

The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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JOSEPH MAZZINI WHEELER.

“If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,
Absent thee from felicity awhile,
And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain,
To tell my story.”

I HAVE sad news for my readers, if they have not already heard it. I told them last week that my dear friend and loyal colleague, Mr. J. M. Wheeler, had broken down under a fresh attack of his old malady. I have now to tell them that he is dead. Nevermore will they read his bright, informing articles; nevermore shall I see his beloved face.

For thirty years he and I were close friends; for twenty years we were close co-workers. We were so much to each other personally, so intimate in every respect, that with his death a certain savor has gone from my own life. We worked together for Freethought—I nominally his chief, he nominally my subordinate, but with no thought of anything but absolute equality and brotherhood ever entering into our actual relationships. We had the same essential interests, hopes, and aspirations. We communed in spirit—if I may say so without being misunderstood. Our thoughts were as open as daylight to each other. No reticence but that of self-respect stood between us. He influenced me, as I influenced him; and sometimes his thought passed into my work, as my thought passed into his. Rarely, I imagine, are two men so associated as we were. And then we had passed through the fire of affliction together. A common suffering lent a final tenderness to our friendship, and gave it a special sacredness.

I must go back over a long tract of years to make the reader understand my dead friend's story. It was in 1868 that I made his acquaintance in London. We were both eighteen; I his elder by a fortnight—a difference I used sometimes to tell him he could never reduce. We were both Freethinkers, both fond of good reading, both full of young enthusiasm for the triumph of our ideas. I think he contributed to the *National Reformer* a little before I did. For a short time I lost sight of him, though we corresponded, when he went with his family to live at Glasgow. I met him there when I went to deliver my first lectures in Scotland. It is all as fresh as yesterday. We talked and talked and talked, especially about poetry, capping quotations from Shelley and Swinburne, and always recurring to Shakespeare, who was over the supreme god with us. As we said good-night one evening, he put his hand on my shoulder in his impulsive way, and said: “George, you must be the leader of the Freethought party.” I laughed: it seemed so absurd. Neither of us foresaw how we should one day be fighting at the front together.

Those were the golden days of bateless hope and tireless energy. He went over with me once when I had to lecture at Edinburgh. We climbed Arthur's Seat, on the abrupt side, before breakfast; and while he sat down on the summit I stood up at his desire and recited Swinburne's
No. 877.

“Song in Time of Order,” as though I were addressing an audience on the other side of the Firth of Forth. When I was last at Edinburgh, only a few months ago, he wrote to me on business matters, and ended by saying he wished he was there with me, and would go up Arthur's Seat once more in my company, if I would only recite that poem again for him at the top.

I think it was after the death of his father that Mr. Wheeler removed to Edinburgh, following his profession as a lithographer in a publishing house there. Mr. Wheeler, senior, was a man of very liberal opinions. He had a great affection for the noble Italian liberator, Mazzini, and named his eldest son after him.

When I started the *Secularist* in conjunction with Mr. Holyoake, in 1876, Mr. Wheeler became a regular contributor. Some of his articles were extremely valuable, particularly those on Buddhism, which he had studied profoundly. He wrote gratuitously and ungrudgingly till the paper was merged in the *Secular Review*. This was in the summer of 1877. I was in the midst of great personal trouble at the time, and his loving sympathy was a steadfast star in my night.

When I felt equal to fresh labors, and started a monthly magazine called the *Liberal*, Mr. Wheeler once more gave his ready co-operation. Good reading from his pen appeared in nearly every number. We were both, as it were, feeling for our way in the Freethought movement, and at last we found it definitely. Mr. Bradlaugh's brutal treatment by the bigots of England opened our eyes to the real nature of modern Christianity. Previously we had thought it to be nearer death than it was. We knew it had no power left for good, but we learnt it had still much power left for mischief, and we changed our policy accordingly. He was with me in heart and head when I started the *Freethinker* in 1882, and when the paper began to make its way he threw up his employment at Edinburgh and came up to London to take his chance with me. I was only able to guarantee him £1 per week then, but we could both work hard and live on little. As soon as possible, of course, I paid him more. The amount was further increased after my imprisonment, and from that time, until his death, the sub-editorship was the principal source of his income.

Delicate as his organization was, with an overplus of nervous susceptibility, and an exquisite sympathy that made him feel too acutely the sufferings of others, he had, nevertheless, a dauntless courage. There was not a shadow of fear about him. He would have done his duty, and stood for his convictions, in the face of any danger. I always knew that if I had to go to the pass of Thermopylæ he would go cheerfully with me. When he praised me for the way in which I faced prosecution, knowing as I did all the time that I was pretty sure to go to prison, I laughed and said: “Nonsense, Joe; I'm not braver than you, only a bit bigger.” When peril is really near you don't find courage universal. I did not find it so. But I knew my old friend would never quail. The *Freethinker* was left in his hands when I went to Holloway Gaol for

twelve months as a "blasphemer." Not to lay too great a burden upon him, however, I forbade him, in black on white, to publish any illustrations during my absence.

Weeks rolled by, and I knew nothing of what was going on in the world outside my prison. But one day Mr. Bradlaugh came to tell me that the trial of the other indictment, in which he was included, was coming on before Lord Coleridge in the Court of Queen's Bench. I asked him about Mr. Wheeler, and was told that he had "gone mad." Mr. Bradlaugh put it too abruptly; he did not know how dearly we loved each other. The news stunned me. When I got back to my prison cell I walked up and down like a caged animal. The word "mad" was burning in my brain. It was long before I felt the relief of tears, but at last they came in a deluge. This was the only blow that wrung them from me. I had nothing but a lofty scorn for my enemies, but the fate of my friend was too terrible. It was worse than mine, and I could not foresee the end of it.

