to it, or taken from it," and that "it contains everything needful to be known or done." This is so false that no one, perceiving it, could be honest and not protest against it in the interest of others. Recently the Bishop of Worcester said : "It was of no use resisting the Higher Criticism. God had not been pleased to give us what might be called a perfect Bible."\* Then it is prudence to seek a more trustworthy guide.

If money were bequeathed to maintain the eclectic criticism of the Scripture, it would be confiscated by Christian law. So to stand apart is indispensable self-defence. Individual Christians, as I well know, devote themselves with a noble earnestness to the service of man, as they understand his interests; but so long as Christianity retains the power of fraud, and uses it, Christianity as a system, or as a cause, remains outside the pale of respect. Prayer, in which the oppressed and poor are taught to trust, is of no avail for protection or food, and the poor ought to know it. The Bishop of Manchester declared, in my hearing, that the Lord's Prayer will not bring us "daily bread," but that "it is an exercise of faith to ask for what we shall not receive." But if prayer will not bring "daily bread," it is a dangerous deception to keep up the belief that it will. The eyes of forethought are closed by trust in such aid, thrift is an affront to the generosity of heaven, and labor is foolishness. But, alas! aid does not come by supplication. The prayer-maker dies in mendicancy. It is not reverence to pour into the ears of God praise for protection never accorded. Dean Stanley, admirable as a man as well as a saint, was killed in the Deanery, Westminster, by a bad drain, in spite of all his Collects. Dean Farrar has been driven from St. Margaret's Rectory, in Dean's Yard, by another drain, which poisons in spite of the Thirty-nine Articles; and Canon Eyton refuses to take up his residence until the sanitary engineers have over-

hauled\* the place, which, notwithstanding the invocations of the Church, Providence does not see to. To keep silence on the non-intervention of Providence would be to connive at the fate of those who come to destruction by such dependence.

O mother, praying God will save  
Thy sailor! While thy head is bowed,  
His heavy-shotted hammock-shroud  
Drops in his vast and wandering grave!

True respect would treat God as though at the least he is a gentleman. Christianity does not do this. No gentleman would accept thanks for benefits he had not conferred, nor would he exact thanks daily and hourly for gifts he had really made, nor have the vanity to covet perpetual thanksgivings. He who would respect God, or respect himself, must seek a faith apart from such Christianity.

A divine, who excelled in good sense, said: "Dangerous it were for the feeble brain of man to wade far into the doings of the Most High. Our soundest knowledge is, to know that we know him not; and our safest eloquence concerning Him is our silence; therefore it behoveth our words to be wary and few."†

Mrs. Barbauld may have borrowed from Richard Hooker her fine line :—

Silence is our least injurious praise.‡

An earnest Christian, not a religious man (for all Christians are not religious), assuming the professional familiarity with the mind of God, said to me: "Should the Lord call you to-day, are you prepared to meet Him?" I answered: Certainly; for the service of man in some form is seldom absent from my thoughts, and must be consonant with his will. Were I to pray, I should pray God to spare me from the presumption of expecting to meet him, and from the vanity and conceit of thinking that the God of the universe will take an opportunity of meeting me.

Who can have moral longing for a religion which represents God as hanging over York Castle to receive the soul of Dove, the debauchee, who slowly poisoned his wife, and whose final spiritual progress was posted day by day on the Castle gates until the hour of the hangman came? Dove's confession was as appalling as instructive. It ran thus :—

I know that the Eternal One,  
Upon his throne divine,  
Gorged with the blood of his own Son,  
No longer thirsts for mine.

Many a man has passed his life  
In doing nought but good,  
Who has not half the confidence I have  
In Jesus Christ, his blood.§

By quoting these lines, which Burns might have written, the writer is sorry to portray, in their naked form, principles which so many cherish. But the anatomy of creeds can no more be explained, with the garments of tradition and sentiment upon them, than a surgeon can demonstrate the structure of the body with the clothes on. Divine perdition is an ethical impossibility.

Christianism is too often but a sour influence on life. It tolerates nature, but does not enjoy it. Instead of giving men two Sundays, as it might—one for recreation and one for contemplation—it converts the only day of the poor into a penal infliction. It is always more or less against art, parks, clubs, sanitation, equity to labor, freedom, and many other things. If any Christians eventually accept these material ideas, they mostly dislike them. Art takes attention from the gospel. In parks many delight to walk, when they might be at chapel or church. Clubs teach men toleration, and toleration is thought to beget indifference. Sanitation is a form of blasphemy. Every Christian sings :—

Diseases are thy servants, Lord;  
They come at Thy command.

But sanitation assassinates these "servants of the Lord." In every hospital they are tried, condemned, and executed as the enemies of mankind. If Labor had justice, it would

\* See *Westminster Gazette* London Letter, November 19, 1895.

† *Ecclesiastical Polity*, book i., § 2.

‡ Charles Lamb was of this opinion when he remarked: "Had I to say grace, I would rather say it over a good book than over a mutton chop." Christians say grace over an indigestible meal. But perhaps they are right, since they need supernatural aid to assimilate it.

§ From a volume of verse privately circulated in Liverpool at the time, by W. H. Rathbone.

\* *Midland Evening News*, 1893.

be independent, and no longer hopeless, as the poor always are. Freedom renders men defiant of subjection, which all priests are prone to exercise. Secularism has none of this distrust and fear. It elects to be on the side of human progress, and takes that side, withstand it who may. Thus those who care for the improvement of mankind must act on principles dissociated from doctrines repellent to humanity and deterrent of ameliorative enterprise.

GEORGE JACOB HOLYOAKE.

(To be continued.)

### THE VOICE OF THE MAJORITY.

In our opinion, too much importance is attached, by the general masses, to the Voice—that is to say, the decision—of the majority. It is often assumed that what almost “everybody believes” must be right, whereas in many cases the very opposite is the fact, as the progress of human thought amply testifies. Much that at one period was regarded by the majority as being true is now acknowledged by the same Voice to be entirely erroneous. Take, for instance, the belief in witchcraft, and the opinion that the earth was flat. Not only did the general multitude accept these errors as realities, but men of profound learning endorsed them, and frequently the few who dissented from the popular view were persecuted, and some put to death. At the present day, however, with the exception of certain ignorant and fanatical enthusiasts, these exploded errors have no defenders. Thus, with the increase of knowledge and the spread of scientific investigation, the faith of the majority has had to yield to the good sense of the minority. Now, as history repeats itself, it is more than probable that what has occurred in reference to false ideas of the past will happen to the false beliefs which exist at the present time.

Granted that the voice of the majority is the acknowledged method of deciding the validity, or otherwise, of the many varied theories which are now set forth, it does not necessarily follow that the conclusions arrived at by this test are accurate. In fact, the history of the last quarter of a century affords many striking instances to the contrary. In the realms of politics, during the past two decades, the decisions of the majority have been of a most contradictory character. The present parliamentary majority give a very different verdict as to political duties to that arrived at by the previous Liberal Government, and there are thousands of electors who dispute the soundness of the judgment given in both instances. It is the same in regard to religious questions, for we find that the majority in one country decide in favor of Protestantism, while the majority in another country pronounce in favor of Roman Catholicism; but the decision in either case does not prove the truth of the claims advanced. It is never argued by Protestants that all Christians should subscribe to the Roman Catholic faith, although its exponents allege that all true believers ought to bow to its authority. Christians in general will not admit that Buddhism is true, because, as Rhys Davids says, “the living Buddhists far outnumber the followers of the Roman Church, the Greek Church, and all other Christian Churches put together.” There was a time when the members of the Church of England were in a majority of the Protestant worshippers; then they would not permit Dissenters to peacefully advocate their views, because they were not in harmony with the doctrines and methods of the “National Church.” If it is contended that what the majority do is right, then we are quite justified in absenting ourselves from church, inasmuch as the majority of the people, we believe, belong to no Church at all.

If we are charged with presumption in disputing the conclusions of the whole Christian world, we reply that, in this particular, we do no more than the members of the various Christian sects are constantly doing, in reference to the claim of each sect, that it has *the* truth upon its side. If it be true that any one particular denomination is the sole depository of “divine truth,” then logically it must follow that all other denominations, where opposite teachings are enjoined, must be in the wrong. It would not be deemed reasonable upon our part if we urged that the members of the Christian sects, which are in the minority, should join the congregations which comprise a majority,

simply on account of the superiority in numbers of the latter. We repeat that the most degraded beliefs in the worst forms of superstition have, in all ages, been those of the majority, while it has been the few only who have been brave and independent enough to adhere to what to them appeared to be true, irrespective of fashion and the opinions of others. It is manifest to many minds of the present day that the deification of fables, in which the majority delight, can in no way make fiction truth. The most favorable indication we could have of intellectual discrimination and mental honesty would be that our public teachers would cease to inculcate the notion that opinions upon religious and social questions should be based upon the necessarily imperfect conclusions of an ill-informed past; and, moreover, when such teachers shall no longer endeavor to enforce beliefs, as being true and useful, which they themselves have abandoned. Unfortunately, in theological circles it has been the habit hitherto of the majority to seek to fetter modern thought by ancient limitations; the intellect, however, of the nineteenth century has proclaimed that such a course is false and degrading.

In England we no longer establish religions by law, nor among intelligent thinkers is the truth of any faith estimated by the number of its adherents. True, non-conformity is recognised, in theory at least, as being one of the rights of citizenship, and therefore we urge that the extension of the principle of Freethought to its utmost limits is thoroughly justifiable. If there be any real value in the demand for “Christian liberty,” any well-thought-out and sincere conviction, whatever its nature may be, is entitled to fair play and no favor. The whole question of the rule of the majority in this country, in matters of religious opinion, is settled; and the Secularist’s claim to dissent from all religious teachings of an alleged supernatural kind is just as reasonable and equitable, although, through the bigotry of the Church, that claim is *not* settled. As Freethinkers, we owe no one an apology for maintaining the right to hold and to give expression to what we believe to be true. The interference with personal opinions has never been legitimate, whether it came from kings, priests, laymen, or governments. It was the exercise of a power which was the outgrowth of an age of oppression and arrogance, and was a gross violation of all progressive requirements. Still, it is a lamentable truth that ignorance of the laws of thought, and of individual rights, exists extensively to-day, which often renders difficult the performance of Freethought duties. The ready admission that all opinions deserve equal freedom is not yet so general as it ought to be.

Majorities, however useful they may prove under certain circumstances, do not necessarily afford any criterion of truth and falsehood, of right and of wrong. Numbers cannot affect the accuracy of science, any more than it can the correctness of our commonly-adopted system of arithmetic. Intelligent men would not think of putting the problems of Euclid to the vote, nor would they attempt to decide the truths of astronomy by a show of hands. It may be that a majority of persons, in arriving at conclusions upon given subjects, would be influenced by the opinions of scientists; but that would in no way affect the truth of what these scientists taught. Moreover, there is a vast difference between the man of science and the ordinary theologian. The former does not ask us to believe except when his statements have been verified by observation or experiment, or by both; neither does he ask us to regard the earth as being stationary because the majority once thought that the sun moved around it. Probably the majority of the world’s inhabitants still adhere to theological teachings for which science can find no reasonable justification.