Mr. Wheeler had to be placed in an asylum. He got better, but he was liberated too soon. He came back to work and broke down again. Once more he recovered and resumed writing for the paper. When I was released from prison at the end of February, 1884, he was reasonably well, and I hoped he was as free from his trouble as I was from mine. But less than three months afterwards he broke down again. It was a very bad attack, but I was able to look after him myself. I kept him in the asylum until he was quite fit to leave, then I sent him for weeks to the seaside, and his residence was changed so that he might return to new surroundings. He had fourteen years before him of happy, useful life; and now the end has come he has left behind him a host of friends, without a single enemy, and hundreds of men and women whose intellectual life-blood has been enriched by the fruit of his studies. Surely he did not live in vain. More than most men he deserved to live longer, and death should have come to him more gently. As I knelt down and kissed his brow in death—for I was too late to see him living—I could only say "Poor Joe!" And as I rose to my feet again and looked down on him, and around at the strange place in which he died, I could only think: "Is this Nature's last boon to a good man? Is this her only laurel for a noble head?" In the light of the doctrine of Theism such a spectacle was a ghastly mockery.

I only learnt that Mr. Wheeler was dying after five o'clock on Thursday, May 5. I drove to the asylum as fast as I could, but I was too late to look for the last time into his eyes and perhaps catch a last word from his lips. It was all over when I arrived. He died at half-past five. Fortunately, Mrs. Wheeler was summoned earlier. She exchanged a word or two with her dear husband. He tried to say more, but failed. She asked him if she should send for me, and she tells me that a beautiful smile spread all over his face. I shall think of it as long as I live.

The acute mania, lasting for ten days, had completely worn him out. His recuperative power was gone. All that was possible was done for him. He was treated with kindness and attention and medical skill, but he could not be saved. We wish he could have died in more pleasant surroundings, but it was impossible. It was necessary to remove him from his home to the asylum; indeed, it was his only chance of recovery, and that was the supreme consideration. The decision, of course, rested with Mrs. Wheeler. It was not my doing, though I should have done the same. All who know the facts are perfectly satisfied that everything was done for the best.

Had I known this trouble was coming I would have dragged my friend away from his work and his books to the country or the seaside. Perhaps it would have saved him. But one cannot tell. I did not know there was anything wrong until the Monday morning,

May 2, when he sent a note round to my house saying that he had no sleep and was unfit for work, and asking me to call round. I advised him to potter about in his little garden while I attended to the paper. In the evening when I called again he was much worse. There were clear symptoms of the old disorder. Medical and other help was obtained, but the malady developed rapidly, and on the Thursday he was removed. He was just a week in the asylum. The doctor said a change would probably take place at the end of that period—for better or worse. When the end came it was without suffering. The mania subsided. He was quite calm. His wife found him quiet and rational. He dozed away into his final rest.

On the Saturday morning before he was taken ill I met him as usual at business. He seemed a little flurried at first, and I looked at him keenly; but the agitation disappeared, and I felt no apprehension. We disposed of business, and had a delightful talk about Shakespeare. There could be no better topic, and it was the last rational conversation I had with him. He mentioned it to Mrs. Wheeler when he got home. She tells me he was so pleased, and apparently happy. And I am pleased to know that our last communion was in the great serene depths of thought—soul to soul.

I have neither time nor space to write now of Mr. Wheeler's great intellectual gifts, his wonderfully wide reading, his profound acquaintance with the whole subject of the evolution of human society, and his minute knowledge of religion, from Christianity down to the most savage superstitions. At such a moment it is character more than intellect that claims our attention. He was brave, gentle, pure, loving, and benevolent; full of kindness towards his fellows, and all dumb animals. His nature had no stain of malignity. He loathed cruelty of every kind. He was as honest as truth, as veracious as daylight. He did whatever he undertook with a whole-hearted devotion. He was true to others, and true to himself. He knew and felt that philosophy is barren without the fertilisation of love. He was one of the heralds of a new and more glorious day for humanity.

G. W. FOOTE.

Postscript.—Mr. Wheeler has left a will, bequeathing all he dies possessed of to his dear wife, and appointing her executrix and me executor. As soon as possible I shall estimate the value of his small estate—of course it is comparatively trifling. I shall also have a talk with Mrs. Wheeler about the future, and with something definite before me I shall make whatever appeal I may think necessary for the widow of this dead soldier of the army of human liberation. Meanwhile I shall see to what is requisite.

IN MEMORY OF JOSEPH MAZZINI WHEELER.

THOU wert a *man*;
And is thy simple, noble life outspent
While cowards live? I bow me, reverent,
And call these words thy fittest monument—
"Thou wert a man."

Thou still shalt live
In loving hearts that knew thy work and thee,
Who will do grace unto thy memory
In added work of true humanity—
Thus shalt thou live.

Thy funeral flowers
Shall be no mockery of blossoms dead,
But *living* fragrance, which shall spread and spread,
Until dark spots of earth are carpeted
With waving flowers—
On thy work nurtured, by thy memory fed.

WILLIAM PLATT.

"THE REJECTED CHRIST."

IN our article last week we pointed out what appeared to us to be the false notions entertained by those who imagine that they have a special love and affection for Jesus of Nazareth. We also showed, even upon the authority of a professed Christian paper, that the peace of mind which is supposed to be engendered by a belief in him is equally as potent with those who have no faith whatever in the alleged founder of Christianity. An endeavor was likewise made to refute the fallacy that a government by Christ in this world would be an advantage to society in general. One of our objects in the present article is to remind our opponents that the rejection of Jesus as a ruler of life has become an acknowledged fact, and that there is ample justification for such a rejection. If it is urged that it is unnecessary to devote so much time as we do in exposing the folly of the Christian's belief in Christ, our answer is that it is this very belief upon which rest not only the orthodox, but also the "more advanced" superstitions of modern Christianity. So long as the person of Jesus is idolized by some, no matter if he be real or imaginary, false ideas of life will be created and the usefulness of human existence impaired. In former times the Bible was idolized as a perfect book; that delusion is now dispelled, and if we wish to complete the work of emancipation the equally palpable delusion of the perfection of Christ must also be obliterated. We write plainly because we feel strongly upon the question. Let those who think that the Jesus of the New Testament once lived credit him with whatever good qualities they choose; but, in the name of reason, let him not be exalted above all others to a pinnacle of greatness that even the records of his traditional life do not justify. Until it can be shown that the teachings ascribed to him in the Gospels are compatible with the duties of daily life; until it can be demonstrated that his example can be profitably emulated in secular affairs; and until his professed followers have the courage to strive to emulate his deeds, we must protest against the hollow mockery of setting Christ up as the "light of the world."