But it may be asked, Are the opinions of an insignificant minority to be allowed the same opportunity as those of a large majority? We answer undoubtedly, Yes; for all opinions resulting from honest investigation and calm reasoning deserve the same freedom of expression, whether they be those of one man or of a million men. No doubt the individual who holds views that are not sanctioned by mankind in general may be expected to support his conclusions by very strong arguments; but that does not touch his right either to entertain or to express what he deems to be right. That the affairs of life are conducted upon the laws of probability, rather than on demonstration, is now the opinion of the majority of thinking men and women. Hence we claim the right, whether in agreement

with the many or the few, to accept those conclusions which appear to us to be of the highest thought, and to be based on the most probable certainties.

The following story, told in the New Testament, will illustrate our eclectic method of inquiry: "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast in the sea, and gathered of every kind; which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away" (Matthew xiii). In casting our net into the turbulent sea of theological opinions we adopt the method of the gospel fisherman—namely, we gather the good, and we cast away the bad. Whatever consequences may result from adopting this cause, we have the consolation of knowing that in following it we are true to ourselves, and just to those who differ from us, inasmuch as we willingly grant to them the same freedom as we claim. We thoroughly admire those who

Dare to be in the right  
With two or three.

CHARLES WATTS.

### CHRISTIAN PERSECUTION.

THE trouble is that each Christian sect believes that it is doing the will of God, consequently those who embrace different ideas are living in violation of some of God's commands; and, as God will punish such violations, the Christian insanely believes that he can do God a great favor by taking a hand in the punishment himself. Once a Christian believes that a man is pursuing a course which God will punish, and he is seized with the idea that God will regard him with favor if he administers the punishment in God's place. This seems to be the philosophy of all religious persecutions. The fact that the peaceable Quakers were whipped, banished, mutilated, hanged, and persecuted in every imaginable way which Christian ingenuity could invent goes far to show that there is an inherent tendency in the Christian religion to fly the black flag of persecution, and to give no quarter to any sentiment, creed, or sect which differs from it.

From the very nature of the case, those whose minds have been dwarfed by the Christian religion must be vindictive and cruel in their methods of opposition to those who differ from them.

Every sincere Christian must be intolerant—his sensibilities have been dulled, he has been put through the hardening process, and is dangerously insane.

In the first place, he believes in a being above the skies, who has no existence; that if he pleases this being he will be rewarded with eternal bliss, and if he displeases him he will receive everlasting punishment.

And, further, that this being has caused a book to be written from which he can learn the will of this great heavenly king, whom he fears and dreads; and that this great autocrat of the skies takes cognisance not only of his actions, but of his very thoughts. In this book he reads of cruel wars which he believes God commanded to be waged for no other reason but disobeying his will.

He believes that those who waged these inhuman wars were blessed of God, because they were doing his will by punishing his enemies. Hence, when the Christian believes that a man, or class of men, is acting contrary to what he believes to be the will of God, he feels called upon to administer such punishment upon him or them as he imagines his God would inflict, without any regard to justice or human rights. The Christian regards those who waged the wars in Bible times as instruments in the hands of God to carry out his will and punish his enemies. And he thinks that he can gain heavenly favor by doing the same. In a later edition of God's book he reads that an agent was sent down to transact business on earth for the principal who has his headquarters in heaven, and that this general agent deputed certain individuals to transact his business by proxy. And when they found a people who did not receive them and accept their doctrine, they were commanded to shake the dust from their feet and pronounce a curse upon that people. And the general agent commanded those who would not accept him as teacher to be brought before him and slain before his face. And he further said that if a man would not hate his wife and father and mother (I quote from memory), and raise "I" with the whole household, he could not be his disciple.

When a man is taught from youth that his conduct must be governed by such teaching, he will manifest all the instincts of a tyrant to those who differ from him. He cannot exercise his judgment; he cannot respect the rights of others, and is ready to engage in a crusade against those who entertain different views. He can never understand or appreciate that the principles of true democracy will prove a dangerous element in a free government, and the willing tool of ecclesiastics.

Christians are so much given to domineering and bullying that the different sects frequently worry and afflict each when they cannot unite upon a common foe. They proclaim peace on earth and goodwill to men; but this is only for those that think as they do. It is banishment and imprisonment, war and flame, hell and halter, for all who differ.

If proof of the truth of these statements were required, it is furnished by the fact that the Quakers were persecuted. They are a peculiar people. They do not believe in contention, litigation, or war. They are the only Christian sect I know of who never have persecuted. They are plain, peaceable, quiet, and unassuming; honest in deal and modest in behavior. Quaker measure is said to be more than just—it is generous. And if there is a people on earth with whom Christians could live in peace, the Quakers are such a people. Though they are advocates of peace and never persecute, they have been persecuted by other Christian sects in the most brutal manner.

In England their dwellings and churches were torn down or burnt, and other property confiscated or destroyed to the amount of over a million pounds sterling. At their meetings they were shot down and beaten to death with the butt-end of the soldiers' muskets. Many were confined for years in damp and loathsome dungeons with just stale food enough to keep them alive. The lowest and most brutal were never called to account, but often rewarded for insulting and beating and otherwise maltreating them.

In New Hampshire, October 27, 1659, two of the Quakers whom Thomas Macy had harbored were led to execution. They were attended by "two hundred armed footmen, besides many horsemen." When near the gallows a coarse, brutal priest tauntingly cried out: "Should such jacks as you come before authority with hats on?" The Quakers made no reply. The prisoners then ascended the ladder and embraced each other, and one of them said to the spectators: "I die not as an evil-doer." Again the priest cried out: "Hold thy tongue—be silent; thou wilt die with a lie in thy mouth." Their names were Robinson and Stephenson.

William Ledra was another who was executed for the crime of being a Quaker. He made a speech which is said to have wrought a great "tenderness" among the people. One Allen, an officious priest, whose business it was to render the doomed man odious, cried out: "I would not have you think it strange to see a man so willing to die; he is hardened in his sins." He commanded the hangman to make haste with Ledra and finish his days. But the friends gathered around the body and bathed it in their tears. And, after the hangman had stripped the body of its clothing, they laid it quietly away in a coffin.

Oh, the rarity of Christian charity! Now, in the name of all that is human, I ask what crimes these unoffending Quakers were guilty of? Will the time ever come when the freedom of thought will not be strangled by Christian cruelty? In the name of an imaginary being, whose existence never has been, and never can be, proved, these crimes have been committed. Should not every lover of human rights duly consider the danger of putting power into the hands of men who seek the blood of those who differ from them?

JOHN PECK.

—*Truthseeker.*

(To be concluded.)

### The Three Professions.

The doctors live by our diseases. These are real, though often avoidable, and better cured by being left to nature than to the druggist's pharmacopeia. The lawyers live by our quarrels. These, too, are real, but usually avoidable, and better remedied by straightforwardness and arbitration than by law. The parsons live by our sins. These are usually imaginary, and, when real, are beyond the efficacy of the parson's remedies, which are all of a post-mortem character.—*Celsus.*

### WITCHCRAFT IN AMERICA.

THE belief in witchcraft bore no less terrible fruit on the free soil of Protestant America than in Europe. Death sentences for witchcraft now and then occurred after the foundation of the New England colonies; but the last and most terrible outbreak took place in Salem, Massachusetts, as recorded in Upham's *History of Salem Witchcraft*, and in Drake's *Witchcraft Delusion in New England*. Under the baneful influence of the religious teachings of Increase Mather and his son, Cotton Mather, two Boston clergymen, the Rev. Samuel Parris, minister of the church in Salem, began to have a case of witchcraft investigated, which, as says President Andrew Dickson White, "would have been the richest of farces had they not led to events so tragical." The possessed behaved like maniacs in court, and charged a poor old Indian woman with having bewitched them. Her husband, an ignorant fool, was induced to testify against her. This easy success emboldened the believers in witchcraft, among whom the Putnam family played a prominent part. They began to prosecute some of the foremost people of New England; several men and women were executed, many fled for their lives, and a reign of terror ensued. Any person once suspected and accused was doomed. As an instance we quote the case of Mr. Burroughs, a clergyman who, on account of petty parish quarrels with the Putnam family, had been dismissed from the ministry. President White says:—

"Mr. Burroughs had led a blameless life, the only thing ever charged against him by the Putnams being that he insisted strenuously that his wife should not go about the parish talking of her own family matters. He was charged with afflicting the children, convicted, and executed. At the last moment he repeated the Lord's Prayer solemnly and fully, which it was supposed no sorcerer could do; and this, together with his straightforward Christian utterances at the execution, shook the faith of many in the reality of diabolical possession."

President White continues:—

"Ere long it was known that one of the girls had acknowledged that she had belied some persons who had been executed, and especially Mr. Burroughs, and that she had begged forgiveness; but this for a time availed nothing. Persons who would not confess were tied up and put to a sort of torture which was effective in securing new revelations.

"In the case of Giles Cory the horrors of the persecution culminated. Seeing that his doom was certain, and wishing to preserve his family from attainder and their property from confiscation, he refused to plead. He was therefore pressed to death, and, when in his last agonies his tongue was pressed out of his mouth, the sheriff with his walking-stick thrust it back again.

Increase and Cotton Mather were the last defenders of diabolical possession and witchcraft on American soil; the latter saw in his later years a new era dawning upon his country. Vigorously and successfully censured by Robert Calef, a courageous Boston merchant, he bemoaned the decay of the religious spirit among the growing generation, and even to his dying hour regarded the mere unbelief in witchcraft as an attack upon the glory of the Lord.

—*The Open Court.*

### THE EARTHQUAKE AT LISBON.

THE destruction of St. Louis by a tornado, and the just recent destructive earthquake in Japan, have recalled the still more alarming earthquake of Lisbon on November 1, 1755, which was attended by circumstances well calculated to strike the religious mind, and which did in Voltaire shatter all seeds of optimism. The first shock of the earthquake came without any warning. It shook the city to its foundations. The houses waded to and fro with such violence that the upper stories immediately fell, and crushed their occupants and the passengers in the streets to death. The motion of the earth was so vehement that it was impossible to stand upright, and the effects of so unexpected and frightful a concussion were rendered doubly terrible by a thick gloom which overspread the light of day. Thousands rushed into the street to escape being buried in the ruins of their dwellings, and made their way over heaps of rubbish to the great square in front of St. Paul's Church, to be out of the reach of falling stones.

The great church of St. Paul's itself had fallen, and involved an immense multitude in destruction. The 1st of

November was the festival of All Saints, and from an early hour the churches had been crowded with devotees and ecclesiastics. Most of these, in the act of religious worship, were at once killed or miserably mangled. Such of their congregations as escaped, including many of the dignitaries of the Church in their episcopal and purple garments, rushed to the side of the river as to a place of comparative safety. Priests in their sacerdotal vestments, ladies half-dressed, and an immense concourse of people of all ranks and ages, were here assembled, supplicating Heaven upon their knees, and with agonising shouts repeating their *Miseracordia mea Deus*. In the midst of their anguish and their devotions the second great shock came on, nearly as violent as the first, completing the work of destruction. The general consternation was at its height, and the shrieks and cries of *Miseracordia* resounded from one end of the town to the other. The church on the top of St. Catherine's Hill, after rocking to and fro, fell with a tremendous crash, and killed great numbers who had sought protection on that eminence. But the most terrible consequence of the second shock fell on those at the water-side, where the river, suddenly rising, swept the multitude into its vortex. The horror of the scene was enhanced by the fires which burst out in many parts of the city. As is usual in Catholic countries on days of high festival, every altar in every church and chapel was illuminated with wax-tapers and lamps; and these, falling with the curtains and timber-work during the convulsion, soon gave a beginning to the fire. The neighboring buildings caught the flames already kindled by kitchen and other fires in private dwellings, and spread them throughout the city. The destruction of life and property during the conflagration was almost equal to that caused by the earthquake, since it was six days before it was finally arrested and extinguished. The total loss of life in these several disasters is estimated variously at from 30,000 to 60,000 persons. In all the disaster religion, instead of being an aid, was an ever-present hindrance. Fanatics and pretended prophets rushed about the city and the neighboring parts, crying out that the end of all things had arrived, and that the earth itself was to be enveloped in destruction. It required a courageous mind to grapple with all these difficulties, since the fanaticism of a multitude, depressed by misfortune, is easily excited, and is especially to be feared. The Freethinking Marquis Pombal, who suppressed the Jesuits, caused many of these false prophets to be seized and led to exemplary punishment, soothing the superstitious horror of the people by declaring that they were robbers in disguise, who were anxious only to perpetuate the public disorder.

### SWEET JESUS.

How sweet the name of Jesus sounds  
In a believer's ear.

My uncle, Benjamin, in his sketch of the Jesuit (*Freethinker*, p. 395), reminds us that the Society of Jesus derives not only its name, but its authority, from the Christian idol. This is worth remembering. It was he who said that he had come not to bring peace, but a sword—to set a man against his own family. It was he who declared, "If any man come to me and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke xiv. 26). It was he who, while saying "he that believeth not shall be damned," yet Jesuitically charged those on whom he worked miracles to tell no man (Matthew viii. 4). It was he who Jesuitically dealt in parables "that seeing they may see and not perceive, and hearing they may hear and not understand." It was he who Jesuitically pretended to his brethren that he was not going up to the feast, when he followed them, "as it were in secret" (John vii. 2-10). It was he who requisitioned a donkey and a colt on the ground that the Lord had need of them (Matthew xxi. 5). It was he who, knowing Judas would betray him, yet accosted him—"Friend, wherefore art thou come?" (Matthew xxvi. 46-50), and who pretended to be another person to his disciples on the road to Emmaus, and "made as though he would have gone further" (Luke xxiv.). It was he who, when asked the plain question, Who art thou? Jesuitically replied, "Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning" (John viii. 19-25).

It is a curious thing that the Hindus, from whom we have taken a few words to enlarge our vocabulary, as well a good deal else to swell our treasury, have taken one word from us. It is the word "Jesus." With them it means a spy, a sneak—one who is trying to gain his own ends by dissimulation. Those who know how the followers of Jesus act towards the heathen will recognise how appositely the word is used in Hindustani.

E. P. MEREDITH.

The wise man looks to himself, the fool to others.—*J. P. Richter.*

## DIVINE BODY-SNATCHING; OR, WHEN GABRIEL BLOWS THE TRUMPET.

THAT precious volume, called "God's Word," by people who are green—

But which, to scoffing infidels, such food for mirth has been—  
Announces the performance of a body-snatching scene—

When Gabriel blows the trumpet by-and-by.  
Jehovah will skedaddle from his mansion in the sky,  
And come to *terra firma* in the twinkling of an eye;  
And from the tombs he'll snatch  
Every "body" with dispatch—  
When Gabriel blows the trumpet by-and-by.

Now, if the body-snatcher finds you "ready" when he comes,  
He'll say to you, "Well done, old pal," and give you "sugar plums";

But otherwise, with "acid drops," he'll irritate your gums—  
When Gabriel blows the trumpet by-and-by.

All those who've "found salvation" will be able to defy  
The law of gravitation, and ascend into the sky;

The rest will have to go  
To the bonfire down below—  
When Gabriel blows the trumpet by-and-by.

To snakes 'twill be a "caution," when the graves give up  
their dead,

To see a man, whose blood was on the field of battle shed,  
Rise up with neither legs nor arms, and minus of a head—

When Gabriel blows the trumpet by-and-by.  
Perhaps that soldier's head and limbs far from his body lie,  
And he will collar other men's, which happen to be nigh;  
If so, that "mother's son"

Will be three, or more, in one—  
When Gabriel blows the trumpet by-and-by.

And if the "Resurrection" married people reunites,  
Some folks will find themselves in strange predicaments and  
plights;

Oh! won't there be some squabbles, and some bickerings  
and fights—

When Gabriel blows the trumpet by-and-by.

Of "better halves" a man, perhaps, has had a large supply;  
When one has "kicked the bucket" he has formed another  
tie.

He'll catch it rather hot  
If he meets the blessed lot—  
When Gabriel blows the trumpet by-and-by.

There's no one on this mundane sphere who's able to aver  
The date on which this body-snatching's likely to occur;

But from the facts of nature wicked infidels infer—  
'Twill happen "when the pigs begin to fly."

They say there is no angel with a trumpet in the sky,  
For since the reign of Science he has had to "do a guy";

They see no cause for funk  
That in hell they will be sunk;  
They think that "Resurrection's" all my eye.

ESS JAY BEE.

## ACID DROPS.

THE Government has dropped the Education Bill, and the parsons will have to wait for their sops. No doubt they will get what they want next year. It is the money they are after, and all the rest of the Bill is of no vital importance to them. On the whole, the fate of the Education Bill is an illustration of the truth that big parliamentary majorities are powerless against public opinion.

It is reported that the Czar has stopped the inquiry into the Moscow disaster, as a number of high-placed persons were being implicated; and that the accident will be attributed to "the act of God." God seems to be a very useful friend to the ruling classes.

Down goes the "Drummond Castle" with all her crew and passengers, including several women and children. Only three persons were saved out of two hundred and fifty. Amongst the dead bodies recovered was that of a woman, clasping the corpse of her child to her breast. Even in death they were not divided. The clutch of love was stronger than the swirl of the ravening sea.

"God's in his heaven, All's right with the world." So sings the girl in one of Browning's poems. The first line may be true, for all we know—or care; the second line is a grotesque falsehood. "God's not in his heaven, All's wrong with the world," would be nearer the mark.

Mohammed Wad Bishara, Emir of Dongola, wrote a letter which fell into the hands of the British. Referring to the advance of the Egyptian forces, he counsels the Dervish leaders to exercise the utmost caution, adding: "For they are cunning, God curse them!" Good old Mohammed Wad Bishara! He is just like a Christian. "God curse them!" says the son of Islam. "God damn them!" says the disciple of Jesus. God Almighty is always expected to hate our enemies. What's the use of a God who won't do that?

The East does not alter rapidly, and among the Semites we still find the modes of expression current among the Bible prophets. Thus, preaching in the Mosque at Suakim recently, the Khalifa is reported to have addressed the faithful in the following terms: "Go to Dongola and fight, that you may win Paradise. I am inspired, and know that the end of the infidels is come. In Egypt they perish from cholera. Their troops will fall by your swords." All these prophecies are intended to bring about their own fulfilment.

"Go to Dongola" says the Khalifa to his followers, "and fight, that you may win Paradise." The Khalifa is not in a hurry to win Paradise himself. Like our own men of God, he will keep out of it as long as possible.

In the *Pall Mall Gazette* is a letter on M'limo, the Matabele God. The writer says: "There is not, I believe, any such person as the M'limo. It is merely a swindle, run by a circle of men who wear their hair long and call themselves his sons. No one, white or black, has ever seen the M'limo. The method of procedure is that the sons go round the people and drum up presents for the god to ensure good crops, etc." This, no doubt, would be considered horrible blasphemy in Matabeleland. It is surprising how rational people can be in regard to other people's religion, without ever thinking of applying reason to their own.

According to the last census, the population of India is 287,223,431, which is about one-sixth of the whole population of the world. Of these, 207 millions are classified as Hindus, 57 millions as Mohammedans, 7 millions as Buddhists, and 2 millions as Christians. Considering the length and cost of missionary enterprise in India, the character of the converts, and the fact that Christianity is the religion of the British rulers, it must be admitted that the Holy Ghost is a very slow proselytiser.

*The Nation*, the leading American economic and literary paper, says: "Interesting from an ethical point of view are the recently-published statistics of India, which show one convicted criminal out of every 274 Europeans, one to 509 Asiaatics, one to 709 native Christians, one to 1,361 Brahmans, and one to 3,787 Buddhists." Judged by the ethical test, the only one a sensible person would think of applying to rival religions each claiming divine origin, Christianity is a complete failure.

The Prince of Wales, who may reasonably expect soon to become head of the Church of England, went into the lobby of the House of Peers and voted for the legalisation of marriage with a deceased wife's sister. The Archbishop of Canterbury and eighteen bishops, all who voted, went into the other lobby with Lord Salisbury, but the measure passed by a majority of 29. It has previously been passed in the Commons, but not in the present Parliament, and it remains to be seen if in this matter the Government will follow the Church, which so far has only led it to disaster.

Thanks to our clericals, England remains almost the only country where such marriages are illegal. And the clerical law does little to prevent such unions. The poor "live tally," which does not promote respect for the legal tie, and the rich take a journey to the colonies, where the marriage becomes legal. The present state of the law, which restrains nobody, is only a part of our national hypocrisy, out of deference to the vested interests of the Church.

*Truth* reminds those in authority that the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885, and the Prevention of Cruelty to Children Act of 1894, admit the unsworn evidence of any child who does not understand the nature of an oath, "if in the opinion of the Court the child is possessed of sufficient intelligence to justify the reception of the evidence and understands the duty of speaking the truth." "To my mind," says the writer, "it is an absurd and anomalous state of things that children cannot similarly be accepted as witnesses without the theological test in all cases. As the late Mr. Justice Stephen pointed out, the practice (still sometimes adopted by wooden-headed Recorders and magistrates) of insisting on a child's belief in punishment in a future state for lying, as a condition for the admissibility of its evidence, 'leads to scenes little calculated to increase respect either for religion or the administration of justice.'"

Jesus said, "Take no thought what ye shall eat or what

ye shall drink," but at the missionary dinners they have the best of everything. The teacher added, "nor wherewithal ye shall be clothed," yet the garden parties at Lambeth and at Fulham Palace are said to be the most stylishly-dressed assemblies of the season, throwing the Hyde Park "Church Parade" into the shade.

The Buddhist community are very indignant that the Bengal Government appears to sanction the claim of the Hindus to the land at Bodh-Gaya, the sacred spot where Buddha is said to have obtained "enlightenment." It is said that the Collector of Gaya last month ordered the Maha-Bodhi Society to remove the sacred image of Buddha from Bodh-Gaya, intimating that unless this was done "the Government will take possession of the image, and will deposit it in the Indian Museum in Calcutta." This last threat is about as gross an affront as could be offered to the religious feelings of the Buddhists. To their minds the seizure of the image, the object of their worship, would be the most sacrilegious act imaginable.

The sessions of the Republican Convention opened with prayer. The Convention met at St. Louis, where "Providence" recently destroyed hundreds of people by a cyclone. It was a good place for praying to the Lord. The result is the election of McKinley as the Republican candidate for the Presidency. Of course it was all settled beforehand, so the malcontents needn't think the Lord had anything to do with it, after all.

The American Presbyterian General Assembly has solemnly declared that the Scriptures deny to women the right to preach. There can be no doubt that this is as truly Scriptural as it is senseless. Women are natural preachers. Probably the sky-pilots feel that when the petticoats get into the pulpit the males may get crowded out. Religion has always told woman to suffer and be silent. It is woman's proud prerogative to support the Church, and man's humble and arduous task to live on her contributions.