To show that Christ is not thought necessary by the general masses, we will quote from a notice of a sermon recently preached in New York by the persistent Evangelist, Mr. Moody, which appeared in the *Christian World* of last month. Mr. Moody there said: "If the question could be put to a popular vote, not a single State, or town, or section of a town, would vote for Jesus to reign there as he reigns in heaven. The great political parties would elect the greatest blackguard on earth sooner than Jesus.....Even the Churches would find his presence inconvenient; he would break up some things in the Churches. If an archangel came down from heaven, and preached in New York, he would lose his reputation inside of thirty days, as Christ did. The world had no room for Christ 1,900 years ago, and it had not altered its attitude since. It had every welcome for the Prince of Wales, but none for the Prince of Peace. There would be a jubilee in hell if a single defect could be found in Christ's character." It is said that on a former occasion Jesus "came unto his own, and his own received him not"; and according to Mr. Moody, who, in this one particular case, we think is quite right, he would meet with no better success were he to come again. But does not such a confession of the probable rejection of Christ prove that he lacks power over the human family, who, if they reject him, cannot have any real love for him? Moreover, it indicates that he would not be in touch with modern life, and that he is destitute of the elements of a true reformer.

Let us, however, notice two important points in Mr. Moody's prophetic statement. He alludes to Christ as the "Prince of Peace." What a bitter satire these words are when we contemplate the present war-like condition of avowed Christian countries. There have been more strife and contention, and more bloodshed, among the followers of "the meek and lowly Jesus" within the last two thousand years than among any other people upon the face of the earth. These dissensions and displays of anger commenced almost in Christ's time, and they have gone on increasing in malignant force down to the present hour. Europe to-day is smitten severely with the military fever, the worst passions are aroused, and the preparations for the slaughter of human lives are on a larger scale than was ever before known in the history of the world. On

Good Friday last, the very day observed to celebrate the death of the "Prince of Peace," who is said to have died to redeem the race, the army of "Christian England" slaughtered over 3,000 of "God's children" in the Soudan, for which Christian monarchs sent telegrams of congratulations. Christ appears not to have been far wrong when he said: "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth; I come not to send peace, but a sword" (Matt. x. 34). The history of his faith has been an unfortunate verification of this declaration.

The other significant point in Mr. Moody's allegation is that "there would be a jubilee in hell if a single defect could be found in Christ's character." If this be true, they must have had a "good time" in hell all along, for his character is full of defects. He was passionate, given to anger, and unjust to his foes. As his enthusiastic admirer, Renan, admits, Christ had "no knowledge of the general condition of the world"; he was "harsh" towards his family, and he "went to excess." "Sometimes his intolerance of all opposition led him to acts inexplicable and apparently absurd," while "bitterness and reproach became more and more manifest in his heart." The Rev. Charles Voysey writes: "Christ had faults which neither I nor my readers would venture to imitate without loss of self-respect." Even the orthodox Dr. George S. Barrett, in his recently-published work upon *The Bible and its Inspiration*, confesses that Jesus "was as limited in knowledge as men usually are." He declared himself that "he was ignorant." And the pious Doctor adds: "If you ask me how we are to reconcile this sinless human limitation of knowledge with the fulness of the Divine omniscience our Lord possessed as the Son of God, I answer frankly, I cannot reconcile them. I cannot understand how it was possible for one and the same Divine person, at the same time, to be limited and unlimited in knowledge, and I confess all the attempts which have been made to combine the two appear to me to be failures" (pp. 141-2-3). Just so, and it seems to us also to be utterly impossible to reconcile two such opposite positions. But the defects of Christ remain all the same. So, according to Moody, there are plenty of materials in hell for a grand jubilee.

We have no doubt that if Christ ventured to put in an appearance upon earth he would be universally rejected, as many other "Christs" have been since his advent. He would be looked upon as an outcast and a fanatic, and if he persisted in urging his claims it is not unlikely that he would be consigned either within a prison or a lunatic asylum. Statesmen, scientists, and philosophers would not court his society, for he would have no views in common with them. He would not, we suppose, be inclined to cast his lot with those who now profess to follow him, for of those he would be ashamed. Fancy him beholding the gorgeous palaces of bishops and archbishops, and comparing those luxurious abodes with his condition when he exclaimed: "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head" (Matt. viii. 20). He regarded poverty as a test of perfection, but the leading expounders of his faith make "money their god, and the almighty dollar their redeemer." Christ sent his disciples on their mission without scrip, money, or purse, leaving them to depend upon charity for their support. The clergy of the nineteenth century prefer staying at home unless they can have something more substantial than "Christian charity." Christ enjoined absolute reliance upon prayer and explicit faith in God. His followers, however, seek for rewards nearer to hand, preferring "a bird in the hand to two in the bush." Judging from their present self-interest, we should expect them to reject any Christ who would rob them of their wealth and comfort. Herein is seen the hypocrisy of their profession.

The only sect whose members perhaps would not at first reject Christ would be the Salvation Army; but then he would have to be careful not to attempt to "reign over them," for, if he did, Booth would be down upon him at once. In the Army there is only room for one King, and his name is "General" Booth.

CHARLES WATTS.

Let us, turning away from the illusion of a directing intelligence, look earnestly for something better than a god, seek for something higher than prayer, and lift our souls to be with the more than immortal now.—R. Jeffries.

WHEN WAS HELL-FIRE LIT?

WHEN was the hell-fire of Christianity lit? I will answer the question at once by saying that, in my opinion, the hell-fire which has so long held its place in the popular belief was not effectively lit till the second half of the second century of the Christian era.