Dr. Agar Beet is gone on a visit to America on behalf of the Anglo-Armenian Association. His object is to arouse public feeling over there in favor of the ill-treated Armenians. But what does he expect they will gain by that? Dr. Beet should go to Russia instead of America. He knows very well—for he says so—that it is Russia that stands in the way of effective pressure being put upon the Sultan. Dr. Beet evidently prefers to take the easiest road as a missionary of humanity.

Japan seems very much favored by "Providence." An earthquake there has just slaughtered a thousand people, and it is since reported from Yokohama that the tidal wave which accompanied the earthquake was far more destructive to life. The wave extended over seventy miles of the north-east coast, destroying several towns, and drowning ten thousand people.

The *Joyful News* of June 18 chronicles another infidel conversion. The statement, which comes from W. A., of Tottenham, is that Brother M— was acquainted "with a German lady of great literary abilities. This lady challenged Mr. M— about the truths of the Christian religion, saying she did not believe in the God of the Bible, and that she had met so many professors of Christianity whose life was the opposite of their profession that she was inclined to question if there was such a thing as a real Christian, and asked our brother, pointedly, if he had ever seen one."

We are not told what Brother M— said to this. Can the Rev. Josiah Mee, of Tottenham, tell us? But it seems the lady shortly after went to Frankfort, Brother M— obtaining an introduction for her to the minister at that place. W. A. says: "He read to us a portion of a letter he had received from her, saying that, though she had been ill, she was now quite well in body and soul, having found peace in believing in Christ as her Savior, had joined the Church, and was now very happy." We should like the real names of these modest anonymous people, and also of the minister at Frankfort. The conversion of "this gifted lady" ought not to remain in the same category of the great unknown with that of the mutilated infidel who preached at Glasgow Cross.

The Rev. Henry Shrimpton, vicar of All Saints, Stoke Newington, was, if we mistake not, very active in seeking to exclude Freethought works from the local library. No wonder. It appears from a report of his Trinity Sunday sermon in the local *Gazette* that he is one of those who persist in defamatory lies concerning Voltaire, whom, he says, "gradually sank from Deism to Atheism till he worshipped the will of his sacred majesty—Chance." We challenge Mr. Shrimpton to give proof of this assertion.

The vicar went on: "In health and the vigor of life he spoke of death as a 'mere nothing'; but, when this

despicable nothing approached, the man who thought he had steeled himself and half Europe by his writings against the fear of another world said to his physician (Bungener): 'Had I followed your advice, I should not be in the horrible condition in which I am. I have swallowed nothing but smoke! I have intoxicated myself with the incense that turned my head! You can do nothing more for me! Send me mad, doctor. Have compassion on me, I am mad; I cannot think of death without shuddering.' Madness took possession of his soul because death was upon him." We ask Mr. Shrimpton also for his authority for this statement.

Cardinal Vaughan has expressed his views as to public meetings in the parks. He is reported as saying: "Although it is true that many people regularly go to Hyde Park who never enter a church, it is difficult to see how it would be possible to frame regulations which, while permitting religious services to be held, prevented other meetings of a less desirable character taking place, and, therefore, I, for one, should not be at all sorry to see the regulations as to Hyde Park so altered as to prevent any meeting—beyond, perhaps, the collection of a few persons—being held there at all." The utterance of the powerless Cardinal is but a mild hint of what might be expected under Rome rule.

Instead of interfering with free speech on religion in public parks, the authorities should try to check the rowdiness of our Sunday-schooled and Bible-dosed mob. A correspondent of the *Westminster Gazette* complains of the rude and rough treatment of young gentlemen belonging to the Chinese Legation in London. Just because they wear their own clothes in their own way, they are frequently molested, and sometimes pelted with stones, while occasionally they have to defend themselves against still more brutal attacks. Such behavior would be impossible in "infidel" Paris, whose inhabitants, though they may not be too pious, are at least courteous to strangers.

Cardinal Vaughan is reported to have arranged for open-air preaching by Catholic laymen in the parks and other open spaces in London. Among the preachers is said to be a well-known Queen's Counsel. We guess he will need all his professional wits if he is tackled by a Secular lecturer.

Rev. Richard Henry Cottar is not sound on the subject of infant baptism, and has been deprived of his benefice at Ardcanny, County Limerick, by the General Synod of the Church of Ireland. Fortunately the infants, whose baptism is the cause of the trouble, are not interested in the dispute. They don't care a straw which way it goes.

Lady Burton's religion gave her singular ideas of her duty towards her husband. She handed his works over to the editorship of the Secretary of the National Vigilance Society, whose threatened prosecution of his translation of the *Arabian Nights* made him say he would fight the Society in the Law Courts with a Bible under one arm and Shakespeare under the other; and to atone for this she leaves a franc a day to pay some priest for muttering a mass for the repose of his soul. Lady Burton was said to believe in spirits. We suppose she thought her husband too fast bound in Purgatory to appear to her. If she could have imagined his return and natural reproach, it surely might have overcome her subservience to the priests.

In the *Church Times* (June 19) appears the following: "Sir, will you allow me to draw the attention of Continental chaplains to the fact that the wife whom Archdeacon Butcher divorced is still living?—William Black." The meaning, apparently, is that Archdeacon Butcher is seeking to console himself for a bad experiment by making a fresh one, and Father Black is seeking to prevent him. How far Father Black may be responsible for Archdeacon Butcher living in concubinage or adultery might be a nice point for Christian casuistry.

Scotland prides itself on its superior piety, but a Scotsman, Mr. Daniel Rankin Stewart, giving evidence before a Select Committee of the House of Commons, said "they could see in Broxburn, with its 5,000 or 6,000 inhabitants, more drunken people in a day than could be seen in London in a week, even if they did nothing else than look for drunken people." Mr. Stewart is connected with the Broxburn Oil Works, and should know.

The London correspondent of the *Liverpool Courier* writes: "At four London churches, nominally belonging to the Church of England, masses were said one day last week. At St. Alban's, Holborn, the English Prayer Book was not used. The dead language of the Italian Church was poured into the ears of the Holborn working man in preference to the living eloquence and the grand simplicity of the English Prayer Book." The correspondent is evidently strongly evangelical, but there is no mistaking the fact that Evangelicalism is declining before Ritualism.

The Rev. Edward H. Sankey believes in aged pensions—

for the clergy. He says: "At sixty-five every clergyman ought to be sure of a pension of £200 for life." Of course, they are unable to save anything out of their beggarly stipends.

The Bishop of Marlborough, who appears to have been in receipt of £3,000 a year already, has been inducted to the fat living of St. Botolph's, Bishopsgate, which is worth about the same figure. This lucky priest is sixty-eight years of age—hardly young enough to take on a fresh job. Some of the parishioners objected and left the church when the institution was proceeding, but the Bishop of London went on with the farce, and charged the people to receive the aged pluralist as "a messenger sent by God's providence." Whatever these clerical creatures do God Almighty has to ratify and bless. They don't allow him a will of his own. After all, what is God but the figure-head of a vile conspiracy against the people?

The living of St. Botolph is worth another £3,000 a year, and the Bishop of Marlborough, in addition to his episcopal stipend, already has the incumbency of St. Michael's, Cornhill, a church without a congregation, for which he receives £2,000 a year. In the case of St. Botolph it had been promised that the £3,000 income was to be utilised for the augmentation of poor benefices in East London, on the death of the late Rev. Hang Theology Rogers.

At the last International Congress of Orientalists, held at Geneva, Professor Angelo de Gubernatis expressed his opinion that the Satan of Dante, and hence, too, of Milton and the Christian world, was mainly derived from Yama, the Indian God of Death. In fact, the last book of the Mahabharata affords some close parallels between the Hindu-Buddhist Hell and the Inferno.

Dr. Karapet has been writing on an Armenian sect of dissenters, which he thinks has descended from the Thoudrakians of the Middle Ages. They hold that, as Jesus was baptised at thirty, no one should baptise before that age. Those who do so only make the baptised person a child of Satan.

The Christian Endeavor people, over in the United States, were all praying for Ingersoll's conversion a few months ago. They are soon going to have a Convention at Washington. But a cloud has arisen on the glory of the movement. One of the Christian Endeavorers, Mr. Burchard, of Brooklyn, kept some letters by him, and they have fallen into the hands of his wife. They were written to this lady's husband by another Christian Endeavorer, Miss Boyd, of Ashby Park, New Jersey. Here is a sample from the bulk:—"My precious, how much I love you! I shall be waiting ready to be received into my lover's arms. Trust in God. Don't forget the Christian Endeavor Convention at Washington. One more big kiss like those at Walbrook Sunday afternoon." The recipient of this pious and amorous epistle will need all his "Trust in God" now that his wife holds the original manuscript.

Cardinal Gibbons has issued a letter on American politics, in which he hints that, if Mr. McKinley or any other candidate accepts the plank of the American Protective Association, the weight of the Catholic Church will be thrown on the other side. The Catholics may be expected, as usual, to vote the Democratic ticket.

At Stalham churchyard, Norwich, when a new grave was being dug out of a hole  $4\frac{1}{2}$  feet deep, bones sufficient to fill a half-bushel basket were thrown, some with the flesh barely decomposed, presenting a sickening spectacle. The churchyard is frightfully overcrowded, but it seems to be nobody's business to insist upon its being closed, or to put a stop to the revolting state of things which arises every time a fresh interment takes place; and the church taboos cremation.

The New York *Outlook* (non-sectarian) says that "if every minister, Protestant and Roman Catholic, Christian and Jew, orthodox and heterodox, should preach an annual sermon upon the duty of putting honest men in office, the clarifying effect would be as sudden as it would be surprising." The *Sun* very properly says that no such effect would follow, and adds: "In spite of all their preaching, the preachers have not yet produced agreement as to the application of religious principles to other matters than politics. They have not yet succeeded in bringing about unity of opinion among the Churches. How, then, can Dr. Abbott expect that they will accomplish that surprising result in a field where the difference of sentiment is sharper and bitterer than anywhere else, save in the special sphere of religion itself?" The *Sun* is right. There is much humbug talked about what the Church could do for morals. It has had a long innings, and what has it effected?

The Presbyterians, in assembly at Saratoga last week, passed a resolution praying for the "speedy extinction of

the Islam Empire." The men who voted for the resolution honor the memory of John Calvin, who burnt a man alive for a difference of opinion on the subject of religion—a crime so far unsurpassed by any subject of the "Empire of Islam." Strange that no Christian minister ever prayed for the extinction of the kingdom of the Devil.—*Truthseeker*.

The Rev. R. C. Fillingham, vicar of Hinton-Beds, has pointed out that the disendowment of the Church would solve the problem of providing pensions for the aged poor. A pension of 5s. a week after they reached the aged of 65 would require £1,500,000 a year; but the Church endowments amounted to £1,900,000, so that a substantial balance would still remain. Thereupon the vicar, in whose parish he lectured at Selston, denounces him as an ill bird, who takes the Church's money and fouls his own nest.