After careful study of the New Testament, I conclude that the first Christians gave very little prominence to the doctrine of hell. I believe the Book of Revelation, which has supplied so many graphic details to the preachers who love to depict the agonies of the lost, is substantially a Jewish and not a Christian document, and can therefore be ruled out of the discussion. We are, then, left to the Epistles and the Gospels. The Apostle Paul was too noble a man to develop any conception of a hell of fire and brimstone; indeed, he makes no mention of hell at all. If we except the reference to David's soul not being left in Hades, hell is not named in the Book of Acts. Neither does it appear in the Fourth Gospel. There is a mere trace of it in "Mark." It appears with some frequency in "Matthew" and "Luke" in such phrases as "in danger of hell-fire," "the gates of hell," "everlasting fire," etc.; and a vivid (the only vivid) picture of it occurs in the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. Even there it is curious to notice that, though the Rich Man was "tormented in this flame," he was able to carry on a connected conversation with father Abraham in heaven. The fact is, I think, the earliest Christians possessed too little malice and too little imagination to create a hell with any energy and terror in it. I do not wish to push my suggestion too far. Of course hell has a distinct place, though small, in the first Christian legend. And if orthodox people try to argue that no special stress was laid by the Gospels upon hell-fire, it is sufficient to answer that these books contained enough allusion to it to give rise to a mischievous development so soon as they assumed the character of sacred scripture.

After taking out the New Testament books above-mentioned, we have very few left. Hell-fire does not flicker in the pages of the epistle to the Hebrews, unless we count in such an expression as "Our God is a consuming fire." There is a casual hint of it in the epistle of James. We obtain a deeper red reflection of it in the epistles known as "Jude" and "2 Peter." Here we meet with "angels cast down to hell," "pits of darkness," "everlasting bonds under darkness," "the punishment of eternal fire," "the blackness of darkness," etc.

These compositions, entitled "Jude" and "2 Peter," carry us a good way beyond the first Christians. "Jude" may have been written about 140, and "2 Peter" some years later; and it is a singular circumstance that this pretended epistle of Peter copies the language and style of the epistle of "Jude."

Now here we are at the middle of the second century, and I think that about this period, when the finer and manlier sentiments of the early Christian religion were declining in power, conceptions of hell-fire began to take increasing hold upon the mind of the followers of the new religion, most of whom were ill-educated persons. Popular audiences had picked up many sensational details of hell from the dramatic representations which they beheld at the Orphic mysteries. In these mysteries the priests would enact thrilling scenes portraying the horrid adventures of the soul in the underworld and its redemption by Orpheus. Such ideas were readily carried over into Christianity, and they found embodiment in a remarkable Christian book which has received the title of the *Apocalypse of Peter*. Its date cannot be exactly fixed, but its contents are quoted by Clement of Alexandria towards the close of the second century. A fragment of it (about half) was discovered in Egypt in the year 1886-87.

The opening verses of the *Apocalypse of Peter* (*i.e.*, of the fragment) depict the glories of paradise, where the landscape was exceeding bright, the earth bloomed with unfading flowers; and "the dwellers in that place were clad in the raiment of shining angels." The writer then passes to the gloomy regions of the damned. "Over against that place," he says, "I saw another, squalid, and it was the place of punishment; and those who were punished there, and the punishing angels, had their raiment dark like the air of the place."

Then he proceeds to catalogue the torments, which are

almost too repulsive to quote. He beheld men hanging by the tongue, and under them fire burned; lost souls tossing in the flaming mud of a lake; women hanging by their hair over the hot bubbling mire; murderers writhing amid snakes; women standing up to their necks in blood as a penalty for procuring abortion; men gnawing their own lips; unhappy wretches whose eyes were pierced with red-hot irons; men and women rolling on sharp red-hot pebbles; sinners hurled from cliffs, then crawling up to the summits again, and again flung down; women and men roasting and turning as they roasted —

At this point the fragment breaks off. The *Apocalypse of Peter*, which thus outrages our humane feeling and reveals the grossness of taste and thought in a certain section of the Christian community, was for many years widely read. Even in the middle of the fifth century, records the historian Sozomen, its ghastly pages were recited publicly in the churches of Palestine once a year "in commemoration of the Savior's Passion" (*i.e.*, on Good Friday). It gradually dropped out of sight and memory; but its villainous and abominable ideas of hell were perpetuated in the mediæval and Puritan notions of the unseen world. It would be interesting to discover why the early Christians kept tolerably clear of these coarse fancies for about a hundred years, and how it was that a change worked itself in their psychology, and rendered them receptive of such blasphemies against human nature.

That the Christians who invented these hideous thoughts of hell were bad men I do not believe. Probably the author of the *Apocalypse of Peter* was a respectable and pious person, very well-meaning and crassly ignorant. And his readers must have been equally ignorant. But, in their crudeness and simplicity, they no doubt accepted these descriptions of torture as useful aids to virtue, for they supposed that by such means people who were inclined to vice might be warned and admonished. Hell-fire was not the invention of rogues. But neither was it invented by the sane and wise.

F. J. GOULD.

INGERSOLL ON ORATORY.

WHAT A PUBLIC SPEAKER SHOULD BE—SOME THINGS HE SHOULD AVOID.

A REPRESENTATIVE of the New York *Sun* recently asked Colonel R. G. Ingersoll to talk on the best way to succeed as an orator. Following are the question and the answer:—

"What advice would you give to a young man who was ambitious to become a successful public speaker or orator?"

"In the first place," said Colonel Ingersoll, "I would advise him to have something to say—something worth saying—something that people would be glad to hear. This is the important thing. Back of the art of speaking must be the power to think. Without thoughts words are empty purses. Most people imagine that almost any words uttered in a loud voice and accompanied by appropriate gestures constitute an oration. I would advise the young man to study his subject, to find what others had thought, to look at it from all sides. Then I would tell him to write out his thoughts, or to arrange them in his mind, so that he would know exactly what he was going to say. Waste no time on the how until you are satisfied with the what. After you know what you are to say, then you can think of how it should be said. Then you can think about tone, emphasis, and gesture; but if you really understand what you say, emphasis, tone, and gesture will take care of themselves. All these should come from the inside. They should be in perfect harmony with the feelings. Voice and gesture should be governed by the emotions. They should unconsciously be in perfect agreement with the sentiments. The orator should be true to his subject, should avoid any reference to himself.