Mr. Labouchere has been showing up the doings of the Kilburn Sisters, who go about London collecting for the Church Extension Association, and philanthropic efforts connected therewith. The Charity Organisation Society some time ago made allegations as to alleged cruelty to children in the orphanages, and Mr. Labouchere was invited to look into the administration. He found the accountant denied responsibility for the books before June, 1895. The C. O. S. alleged that the children were restrained in bed by mechanical contrivances, which, Mr. Labouchere adds, constitute a serious danger in the event of fire, and in some instances were severely punished to make them confess charges of indecency. Other points of Mr. Labouchere's criticism deal with the practice of taking illegitimate children off the hands of their parents ("without inquiry") for a lump sum of money; the unfair competition of the Society's depôts for the sale of second-hand goods (contributed by charitable people); and the secession of several Sisters from the community in 1894, on the ground of their dissatisfaction with its administration and certain of its practices.

At the Derby Conference of the Young Men's Christian Association, Mr. R. Souttar, M.P., said: "Few Christians studied the Bible with care; many could hardly be said to study it at all. How few of them had more than a superficial acquaintance with its teachings." He thought increased study of the Bible would make better Christians. But this depends whether studied in the light of faith or of reason.

Mr. H. B. Wilson, who is hon. sec. of the Y.M.C.A.'s Bible-reading Union, confirmed the views of Mr. Souttar as to how little the Bible was now read. Among the vast multitudes of young men acquainted with the Bible, he asked what proportion even spent fifteen minutes a day in prayerfully reading the book itself? Without being a pessimist, he should dread the declaration of the result of a poll on this point. The Bible, he went on to say, must be read devotionally—that is, in an unquestioning spirit. Why, of course!

The *Twentieth Century*, of New York, says: "The English clergymen have made a very touching appeal to Americans generally, for aid in restoring the somewhat faded glories of Canterbury Cathedral. The sum needed is about \$20,000. It is certainly very odd that these Englishmen should be forced to beg such a sum over here."

The *Light of Truth*, which is now a sixteen-page Spiritist magazine, to which Mr. W. E. Coleman and Mrs. M. T. Longley contribute, states that Mrs. Kate Tingley, the new Mahatma, and successor to Blavatsky and Judge, who is now on her way to evangelise Europe, was for years a New York medium, and enjoyed the patronage of a large class of worthy people. But since the death of Newton, the millionaire, the cause of Spiritualism is not what it was, and it is no wonder that Mrs. Tingley wends her way Thibetward.

The *Sunday Chronicle* records the arrest, at Darwen, of a man charged with complicity in a big safe robbery at Leigh. In his possession was found a guide to religious faith, a number of religious publications, a temperance pledge card, and a well-thumbed pocket Bible. It was an outfit for a saint.

Seventeen churches were destroyed or injured by the devastation at St. Louis, and the damage to church property amounted to some 348,000 dollars. The destroying angel was no respecter of creeds; Catholic and Protestant churches went down together.

During the visit of "General" Booth to Melbourne (Australia) one of the reporters for an evening paper rose to leave the hall with his copy. "Brother," cried the "General," "you will be d— if you go now." "I shall be d— by the sub-editor if I don't go," was the reply. "But the Lord is greater than the sub-editor," said the "General," warningly. "The sub-editor does not think so," was the retort.—*Printer's Ink*.



### Mr. Foote's Engagements.

July 5 and 12, Camberwell.

### TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—June 28, (morning), North Brixton Gladstone Club; (evening), Athenæum Hall, Tottenham Court-road, London, W. July 12, Athenæum Hall, Tottenham Court-road, London, W.—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.

J. M. R.—Thanks for cuttings.

J. HILL (Chatham).—Mr. John Samson's book on *Inventions* (1s.) is published by Simpkin & Marshall, 4 Stationers' Hall Court, London, E.C. Mr. Samson's address is Dashwood House, 9 New Broad-street, E.C.

MONEYSWORTH.—We did not know that the proprietor of the *Sunday Companion* is also the proprietor of *Paddock Life*, running one in the interest of piety and the other in the interest of gambling. Whether he goes to heaven or hell, he means to have friends in both places—and the cash here to go on with.

E. SMEDLEY.—(1) The average of efficiency in Board schools is considerably higher than in Voluntary schools. This is proved by the efficiency grant. (2) Luther's views on polygamy were pretty much what you imagine.

COMMUNICANT (Northampton).—We regret to hear of Mr. Stimpson's death; we believe he attained a very ripe old age. He was a Secularist, though he took no active part in the movement, at least during late years. He was one of the oldest supporters of Charles Bradlaugh, whom he often entertained at his house.

W. C.—There is a Reader's Bible, edited by Professor Moulton, that might meet your requirement. But it will not include all the books of the Bible, we believe; and collectively it would be rather expensive for working-class pockets.

W. CALDER.—Our best regards to you and yours.

P. HARWOOD.—Pleased to hear that Mr. Heaford had such a large audience at Elmton, and that your meetings constantly improve.

W. B. THOMPSON, 61 College Avenue, New Brompton, Kent (Chatham Branch), would be glad to receive practical suggestions from any of our readers who have them to give, as to the best means of retaining the interest and attendance of the elder scholars (boys and girls) in a Secular Sunday School. Mr. Thompson has an idea of forming reading circles, and to take some good work of fiction first. He asks us what book we would suggest. Well, one of these:—George Eliot's *Adam Bede* and *Mill on the Floss*, Dickens's *David Copperfield* and *Nicholas Nickleby*, Thackeray's *Pendennis* and *Vanity Fair*.

H. JONES.—Sorry we cannot refer you to such statistics in England.

DELTA.—You are probably right about the paragraph. Mrs. Macdonald's "Iliad of the East" is a condensation, and a good one, of the Ramayana, which has been translated completely, and published, we believe, at Calcutta. Mrs. Macdonald's book is published by Longmans. We think the price is 7s. 6d. Mr. Foote's pamphlet, *The Sign of the Cross*, of which you speak so highly, is selling fairly well; it cost a good deal of labor.

JOHN WALKER.—Thanks. See acknowledgment of subscription to Lecture Scheme. The rest will be acknowledged by the respective secretaries.

THOMAS DUNBAR.—Thanks for your encouraging letter.

D. KAY.—Obliged. See "Acid Drops."

MR. FOOTE'S LECTURE SCHEME.—Collected by W. Calder, 2s. 6d.; Lux, £2 2s.; John Walker, 10s.; Thomas Dunbar, 2s. 6d.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Wellington Journal—Daylight—Open Court—Hackney and Kingsland Gazette—Light of Truth—Derby Daily Telegraph—Two Worlds—Clarion—Nya Sanningar—New York Public Opinion—Freidenker—Der Arme Teufel—Boston Investigator—Progressive Thinker—Truthseeker—Post—Isle of Man Times—Reynolds's Newspaper—Twentieth Century—Free Review—Daily Mail.

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

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

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

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

RAMSEY-KEMP TESTIMONIAL FUND.—D. Colville, 10s.; R. Gibbon, 2s.; J. Pearson, 6d. Per J. Knowles (Blackburn)—N. Ashworth, 1s.; L. Whitehead, 1s.; J. Howarth, 1s.; S. Titherington, 1s.; Mr. Ainsworth, 1s.; J. Leach, 1s.; S. Hampson, 1s.; Mrs. Knowles, 1s.; H. Jones, 1s.; R. Ashworth, 1s.; Mr. Harley, 6d.—G. WARD, *Hon. Treasurer*.

### SUGAR PLUMS.

OWING to Mr. Watts's indisposition, which we are happy to say is not serious, Mr. Foote lectured at the Athenæum Hall, Tottenham Court-road, on Sunday evening. Mr. Watts will lecture there this evening (June 28), and on the following Sunday the platform will be occupied by Mr. Cohen.

Mr. Watts will take for his subject this evening (June 28) at the Athenæum Hall: "Why the Government Dropped the Education Bill." The subject should attract a good meeting.

The New York *Journal* of June 3 gives on its front page an illustration entitled "Miss Ingersoll Refuses the Bible." The account, which has the first place in the paper, tells how Miss Maud R. Ingersoll, when riding in a Broadway car, noticed a team of horses being driven alongside, one of which had three raw sores on its neck just where the collar encircles it. She at once signalled her car to stop, and called the driver of the team to draw up and notice the condition of his horse. He attempted to drive on. A crowd and a policeman came, and the case was brought before a magistrate. When the young lady was asked to take the oath, she at once demurred, and explained that she did not believe in the Bible; she preferred to assert her intention of telling the truth in some other form. So the magistrate permitted her to make a simple affirmation. The prisoner was held on bail for trial. Miss Maud's pluck and humanity evince her stock. No wonder the Colonel is proud of his daughters, as they are of their father.

The Rev. Mr. Myers (Unitarian), of Shrewsbury, is one of the few ministers who think of the rights of others as well as those of their own body. At a meeting to consider the Education Bill, he reminded the audience that there were others besides Catholics, Churchmen, and Nonconformists whose rights should be protected. He said: "What is wanted, should this 27th clause of the new bill remain, is a declaratory clause making it clear that any parent objecting to the religious instruction given in a public elementary school shall not be required to send his child to such school till the time marked for calling the register, just prior to the commencement of secular work." This statement was received with applause.

The Humanitarian League is publishing through Bell & Son the addresses given under its auspices last winter at the Memorial Hall on the Rights of Men and Animals. One of these addresses, entitled "A Secularist View," was given by Mr. Foote. The volume will be on sale in a week or two.

The Annual Excursion of the West London Branch takes place to-day (June 28), by the Great Western Railway, to Taplow. The train leaves Paddington at 9.45 a.m., and the return journey can be made by any train. The river scenery is most charming, and just now is at its best. The fares are, for adults, 2s. 9d.; children half-price. Friends wishing to join in this trip should make immediate application for tickets to F. Todd, 21 Abdale-road, W.

Our Liverpool friends take their Annual Picnic on Sunday, July 12. This year they go to a beautiful spot, Burton, in Cheshire, by wagonettes, which start from Birkenhead Ferry entrance at 2.15. The tickets are 3s. 6d. each, which includes wagonette fare and knife-and-fork tea at Burton. Members and friends who wish to join this delightful trip should give their names to the secretary at the hall, or by post to J. Roberts, 99 Saxony-road, not later than July 5, after which date no places can be guaranteed.

The *Star of the East*, a Hindu monthly published at Calcutta, notices the Humanitarian League's edition of Mr. Foote's *Shadow of the Sword*.

The *Journal of Education* offered a prize for the best list of twenty men to form the nucleus of an English Academy. Here are the names in the order of selection:—Ruskin, Swinburne, Lecky, G. Meredith, H. Spencer, J. Morley, T. Hardy, Andrew Lang, W. Morris, W. E. Gladstone, Leslie Stephen, R. Kipling, F. Harrison, W. Watson, S. R. Gardiner, Sir E. Arnold, Max Müller, Barrie, Besant, Stubbs. The reader will note the high percentage of avowed Freethinkers.

Mr. S. P. Putnam is on a long lecture tour in the Western States. One place he has visited is called Owatonna. The soil is rich there, and the scenery superb. "If I owned one hundred acres here," says Putnam, "I think I should be a happy man. I wouldn't exchange it for the Garden of Eden."

George Macdonald replies in the New York *Truthseeker* to our recent strictures on his depreciation of George Meredith. "It is immediately apparent," he says, "that Mr. Foote and myself would never reach a theoretical agreement, for the

writing of which he speaks slightly—namely, that ‘which the reader can follow with his mind as rapidly as his eye glances along the lines’—is, in my estimation, the only kind worthy to be aimed at, and I know of no better exponent of that style than Mr. Foote himself.” Well, we think we had better let the matter stand as it is. After all, controversy is useless on a question of taste. All of us cannot see alike, nor feel alike; and this truth need involve no invidious reflections. But we beg to assure George Macdonald that our recognition of George Meredith’s genius is based upon more than twenty years’ close acquaintance with his writings. What we have found in them is not to be annihilated by argument. We must rely upon our own perceptions.

Mexico is not the priest-ridden country it used to be. According to the *New York Independent*, all church property in that country now belongs to the government, convents and monasteries have been suppressed, and Church and State are totally separated. Peculiarity in dress is forbidden to the priests, and sectarian schools depend entirely upon their own resources for support.

Secularists on Vestries should note that Mr. Denman decided that the owners of the Baptist Chapel, Arodene-road, Brixton Hill, were liable to the Vestry under Section 105 of the Metropolitan Local Management Act, 1855, for their contribution towards the cost of paving the thoroughfare, and made an order for payment of £116 17s. 11d., with £2 5s. costs.

Dr. Joseph Parker writes to the *Times* (June 22): “I am not a secularist in education. I am a separatist. I would have the State teach literature, and the churches teach religion.” He gives the voting at the referendum on the subject in South Australia.

The Melbourne *Spectator*, a Wesleyan organ, says the people will not have State and denominational schools. “They have said no with much emphasis in South Australia, and they will say no in Victoria quite as emphatically when their turn comes.” English Nonconformists ought to learn something from this, but they will not when they allow themselves to be led by men like H. P. Hughes.

The *Free Review* for July opens with a scathing criticism of the metaphysical evolution of Professors Drummond and Calderwood, entitled “Biology with a Snuffle.” Geoffrey Mortimer follows with an appreciative notice of M. Zola’s *Rome*. Mr. J. M. Robertson begins a paper on “Shakespeare and Montaigne,” giving many instances of the use of Florio’s translation of Montaigne by our great dramatist. Mrs. Walter Grove writes on “What Children should be Told,” dividing her subject into two branches—on Religion and on Physiology. In each case she advocates candor with discretion. On Religion she says emphatically truth is the first consideration, above expediency and above respectability. Why, she asks, should it be considered wise or expedient to teach the young to reverence what the parents do not believe? Mrs. Grove urges, upon those who have attained the atmosphere of Freethought: “Do not hesitate to afford your children, through fear of the world’s uncomprehending disapproval, the same liberty which you yourselves enjoy.”

The *Literary Guide* (Watts & Co.) is enlarged this month (July), and the price is raised to twopence. It reaches us almost as we are going to press, and we have not been able to scrutinise its contents. But we can see at a glance that it is a very interesting number, and we believe it will attract a large number of new readers.

Mr. A. B. Moss is booked to lecture shortly at Blackburn, Rochdale, Todmorden, and probably Bolton, under Mr. Foote’s Lecture Scheme. Other places in the vicinity that would like a visit from Mr. Moss should write to him at once at 44 Credon-road, London, S.E.

The London Freethinkers’ Annual Excursion, under the auspices of the National Secular Society, takes place on Sunday, July 19. A special train will convey the excursionists to Margate, Broadstairs, and Ramsgate. Tea for the whole party will be provided at Munn’s Hotel, on the Margate front, at 5 o’clock. Mr. Foote, Mr. Watts, Mr. Forder, and other well-known Freethinkers, will join the party. The tickets are 4s.—children half price, and obtainable at 28 Stonecutter-street, or from any London Branch secretary.

Every religion founded on the fear of an invisible power is a tale that, avowed by a nation, bears the name of religion; and, disavowed by the same nation, bears the name of superstition.—*Hobbes*.

Truth is a thing to be shouted from the house-tops, not to be whispered over rose-water after dinner, when the ladies are gone away.—*Clifford*.

## LITTLE SAVIORS.

ALL parties have their little saviors; at least all parties that I have ever been acquainted with, or that I have ever read of in history. They are generally persons of a certain ability, of which they are sufficiently conscious, but they cannot get themselves recognized as leaders. Somehow or other they are not taken at their own valuation. They never wield the influence to which they fancy they are entitled. Others are basely or stupidly preferred before them. The result is that they view everything with jaundiced eyes. They perceive the rottenness of affairs in the party they belong to, and they proceed to tender what they regard as very judicious advice. If they are listened to, the party may be saved; if not, it is certainly doomed. And they particularly wish it to be observed, and afterwards remembered, that the responsibility for whatever misfortunes or disasters may happen must be laid at other doors than theirs. Having mentioned this with grave emphasis, they resign themselves cheerfully to witness the realisation of their predictions.

There is another and still worse class of little saviors; men who are animated by personal pique and ingrained contentiousness. Effeminately sensitive, and easily offended, they are capable of harboring malice for twenty years, or for a whole lifetime. They have no particular ability or force of character, but they find a way of asserting themselves. They can do nothing, or very little, themselves; but they obstruct those who can, and that is something, especially when it is done on grounds of “principle.” They bear a resemblance to the man who burnt down the famous temple of Ephesus, and thus gained a certain immortality. A lighted torch and a bad temper were equal to that achievement. It takes very little capacity to spoil or hinder the work of others. A dead jackass can stop the whole traffic in Cheapside. He can do nothing else, but he can do that.

During my presidency of the National Secular Society I have had occasion to study several of these little saviors. They have often made me the subject of their reflections, but I have rarely condescended to notice them. In the long run it is best to leave them to the law of gravitation. Besides, it is a natural penalty of my position to be misrepresented, and even to be maligned; and it is a waste of time and energy to be too sensitive to what is inevitable. William Cobbett used to say, “If a flea bite me, I will kill it if I can”; but he nearly ruined his temper by too much flea-killing. There was that in his writings which would outlast the memory of his enemies and detractors.

Occasionally, however, it is advisable to break silence, even at the risk of giving the enemy a fresh opportunity to blaspheme.

Several friends have sent me copies of a circular headed “A Word to Secularists.” The writer deals pretty freely with me, but it did not occur to him to send me one himself. “It is not intended for broadcast distribution,” though I hear that hundreds have been circulated; but “copies will be sent post free on application to G. Standing, 7 and 9 Finsbury-street, London, E.C.” Well, I will save my readers trouble, and Mr. Standing his postage; and show at the same time how little I fear his criticism. What follows is the whole of the circular, except a closing prophecy about the future success of the writer’s proposal, and a plaintive protestation that “it is better to have tried and failed than never to have tried at all”—which is hardly controvertible:—

“In view of the lamentable condition to which the organised propaganda of Freethought in this country has fallen, I issue this leaflet in the hope that something may be done, upon independent lines, to infuse new vigor into the work.

“When our great leader passed away, in the early days of 1891, there seemed little or no reason to despair of the future of the Secular party. A few of Mr. Bradlaugh’s most active helpers (the group somewhat fantastically described as ‘The Old Guard’) stood around the President who had succeeded Mr. Bradlaugh as the elected head of the National Secular Society. Branches were numerous and in fairly good working order. For a year or two the propaganda of Freethought was carried on with vigor and resolution; but, one by one, the ‘Old Guard’ retired from an association which became intolerable to them; and for a considerable time the Society has practically been a private adventure carried on with a few picturesque adjuncts of a representative character. A motion on the Agenda-paper of

the last Conference, in the name of one of the Vice-Presidents, openly proposed to formally abolish the direct representation of Branches on the Executive. The fact that, 'in the interest of harmony,' the motion was (*pro tem*) abandoned shows that there still remains a healthy instinctive love of democracy among Secularists. This, indeed, is one of the few features of the situation which inspire a tepid hope for the future.

"A glance at the actual position of affairs in the Secular party demonstrates the urgent necessity for a new departure. For the first time in nearly thirty years the party is homeless. Under Mr. Foote's leadership the Hall of Science has been lost to us, and our historic meeting-place may become a factory or warehouse, even if no worse fate befall it. In his 'Report' to the recent Conference, Mr. Foote airily dismissed this disaster as a mere incident of small import. 'A change of address,' he declared, 'is not a funeral.' But a funeral is a change of address; and when a man's address is changed (say) from Tottenham Court-road to Finchley Cemetery we are apt to regard him for all practical purposes as *dead*. The loss of the Hall of Science is the most serious blow that the Secular party has sustained since the death of its one real leader, five years ago.

"It is not alone at the centre that this disintegrating process has gone on. A policy of ignoring unpleasant or discreditable facts may for a time succeed in concealing the truth; but the facts remain, and their consequences cannot be stifled. It is known, in spite of careful suppression, that certain Branches of the National Secular Society have seceded; but probably no one outside a very small circle knows *how many* have gone, or are about to go. When the fact that the Nottingham Branch had withdrawn could no longer be concealed, its action was reported to the Executive with an 'explanation' that had no appreciable relation to the facts. When the whole of the vital element in the Finsbury Branch seceded, it was represented in the *Freethinker* that a knot of traitorous malcontents had happily left the Branch. There are other cases, but of these I have not sufficiently full or accurate knowledge to warrant me in making specific reference to them.

"The few sentences which I have devoted to this subject seem to me to establish a case for independent action in organising the work of Secular propaganda. I will now describe, as briefly as possible, my own position, and indicate the line along which a revival of our movement appears possible.

"I am no longer a member of the National Secular Society. Five years ago I deemed it wildly improbable that I should ever live to write those words. But the course of events forced me to sever, one by one, the links that bound me to the Society: and in November, 1894, I resigned a highly-prized position, that of a vice-president, which I had held for sixteen years. The resignation was personally tendered to the Executive, and my stated ground was dissatisfaction with the general conduct of affairs. The Executive did not feel sufficiently interested to ask me a single question; my resignation was formally accepted; and the august body then proceeded to 'next business.' No report of that meeting has ever been published, and probably many Secularists have not noticed the omission of my name from the list of officers. When a large majority of the Finsbury Branch, which I subsequently joined, elected to withdraw from the Society, I withdrew with them, in January last.

"I do not propose, either here or elsewhere, to discuss at length the causes which led to my separation from the N.S.S., or to criticise the affairs of a Society of which I am not a member. The story, to be complete, or even intelligible, would be a long one, crowded with a thousand details which would be wearisome, yet essential to full understanding. The important thing is that many persons desire to work for Freethought who cannot and will not associate themselves with the existing agency. For myself, I can conscientiously say that my enthusiasm for the Secular cause is as keen to-day as it was twenty-three years ago.

"What, then, can be done to bring these isolated and wasted forces into fruitful co-operation? My suggestion is that a Secular Propagandist Committee be formed; and to that end I invite every Freethinker willing to associate himself or herself with such a body to communicate with me at the address given below. When fifty names are enrolled I will convene a meeting."

Some of my readers will doubtless think I am attaching too much importance to this circular in reproducing it in this fashion. But there are certain statements in it which I may be expected to contradict, and, while doing so, I will make some statements *per contra*. This, indeed, is my chief reason for noticing it at all; and, on the whole, one may as well print the thing in full, so that it may not be said that I have merely taken extracts to suit my convenience.

I will number my comments and make them as brief as possible:—

(1) The "lamentable condition" of organised Freethought propaganda is a morbid dream of the writer's sick imagination. But if the Secular party is going to the dogs, I do not believe Mr. Standring is able to save it. When the Duke of York told Charles II. that he was in danger of assassination, the witty monarch replied: "Have no fear, brother James; they will never kill me to make you king." I think the National Secular Society is safe enough, if the only alternative is Mr. Standring and his committee.