"The great column of his argument should be unbroken. He can adorn it with vines and flowers, but they should not be in such profusion as to hide the column. He should give variety of episode by illustrations, but they should be used only for the purpose of adding strength to the argument. The man who wishes to become an orator should study language. He should know the deeper meaning of words. He should understand the vigor and velocity of verbs and the color of adjectives. He should know how to sketch a scene, to paint a picture, to

give life and action. He should be a poet and a dramatist, a painter and an actor. He should cultivate his imagination. He should become familiar with the great poetry and fiction, with splendid and heroic deeds. He should be a student of Shakespeare. He should read and devour the great plays. From Shakespeare he could learn the art of expression, of compression, and all the secrets of the head and heart.

"The great orator is full of variety—of surprises. Like a juggler, he keeps the colored balls in the air. He expresses himself in pictures. His speech is a panorama. By continued change he holds the attention. The interest does not flag. He does not allow himself to be anticipated. He is always in advance. He does not repeat himself. A picture is shown but once. So an orator should avoid the commonplace. There should be no stuffing, no filling. He should put no cotton with his silk, no common metals with his gold. He should remember that 'gilded dust is not as good as dusted gold.' The great orator is honest, sincere. He does not pretend. His brain and heart go together. Every drop of his blood is convinced. Nothing is forced. He knows exactly what he wishes to do—knows when he has finished it, and stops.

"Only a great orator knows when and how to close. Most speakers go on after they are through. They are satisfied only with a lame and impotent conclusion. Most speakers lack variety. They travel a straight and dusty road. The great orator is full of episode. He convinces and charms by indirection. He leaves the roads, visits the fields, wanders in the woods, listens to the murmurs of springs, the song of birds. He gathers flowers, scales the crags, and comes back to the highway refreshed and invigorated. He does not move in a straight line. He wanders and winds like a stream.

"Of course, no one can tell a man what to do to become an orator. The great orator has that wonderful thing called presence. He has the strange something known as magnetism. He must have a flexible, musical voice, capable of expressing the pathetic, the humorous, the heroic. His body must move in unison with his thought. He must be a reasoner, a logician. He must have a keen sense of humor—of the laughable. He must have wit, sharp and quick. He must have sympathy. His smiles should be the neighbors of his tears. He must have imagination. He should give eagles to the air, and painted moths should flutter in the sunlight.

"While I cannot tell a man what to do to become an orator, I can tell him a few things not to do. There should be no introduction to an oration. The orator should commence with his subject. There should be no prelude, no flourish, no apology, no explanation. He should say nothing about himself. Like a sculptor, he stands by his block of stone. Every stroke is for a purpose. As he works the form begins to appear. When the statue is finished the workman stops. Nothing is more difficult than a perfect close. Few poems, few pieces of music, few novels, end well. A good story, a great speech, a perfect poem, should end just at the proper point. The bud, the blossom, the fruit. No delay. A great speech is a crystallization in its logic, an efflorescence in its poetry.

"I have not heard many speeches. Most of the great speakers in our country were before my time. I heard Beecher, and he was an orator. He had imagination, humor, and intensity. His brain was fertile as the valleys of the tropics. He was too broad, too philosophic, too poetic for the pulpit. Now and then he broke the fetters of his creed, escaped from his orthodox prison, and became sublime.

"Theodore Parker was an orator. He preached great sermons. His sermons on 'Old Age' and 'Webster' and his address on 'Liberty' were filled with great thoughts, marvellously expressed. When he dealt with human events, with realities, with things he knew, he was superb. When he spoke of freedom, of duty, of living to the ideal, of mental integrity, he seemed inspired.

"Webster I never heard. He had great qualities, force, dignity, clearness, grandeur; but, after all, he worshipped the past. He kept his back to the sunrise. There was no dawn in his brain. He was not creative. He had no spirit of prophecy. He lighted no torch. He was not true to his ideal. He talked sometimes as though his head was among the stars, but he stood in the gutter. In the name of religion he tried to break the will of Stephen

Girard—to destroy the greatest charity in all the world; and in the name of the same religion he defended the fugitive slave law. His purpose was the same in both cases. He wanted office. Yet he uttered a few very great paragraphs, rich with thought, perfectly expressed.

"Clay I never heard, but he must have had a commanding presence, a chivalric bearing, a heroic voice. He cared little for the past. He was a natural leader, a wonderful talker—forcible, persuasive, convincing. He was not a poet, not a master of metaphor, but he was practical. He kept in view the end to be accomplished. He was the opposite of Webster. Clay was the morning, Webster the evening. Clay had large views, a wide horizon. He was ample, vigorous, and a little tyrannical.

"Benton was thoroughly commonplace. He never uttered an inspired word. He was an intense egotist. No subject was great enough to make him forget himself. Colhoun was a political Calvinist—narrow, logical, dogmatic. He was not an orator. He delivered essays, not orations. I think it was in 1851 that Kossuth visited this country. He was an orator. There was no man, at that time, under our flag who could speak English as well as he. In the first speech I read of Kossuth's was this: 'Russia is the rock against which the sigh for freedom breaks.' In this you see the poet, the painter, the orator.

"S. S. Prentiss was an orator; but, with the recklessness of a gamester, he threw his life away. He said profound and beautiful things, but he lacked application. He was uneven, disproportionate, saying ordinary things on great occasions, and now and then, without the slightest provocation, uttering the sublimest and most beautiful thoughts.

"In my judgment, Corwin was the greatest orator of them all. He had more arrows in his quiver. He had genius. He was full of humor, pathos, wit, and logic. He was an actor. His body talked. His meaning was in his eyes and lips. Governor O. P. Morton, of Indiana, had the greatest power of statement of any man I ever heard. All the argument was in his statement. The facts were perfectly grouped. The conclusion was a necessity.