(2) "One by one" the "Old Guard" retired from the Executive. Those who retired did so one by one. I admit it. But they were only two altogether—Mr. Standring and Mr. Reynolds. I am not aware of a third.

(3) Mr. Watts's proposal for strengthening the Executive only concerns members of the National Secular Society. It will not be discussed with outsiders.

(4) Mr. Standring says "the party is homeless." It is an insular statement, made by a Cockney. Do the Secularists of Manchester, Liverpool, Glasgow, etc., find the "party"—of which they are surely important sections—in this "homeless" condition?

(5) The loss of the Hall of Science was not "airily dismissed" at the last Conference. It was stated in the Report that the matter had been sufficiently explained to the Secular party, and the Conference endorsed the statement.

(6) The loss of the Hall of Science is said to be a very "serious blow." Assuming it to be so, what did Mr. Standring do to avert it? He was president of the Club, which was to be the principal source of revenue. Under his fostering care, instead of paying £400 a year, it paid £175 the first year, £125 the second year, and £50 the third year. And when the final troubles commenced Mr. Standring and his friends on the Committee played right into the hands of Mr. Smith, instead of trying to help the party. I had to set the solicitors in motion to prevent their handing Mr. Smith the keys, over the heads of the Directors.

(7) There was no "concealment" about the secession of the Nottingham Branch. The secretary's letter announcing the fact was read by Miss Vance in the usual way to the Executive. That other Branches have seceded, and that the fact is concealed from the Executive and the party, is a statement too ridiculous for confutation. The case of the Finsbury Branch has been published in the *Freethinker*. Whether the "vital element" is in the Branch, or amongst those who left it, time will show. But no one doubts that Mr. Standring joined the Finsbury Branch for the purpose of creating mischief.

(8) Mr. Standring appears to think the Executive has been slighted by the President, yet he sneers at it as that "august body" when it affronts his self-esteem. He complains (he has complained *before*; it seems to weigh on his mind) that the Executive asked him no questions when he tendered his resignation. Well, let us look at the date. It was November, 1894. At that time the Club Committee, led by Mr. Standring, was defying the Directors and the Executive, who unanimously protested against the hall being let for a scandalous and disgusting exhibition, which was politely called "a boxing contest." Mr. Standring's resignation was tendered in the midst of that trouble, and it is not surprising that the Executive "did not feel sufficiently interested" to ask him "a single question."

I have now to say that I am quite indifferent to any outsider's opinion of the National Secular Society. The Glasgow Conference was free and open. Branches and individual members were at liberty to place whatever they desired upon the agenda. Had the Finsbury malcontents not cut themselves off, they might have been represented at the Conference, with a view to ventilating any legitimate grievance. I was re-elected President without a dissentient voice or vote, and I can afford to smile at the statement that the Society is "a private adventure." I have certainly undertaken, with the Society's approval, to continue the Lecture Scheme, which has given a fresh impetus to Secular propaganda in all parts of the country, and I believe it will be fairly supported. If others choose to attempt schemes of their own, let them do so. They will not engage me in any further controversy. Let them go their own way; and perhaps they will be sobered by facing their own responsibilities.

G. W. FOOTE.

## TYPES OF RELIGIONISTS.

## II.—THE RITUALIST.

THE Rev. Vavasour Verisoph prides himself on being of good family. A maternal ancestor was mistress to Charles II., whose dictum, that "the Church of England is the religion for gentlemen," is quoted approvingly by the Rev. Vavasour Verisoph, with the proviso that the High Church alone represents the Anglican branch of the Catholic faith in its integrity. The Low Church is to be classed with those miscreants of the "Deformation," the Protestants, and are scarcely a grade above his *bête noir*, "the dissidence of Dissent." The Low Church is, he says, not only low, but vulgar—and vulgarity is the worst of sins. The six points of Ritualism he holds to be as necessary to the religion of a gentleman as the Chartists held the six points of the Charter essential to the true political faith. Altar lights and incense are the two items which call out all the profundity of his nature.

The Broad Church, he holds, is nothing but disguised infidelity. Let the Church make its own laws in Convocation, and it would soon rid itself of these vipers now nourished at its bosom. He hates Erastianism even more than Evangelicalism. The function of the State is to see that the Church is properly respected. Beyond this, any pretence to authority is an usurpation. He refuses to acknowledge the jurisdiction of the Privy Council, and holds among his heroes the Rev. Mr. Green, the Rev. Bell Cox, and others who have gone to prison in defiance of the law. His favorite virtue for the "lower orders" is being law-abiding. He looks back with the greatest admiration to Archbishop Laud as the type of the true Churchman. Like Laud, he hates all Nonconformity—would suppress it if he could—speaks much of the beauty of holiness, and holds there is no holiness save of the Catholic type.

He cants much of beauty and art, and of how the Church has elevated the tastes of the people. Stained-glass windows constitute his ideal. They must be of aesthetic colors, and depict saints of unearthly hue and lantern-jawed expression. He does not permit lay interference with Church affairs. Apostolical succession creates a difference between clergy and laity, which is one, not of degree, but kind. The laity are all very well in their way as supports of the Church, but they must never pretend to any share in its rule. Their main duties are to attend the services as early and often as possible, to take fasting communion regularly, and to provide the offertory. After failure to shell out the funds, there is no greater sin on the part of a congregation than to take evening communion, or to have anything in their stomachs to mingle with the holy bread and wine into which the blessing of the priest has imparted the Real Presence.

The Ritualist is great among women. He is eloquent on their work in the Church—viz., to provide it with flowers and embroidery, and himself with fine vestments. The "service of the altar" is often on his lips with the injunction to give God of our best, and the duty of casting our riches into the treasury of God. He approves of confession, nay, insists on it in the case of young girls, at the delicate age when they ripen into womanhood. Only thus can they be confirmed in the ways of grace. For the rest he is neither rigid nor Puritanical. Puritanism, indeed, he hates; not so much for its intolerance as for its earnest opposition to sacerdotalism.

Is he sincere in his religion? Well, like Mustapha, he believes that he believes. He thinks religion is a good thing, and he knows it brings him a comfortable living. He has opinions on altar-lights, birettas, and chasubles; but it is almost absurd to speak of the Rev. V. Varisoph's thoughts upon any subject of importance. He has little brains to speak of, and had he not been born of good family, with a silver spoon in his mouth, would have found it difficult to get his living as a bus-conductor. You might fancy that, like so many charlatans who live by pumping the east wind into the bellies of their patients, or parishioners, he laughs in secret at their credulity. You would give him credit for too much discernment. No doubt he would have been a considerable knave had not an inscrutable Providence ordained that he should be a consummate fool. He has been brought up in such a way as never to have any perception of the falsity and folly of his faith. The works of the late E. B. Pusey and the leaders of the *Church Times* are his idea of literature. Darwin and Huxley are only names of dire import—heretics who have led many from the true Church, but whose writings he would no more think of reading than of perusing those of Socinus or John Knox. He sincerely regards the Church as the bulwark against Secularism, Socialism, and Anarchy, and thinks the main thing necessary to the welfare of the country is that the whole of the bishops shall reflect the views of the Rev. Vavasour Verisoph.

UNCLE BENJAMIN.

A freeman thinks of nothing so little as of death, and his wisdom is a mediator, not of death, but of life.—*Spinoza*.

## BOOK CHAT.

Mr. MALCOLM QUIN, director of the Church of Humanity, Newcastle-on-Tyne, has published through Mawson, Swan, & Morgan a pamphlet (2d.) on *The State and Education*. It is an appeal to the ministers and representatives of all denominations. As a Positivist, Mr. Quin believes in religion, and also in a Church; and he calls upon the ministers of the theological Churches to free religion from all State patronage or control. The family first, and afterwards the Church, are the proper schools of religious training. The State has no business to extemporise a religion for the public schools; and, on the other hand, to recognise all religions in the public schools is to sanction indifference. This is the core of Mr. Quin's argument, and *practically*, of course, we thoroughly agree with him. But calling two different things by the same name does not necessarily lead to a recognition of identity, or even of similarity; and we suspect that the ministers of the theological systems—Christians, Jews, and Deists—will regard Mr. Quin's advice as the Trojans should have regarded the gift of the Greeks. Still, we desire to acknowledge the force with which Mr. Quin's appeal is written. "Let us not," he says, "disestablish the belief of centuries only to establish the dogmas of a day"; "there can be no true progress or religion without liberty."

\* \* \*

Most of our readers know about *La Bible Comique*, a French publication ridiculing the Bible stories, chiefly by illustrations, to which a little text is attached. It is not so well known that there is a burlesque of the Koran written in Arabic by one Moseylemah, and appreciated for its coarse humor in many parts of the Moslem world, in which inter-communication is rapidly spreading the seeds of Free-thought.

\* \* \*

That able writer, Mr. I. Zangwill, is now bringing out in the *Illustrated London News* a serial entitled "Uriel Acosta." The story is founded on fact. Uriel Acosta was, like Mr. Zangwill, a Freethinking Jew. He was born in Portugal in 1597. His father had been nominally Christianized, and Uriel was brought up as a Christian. Like Heine, he came to regret that he had ever given adhesion to the patched faith which had persecuted his ancestors. He had a Christian benefice at Oporto, but for having reconverted his mother and brethren he had to fly the country. He went to Holland and joined the synagogue, but issued a work in which he adopted the opinions of the Sadducees, and was stigmatised as an Atheist, and, like Spinoza, excommunicated. He was, moreover, denounced to the magistrates, fined, imprisoned, and his work suppressed. A marriage he had contracted was broken off; insults and persecutions were heaped upon him. He was scourged in the synagogue, and at length blew out his own brains in despair. Gutzkow has written a tragedy on Uriel Acosta, but the bare facts are found in Bayle, and are condensed in Mr. Wheeler's *Biographical Dictionary of Freethinkers*.

\* \* \*

Emile Zola has at last been accused of plagiarism, and of having taken much of the material for his *Rome* from a work entitled *Le Vatican, les Papes et la Civilisation*. M. Zola admits having carefully read, and, as we should say, utilised, it among others. M. Zola's method of work is well known. He seeks from books, as well as from living witnesses and by travel, all the documents necessary for a right understanding of the case. For each new romance he surrounds himself with a new library, selecting what suits his purpose. To accuse him of plagiarism is absurd. He never gives any one to understand, and no one should be absurd enough to suppose, that all his characters and incidents are sprung from his own brain. He swallows, assimilates, and recreates what he has taken from others; and this he holds to be the true function of a romancer who seeks to give an epitome of his age.

\* \* \*

In the number of *La Figaro* in which M. Zola writes on "Les Droits du Romancier" he gives many interesting details of the works to which he is indebted. The account of the death of Coupeau from *delirium tremens*, for instance, in *l'Assommoir*, was the textual reproduction of the observations of a physician at an hospital. For his *Rome* he used many works beyond those mentioned. He instances M. Nitti's *Le Socialisme Catholique*, *Le Cardinal Manning*, by the abbé Lemire, and a crowd of others. M. Zola, in short, reads so much for the production of his works that it is ridiculous to specify any one book to which he is indebted. He holds that he is fully within his rights. His own progeny is sufficiently large to preclude the idea that he wishes to steal the children of others.

\* \* \*

The *Literary World*, noticing Miss Martineau's condensation of the *Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte*, says of the French philosopher: "No one can read him without a sense of his magnificent gifts, and of his absolute devotion to what

he believed to be the truth. No modern student, whatever his school, can afford to ignore Comte."