"The best political speech I ever heard was made by Governor Richard J. Oglesby, of Illinois. It had every element of greatness, reason, humor, wit, pathos, imagination, and perfect naturalness. That was in the grand years, long ago. Lincoln had reason, wonderful humor and wit, but his presence was not good. His voice was poor, his gestures awkward; but his thoughts were profound. His speech at Gettysburg is one of the masterpieces of the world. The word 'here' is used four or five times too often. Leave the 'heres' out, and the speech is perfect.

"Of course I have heard a great many talkers, but orators are few and far between. They are produced by victorious nations—born in the midst of great events, of marvellous achievements. They utter the thoughts, the aspirations of their age. They clothe the children of the people in the gorgeous robes of genius. They interpret the dreams. With the poets they prophesy. They fill the future with heroic forms, with lofty deeds. They keep their faces towards the dawn—towards the ever-coming day."

Anti-supernaturalism is the final, irreversible sentence of scientific philosophy, and the real dogmatist and hypothesis-maker is the theologian. That the world is governed by uniform laws is the first article in the creed of science, and to disbelieve whatever is at variance with those uniform laws, whatever contradicts a complete induction, is an imperative intellectual duty. A particular miracle is credible to him alone who already believes in supernatural agency. Its credibility rests on an assumption—the existence of such agency. But our most comprehensive scientific experience has detected no such agency. There is no miracle in nature; there is no evidence of any miracle-working energy in nature; there is no fact in nature to justify the expectation of miracle. Rightly has it been said by an English *savant* and divine, that testimony is a second-hand assurance, a blind guide that can avail nothing against reason, and that to have any evidence of a Deity working miracles we must go out of nature and beyond reason.—*W. M. Call.*

Liberty is glorious. It is liberty that gives human nature fair play and allows each singularity to show itself. For one unpleasant oddity which it brings forth it gives the world ten thousand great and useful examples.—*Montesquieu.*

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY'S ANNUAL CONFERENCE.

SECULAR HALL, RUSHOLME-ROAD, MANCHESTER, MAY 29, 1898.

AGENDA.

1. Minutes of last Conference.
2. Executive's Annual Report. By PRESIDENT.
3. Reception of Report.
4. Financial Report.
5. Election of President.
Motion by Finsbury Branch: "That Mr. G. W. Foote be re-elected President."
6. Election of Vice-Presidents.
(a) The following are nominated by the Executive for re-election: Dr. T. R. Allinson, G. Anderson, E. Bater, Annie Brown, L. Büchner, C. Cohen, W. W. Collins, J. F. Dewar, R. Forder, J. Grange, T. Gorniot, S. Hartmann, W. Heaford, A. B. Moss, S. M. Peacock, C. Pegg, W. Pratt, V. Roger, J. H. Ridgway, T. Robertson, F. Schaller, H. J. Stace, J. Symes, S. R. Thompson, E. Truelove, J. Umpleby, E. M. Vance, G. J. Warren, C. Watts.
(b) Nominated for election by the Executive: Mr. E. W. Quay.
7. Resolution *re* the death of Mr. J. M. Wheeler.
8. Election of Honorary Secretary.
Motion by Executive: "That Mr. R. Forder be re-elected Honorary Secretary."
9. Election of Auditors.
10. Motion by Birmingham Branch:—
"That, on the occasion of his visit to England, this Conference of the National Secular Society cordially invites Colonel Ingersoll to visit Stratford-on-Avon and deliver a lecture there, if possible, in the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, which, if accepted, the Executive arrange for a national demonstration of Freethinkers on the occasion."
11. Motions by Mr. G. J. Warren:—
(a) "To strike out of rules the following: 'And on admission of the member a certificate will be issued by the Executive.'
(b) "That every Branch shall appoint a collector for the Propaganda Fund."
(c) "That Secularists should more actively support their principles by making affirmation in lieu of taking oaths; by advocating non-religious marriage ceremonies; by withdrawing their children from religious instruction in schools; by arranging for Secular funerals."
(d) "That a protest should be made against the prohibition of funerals on Sundays in the London cemeteries."
12. Statement by Mr. G. W. Foote *re* the Secular Incorporation.
13. Motions by Manchester Branch:—
(a) "That the Secretary be appointed by election at the Annual Conference."
(b) "That if any member be expelled by a Branch, and afterwards seeks to re-enter the Society through any other Branch, the secretary of the latter should communicate with the secretary of the former before admitting him, asking the reasons of his expulsion, and whether there is still any objection to his again becoming a member."
14. Motions by Liverpool Branch:—
(a) "That the Executive shall consist of a President, two Vice-Presidents, a Treasurer, Secretary, and sixteen others elected annually at the Conference of the Society, and one member elected by and from each Branch of the Society."
(b) "That no lecturer or other member paid by the Society shall be a member of the Executive."
(c) "That the agenda of each meeting of the Executive shall be supplied to the member of each Branch in time to enable him to attend the meeting, or to express his opinions by letter (four days)."
(d) "That lecturers under the Finance and Propaganda Scheme shall be appointed at the annual Conference, and a list of the lecturers appointed shall be supplied to the Branches."
(e) "That honorary membership may be conferred upon distinguished Freethinkers in recognition of their services to the cause."

The morning sitting of the Conference will open at 10.30, and close at 12.30; the afternoon sitting will open at 2.30, and close at 4.30. Both are business meetings for members of the N.S.S. Outside Freethinkers may be admitted to the back of the hall by applying to the Secretary, Miss E. M. Vance.

A public meeting will be held in the evening at 7.30. Addresses will be delivered by Messrs. G. W. Foote, Charles Watts, C. Cohen, R. Forder, and other well-known speakers.
G. W. FOOTE, *President*.
ROBERT FORDER, *Hon. Sec.*
EDITH M. VANCE, *Sec.*

ACID DROPS.

MORE prayers for the poor Spaniards! Yvette Guilbert, the famous music-hall singer, suggests that prayers should be said in all the French churches for the success of the Spanish troops. She also says that there ought to be a special service for that object in Notre Dame. Well, if the French keep on praying for Spain, and the Yankees keep on knocking her about, it is easy enough to see which process will be the most effectual.

Senor Mella, a Carlist deputy, got into trouble through quoting the Bible in the Cortes. He said that the words of the prophet Isaiah were applicable to Spain: "As for my people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them." The speaker was expelled from the Chamber. Next time he had better give a reference to the text, and let the other members hunt it up at leisure.

General Weyler, the man who is chiefly responsible for the worst sufferings of Cuba, has become a perfect hero with the multitude in Spain. He stays at home and talks big. In imagination he is invading America with fifty thousand Spaniards who are also at home talking big. It is almost needless to say that General Weyler is a very devout Christian. On the other hand, however, it is good to note that the Radical papers at Madrid are rounding on the Church and the priests. Why, they ask, should the nation pay so much money to keep up the pomps and vanities of these followers of Christ, who ought to be living in apostolic simplicity? In reply to this the priests maintain that all the disasters of Spain are due to the spread of Liberalism; which is a view, of course, that they are bound to take on the mere ground of self-preservation.

The Pope announces, indirectly of course, through the *Osservatore Romano*, that he doesn't favor either Spain or the United States in the present struggle. His Holiness is like the dying man who didn't care whether he went to heaven or hell—he had friends in both places.

Mr. Gladstone's favorite hymn at present is one of Cardinal Newman's. It used to be "Rock of Ages." Mr. Gladstone once complained of Scott's version of "Dies Irae" being excluded from the Sacred Anthologies of Lord Selborne and Professor Palgrave. One verse of it is very sweet:—

That day of wrath, that dreadful day,
When heaven and earth shall pass away,
What power shall be the sinner's stay?
How shall he meet that dreadful day?

This is a cheerful hymn for any dying man—for *all* have sinned, as the Bible tells us. Is it one of the consolations of religion?

"General" Booth fights the devil, which is not even as risky as fighting the Spaniards. Returning from America, he has been interviewed by the *Chronicle*. Of course he is all in favor of an Anglo-American alliance. So are we, if the alliance is put upon a sensible basis. We cannot agree, however, with Booth's forecast of the future if the alliance is made. Working in concert, he says, England and America could say, for the benefit of mankind: "Let's have peace, and let's have righteousness, and let's have the reign of God on earth." There seems to us a good deal of Mr. Pecksniff in all this. England, for instance, has got a very big empire all over the world, but did she get it altogether through "peace" and "righteousness"?

"General" Booth has had a big reception at the Crystal Palace. Twenty thousand Salvationists were present, and the beating of drums and blowing of trumpets (how savages love noise!) was quite deafening. When the astute William ended his speech the vast audience rose and sang "All I have I bring to thee." No doubt the "General" likes that hymn better than any other in the collection.

Miss Betham-Edwards, in her recent book of Reminiscences, tells a story about the holy communion in the church of the village of her childhood. The parishioners came up to the table in the order of their social importance, and the poor old men and women got the last drops of the blood of Christ. One Sunday morning, after communion, Miss Betham-Edwards's nurse met a neighbor, and said she supposed he had been to the table. "Yes," he replied, "and I might as well have stayed at home. I only got one d—d

drop!" This man was like the nigger who took the communion for the first time. Instead of taking a sip, he drained the cup, and exclaimed: "Fill 'im up again, massa; me lub Jesus."

The Congregational Union, at its annual meeting, passed a strong resolution in favor of closing public-houses on "the Lord's Day"—by which the clergy mean *their* day. We dare say they would like to see bicycles chained up, and trains and street cars stopped, except during the time that people want to be taken to and from the gospel shops.

The Berlin correspondent of the *Daily News* reports a curious story of superstition in connection with the bread riots in Italy. At Minervino, a little town in Southern Italy, the image of a Madonna stands on the market-place, and is highly revered. By an accident, some of the varnish had come off the face of the figure. Like wildfire the news spread that, from anger at the enormous rise in the price of bread, the Madonna had changed color. That was enough. Armed with axes, scythes, and cudgels, the mob fell upon the Custom Houses, the Municipio, the houses of the Sindaco, and the magistrates, and others. No quarter was shown. Those who did not escape through back doors, or over the roofs, were lost. The mob penetrated into Dr. Brandi's house, although his wife lay dying. The sick-room was plundered, and the doctor himself escaped on to the roof, and from there into a garden. There he was brought to bay, and struck at with axes till he was a mass of blood. The same thing happened to two other men. The few soldiers, only thirty men, fled into a house, where they barricaded themselves. The house was set on fire, and the "brothers in the King's coat" had almost begun to stew when reinforcements arrived.

Mrs. Florence Lilian Maitinsky went studying Theosophy at Bedford-park under the guidance of a prominent member of the local lodge of Theosophists, Mr. Ernest William Bowes. Result—a case in the Divorce Court, and a judgment against the lady student of Theosophy and her initiator into its sublime mysteries.

The London Jews' Society held its annual meeting at Exeter Hall. There was a deficit of £8,851, although the income had been £38,841. The number of converts was not stated. We learn that there is "a small temporal relief fund for baptised and inquiring Jews," and we are not surprised that one clerical speaker thought it necessary to deny "that Jews were bribed to become Christians."

The rector of Emmanuel Church, Southport, has been discoursing "to men" on Atheism. Perhaps he thinks it is no danger to the women—in which case he is mistaken. We could introduce him to many Atheist women, and most of them would very easily answer his arguments. They would tell him, in the first place, that he doesn't understand Atheism. He says that the Atheist declares "There is no God." But this is a mistake—not to use a harsher word. The Atheist asks you to define God, and then he sees whether the definition is self-consistent and consistent with the facts of nature and human life. A mere word, of so many letters, is nothing in itself. Without a definition the word "God" is meaningless. You might as well spell it backwards.