\* \* \*

The late Mr. Froude, in his last *Lectures on the Council of Trent*, recently published, remarks: "The history of Europe for a hundred years was the history of the efforts of the Church, with open face or secret conspiracy, with all the energy, base or noble, which passion or passionate enthusiasm could inspire, to crush or annihilate its foes. No means came amiss to it, sword or stake, torture-chamber or assassin's dagger."

\* \* \*

Mr. W. T. Stead has a hysterical article in this month's *Review of Reviews* upon "The People's Bible History," published by Sampson Low & Co. The review is illustrated by a facsimile of the Siloam inscription placed upside down; Mr. Stead's Hebrew being probably a bit rusty. Mr. Stead gives a summary of the views of the different writers, from which it appears that they all contradict one another. Professor Sayce proves conclusively that the book of Daniel is a forgery; Dr. Moore is just as conclusive that it is genuine. Dean Farrar's views are all denied by Mr. Gladstone in another part of the same book; and the "People's Bible History" seems only likely to show that no two theologians can agree upon anything. Mr. Gladstone talks largely about Christianity being the dominant religion, and says that 500,000,000 of the earth's inhabitants are "professing Christians"; although the Grand Old Man's statistics are not likely to be swallowed by anyone having the least acquaintance with the subject. Mr. W. T. Stead comforts himself with the thought that, although the Higher Criticism has proved the Bible to be a comparatively late collection of Jewish books, fabricated by unscrupulous priests for their own purposes, yet it is still possible to believe in the volume as a record of Divine revelation!!

\* \* \*

*Le Magazine International* (Paris: 91, Avenue Niel) gives as frontispiece a portrait of Edward Carpenter. A translation from his brochure on Marriage follows. There is also a translation of one of Shelley's most ethereal poems, "Epsychidion" by Mme. Tola Dorian, who has already rendered "Queen Mab," "Hellas," "Prometheus Unbound," and "The Cenci" familiar to French readers. It also gives a portrait of Magalhaes Lima, the leading Portuguese Freethinker, editor of the *Seculo* and author of *O Papa perante o Seculo* (the Pope before the Age), *Padres e Reis* (Priests and Kings), and *O Livro da Paz* (the Book of Peace).

\* \* \*

From the Antipodes we receive *Lyrics: Religious and Irreligious* (Korumburra: E. C. Oliphant, Radovick-street). It has as its motto the following lines:—

In the name of the God of Love,  
Who reigneth not above;  
In the name of the mind of man,  
By priests put under ban;  
And in scorn of the worshipped God  
Who doth good with a whip and a rod;  
And in scorn of His church's curse  
I bid thee forth, my verse.

After this we are not surprised to find that the lyrics are of a decidedly irreligious character, though the author has evidently had a very religious training. He takes up such subjects as God's Curse, the Hope of Immortality, Christ, Heresy, Prayers, etc. The following, though the least refined in the book, is one of the most quotable:—

#### THE IDIOT.

Look at 'im sittin' there, worse 'an a babby, sir—  
That's what he is: he's just a God-damned silly 'un—  
Why, I dunno: not 'alf the brains o' tabby, sir.  
I'm told it's wrong to say that God's a villyan  
For makin' a poor devil of a manikin,  
Such as this 'ere 'un—wicked and undootiful  
To arst why, when in His infernal pannikin  
God messed up men, He made some on 'em bootiful,  
Some on 'em rich, some on 'em big, some plucky 'uns,  
Some 'appy on nex' to nothin'—an' that's curious!  
And some on 'em He seems t' have made real lucky 'uns,  
While some He's curst with everythin's injurious.  
His best-made fools suffer from Christianity;  
The cussed things praise Him, th' Creator of insanity.

\* \* \*

The *Young Man* is a very goody Christian journal, and we are not surprised to find that in its July number it treats Max Nordau as a Jew, though he is as decided a Freethinker as ever was Uriel Acosta or Benedict Spinoza. It, however, says: "Nordau has lived for years in Paris, where he has cured the ailments of the poor with a devotion beyond all praise. Decidedly, if he has no religion, he can at any rate say with Abou Ben Adhem, 'Write me as one who loves his fellow-men.'"

## ODIUM THEOLOGICUM.

THEY met and they talked where the cross-roads meet,  
Four men from the four winds come;  
And they talked of the horse, for they loved the theme,  
And never a man was dumb.  
And the man from the North loved the strength of the horse,  
And the man from the East his pace,  
And the man from the South loved the speed of the horse,  
The man from the West his grace.

So these four men from the four winds came,  
Each paused a space in his course,  
And smiled in the face of his fellow man,  
And lovingly talked of the horse.  
Then each man parted and went his way  
As their different courses ran;  
And each man journeyed with peace in his heart,  
And loving his fellow man.

They met the next year where the cross-roads meet,  
Four men from the four winds come;  
And it chanced as they met that they talked of God,  
And never a man was dumb.  
One imaged God in the shape of man;  
A spirit did one insist;  
One said that Nature itself was God;  
One said that he didn't exist.

But they lashed each other with tongues that stung,  
That smote as with a rod;  
Each glared in the face of his fellow man,  
And wrathfully talked of God.  
Then each man parted and went his way,  
As their different courses ran;  
And each man journeyed with war in his heart,  
And hating his fellow man.

S. W. Foss

## PROFANE JOKES.

At a suburban church the pastor, after giving out a long list of banns of marriage, exclaimed—"Father forgive them, for they know not what they do. Hymn 115."

Boston is said to be a poor place for revivals, because the inhabitants are afraid that if they are born again it may be in somewhere else than in the Athens of America.

"Is this hot enough for you?" asked Satan. "Purty warm," admitted the newly-arrived oldest inhabitant, "but I remember some fifty years ago, when it was so durn hot that—" The attendant imps, at signal, seized him and shoved him down seven stories nearer the bottom which isn't there.

An old man, who had been dreadfully henpecked all his life, was visited on his death-bed by a clergyman. The old man appeared very indifferent, and the parson tried to arouse him by talking of the King of Terrors. "Hout, tout, man, I'm no scar't. The King o' Terrors! I've been living sax and thirty years with the Queen o' them, and the King canna be muckle waur."

The church in a little New Hampshire town was struck by lightning and burned to the ground, and arrangements were made for holding services in the Town Hall on the following Sunday. Deacon K— led in prayer at a meeting held before the preaching service. He was a shrewd, close-fisted old man, and in his prayer he said: "We feel to be thankful, O Lord, even though it was thy lightning that destroyed our house of worship, or, rather, thy house of worship. Make us to bow humbly to thy will in this matter, recollecting with gratitude, as we do, that it was insured to its full value, if not a little more."

Some years ago the clergyman of the parish, accompanied by his staunch ally, the clerk, called on a Quaker on clerical business. They found him about to sit down to dinner, and presented their demand. "Oh, I see it is for the Easter offering, as thee terms it. Well, wilt thee walk in, friends, and take a bit of dinner?" The invitation was gladly accepted. After dinner they partook of a glass of genuine home-brewed, and a pipe of excellent returns; but when all was over, and they were about to separate, the gentleman of the black robe reminded their kind entertainer once more of the Easter offering. To which Obadiah somewhat drily replied: "Friends, I have given thee a meat offering, a drink offering, and a burnt offering; and if thou art not speedily gone, I will verily be tempted to give thee a heave offering."

An old toothless clergyman used to be much bothered by the lesson in which the names Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego so often occur. At last he adopted the expedient of calling them "these three gentlemen," reading thus: "So the king commanded these three gentlemen to be cast into the fiery furnace."

— A mind uninformed is better than a mind misinformed.—  
Brougham.

## 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, C. Watts, "Why did the Government Drop the Education Bill?"  
BRADLAUGH CLUB AND INSTITUTE (36 Newington Green-road, Balls Pond): 7.15, R. Forder, "Bradlaugh and the Bigots."  
CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, W. Heaford, "The Uncertainties of Christianity."  
EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Libra-road, Old Ford): 7.30, G. Lansbury, "Children under the Poor Law."  
WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Westminster Town Hall, Caxton-street): 11.15, Dr. Stanton Coit, "Ethical Culture as a Religion."  
WEST LONDON BRANCH ("Sun in Splendor," Portobello-road, Notting Hill Gate): Annual excursion by G. W. R. to Taplow. Train leaves Paddington at 9.45.

### OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

CAMBERWELL (Station-road): 11.30, C. James, "What has Unbelief Done for the World?"  
CAMBERWELL BRANCH (Peckham Rye): 3.15, C. James, "The Church Protestant."  
CLERKENWELL GREEN: 11.30, O. Cohen will lecture.  
DEPTFORD BROADWAY: 6.30, O. Cohen will lecture.  
EDMONTON (corner of Angel-road): 7, A. B. Moss, "Orumbling Creeds"  
FINSBURY PARK (near band-stand)—Finsbury Branch: 11.15, E. Calvert, "The Old Testament"; 3.15, W. Heaford, "Immortality."  
HAMMERSMITH BRIDGE (Middlesex-side): 8, Stanley Jones will lecture.  
HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): Wednesday, July 1, at 8, S. E. Easton will lecture.  
ISLINGTON (Highbury Fields, Highbury Corner): 10.45, Mr. Blanchard, "The New Secularism."  
KINGSLAND (Ridley-road): 11.30, Stanley Jones, "Church and Science."  
MILE END WASTE: 11.30, F. Haslam, "Miracles of the Bible."  
OLD PIMLICO PIER: 11.30, W. Heaford, "Christ and Socialism."  
REGENT'S PARK (near Gloucester Gate)—N.W. Branch: 3, T. Thurloe, "Christianity and Secularism."  
VICTORIA PARK (near the fountain): 11.15, a lecture; 3.15, C. Cohen will lecture.  
WOOD GREEN (Jolly Butchers' Hill): 11.30, A. B. Moss will lecture.

### COUNTRY.

HULL (Cobden Hall, Storey-street): 7, S. Ackroyd, "The Naturalism of Scepticism"—a reply to the Rev. F. Ballard's "Miracles of Unbelief."  
LEEDS (Vulcan Club, Vulcan-street, Benson-street): Excursion to Shipley Glen. Leave Midland Station at 2.10 p.m. Return fare, 1s.  
LIVERPOOL (Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street): 7, F. Wollett, "Robert Browning."  
MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints).—Closed for alterations and repairs until August 16.  
PLYMOUTH (Democratic Club, Whimple-street): 7, Business meeting.  
SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): Members' and friends' excursion to Bradwell, Derbyshire. Meet at 10.45 corner of Arun del and Norfolk-streets. Carriages to leave at 11 prompt. Applications must be made to Secretary at once. Return fare 2s. 6d.  
SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, King-street): 7, Business meeting; 7.30, A. reading.

### OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

BARNESLEY (May Day Green): W. Dyson—11, "The Age of Miracles"; 6.30, "Fifty Years of Free Trade."  
NORTHAMPTON (Cow Meadow): Lucretius Keen—11, "Christianity and Secularism"; 6.30, "My Position as Atheist."

### Lecturers' Engagements.

O. COHEN, 12 Merchant-street, Bow-road, London, E.—June 28, m., Clerkenwell-green; a., Victoria Park; e., Deptford.

A. B. MOSS, 44 Oredon-road, Rotherhithe, London.—June 28, m., Wood Green; e., Edmonton. July 5, m., Westminster; a., Hyde Park; e., Kilburn. 12, Northampton.

## 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.

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