As this worthy rector never defined the word "God" in his sermon, there is really nothing to be said in reply. All we care to observe is this, that the rev. gentleman is talking like a professional salesman of religious wares, when he asserts that Atheism is immoral, and that there is no goodness without God. Atheists are quite as "good" as Christians in every respect. If the rector of Emmanuel Church doesn't believe it, let him examine the statistics of prisons, divorce courts, and commercial frauds. It is Christians, not Atheists, who are responsible for the greater part of the vice and crime of this country. Ninety per cent. of the prisoners in our gaols have been Sunday-school scholars.

The *Protestant Standard* refers to "the sophistries and audacious clap-trap of those persons who call themselves Secularists, but who are better known as Atheists." This organ of sweetness and light also looks forward to the time when the burial service will be read over the Secularists' organization. Is it going to get its old friend, Walton Powell, out of prison to officiate?

"Dear Friend" is the opening of a printed circular issued by the Northern Baptist Association, which has had under "serious consideration" the lamentable "decline of spiritual vitality in the Churches as shown by the reports." There is a "steady decrease in the number of baptisms," and the "lack of spiritual power and success" is "painfully manifest." Of course this is very sad. We feel it ourselves—in fact, we have just hung up two pocket-handkerchiefs to dry. But what does the Committee propose as a remedy?

Prayer, prayer, more prayer. God is to be asked to grant the Association "a renewed outpouring of his spirit." All right, then; pray away, dear Northern Baptists; and let us know when the outpouring begins. We'll be there with a couple of buckets.

According to the Bible, the first man—poor old Adam—was born (we beg pardon, *made*) about four thousand years before Christ. According to Professor Sayce, the date of Sargon, King of Akkade, was about 3,800 years before Christ. That's very near the birth (we beg pardon again, the *making*) of Adam. But the American scholars carry the date of cities in ancient Babylon as far back as 7,000 years before Christ. That's 3,000 years before Adam grew peas and asparagus in Eden.

"The God of Victories will give us one as brilliant and complete as the righteousness and justice of our cause demand." So ran the proclamation of the Governor-General of the Philippines. And what was the sequel? The god-forsaken Yankees came along and knocked the whole Spanish fleet to pieces. Let us pray!

The *Daily News* says that the Philippine islands are "run" by the priesthood "with the usual consequence—ignorance, tyranny, and corruption." The clergy fatten on the wealth of the land. "Their budget in one year was 113,000,000 francs, as against 66,000,000 allotted to the State."

An evangelist named Seth Backhouse has been holding forth on his own life at the Workmen's Mission, Sheffield, and a brief report of the affair is printed in the local *Independent*. Like a great many evangelists, he has been "a 'ot un in 'is time." Of course he drank and lived the lowest sort of life till he was reclaimed by the Salvation Army. For some years he did soul-saving for that body, but he is now "on his own," and probably finds it pays better. His leisure hours have been given to hard study—especially, we should say, to the study of mendacity. "At sixteen," the report says, "he became an evangelist, and about that time upset one of Mr. Charles Bradlaugh's meetings at Dukinfield to such an extent that the lecturer vowed he would never visit the place again." Many a dirty little Christian cur has told the same sort of yarn about the dead lion of Freethought. They vanquished him lots of times—in anecdotes. And orthodox fools listen to these paltry lies with delight, and put something into the collection-box for the liar.

Archdeacon Sinclair, speaking at the annual meeting of the Religious Tract Society, said that "He was informed by those competent to judge that, since the death of Mr. Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant's adhesion to Theosophy, infidelity had been on the wane among the working men of London." Archdeacon Sinclair is mistaken, and it doesn't seem that he is quite sure after all; why else did he say that "There was a great need for the circulation of sound literature at home"? If the bane is growing scarcer, can there be a need for such a larger supply of the antidote?

This "wane of infidelity" is a regular bit of ostrich-tactic on the part of Christians. Even a paper like the *New Age* affects it. Speaking of the spread of Romish practices in the Church of England, it says it hails every opposition to that danger with delight. "Better," it adds, "even a revival of the National Secular Society than that no protest should be made." A stranger reading this would imagine that the National Secular Society is dead. But it isn't, and the editor of the *New Age* is quite aware of the fact. Moreover, the N. S. S. never existed for any such object as settling domestic differences among Christians. The more Catholic and Protestant rend each other the better we are pleased.

The Birmingham Christian Evidence Society has just held its annual meeting. According to the report, the Society has much difficulty in obtaining new subscribers, and as the old ones drop off by death and otherwise its financial condition is causing "much anxiety." We hear a great deal about "the decline of infidelity," but it is not "infidelity" that is declining in Birmingham.

Archdeacon Diggle says that many of the clergy do not keep pace, and are not capable of keeping pace, with the progress of knowledge and thought. Many of their parishioners (he says) have left them far behind in the struggle for light and learning. Had *we* said this, it would have been called an infidel calumny. Coming from an Archdeacon it is, of course, as true as gospel.

Walking down Holborn the other day, the present writer saw a sandwich man carrying a glaring notice that whoever did not eat the flesh of Jesus Christ, and drink his blood, had no life in him. Evidently the sandwich man had not been fed on that nutritious diet. There was very little life in *him*. But perhaps he was selected as an awful example

of indifference and unbelief. Anyhow, he looked as though a few slices from the lamb of God, or any other decently-fed animal, would do him a world of good.

A "mission priest," at an English Church Union meeting in Yarmouth, said that "If they only looked at a Baptist minister, for instance, they would see a sort of hardness even in the outward expression of his countenance." Hard-shell Baptists are a well-known variety. Hard-faced Baptists, according to this Church of England man of God, comprise the whole species.

Will an unbaptized baby go to hell? The curate of Heytesbury answers, Yes. He told a poor bereaved mother, "As your child has not been baptized, it cannot enter the kingdom of heaven." If this be true, it is not quite without its consolations. Those who die unbaptized are likely to find more agreeable company than this clergyman's. One would hardly like to spend eternity with a fellow who is callous enough to tell a sorrowing mother that her child is in hell.

The Church of England has left the damnation of the unbaptized an open question. It does not allow its Burial Service to be read over such an one, however, as that would acknowledge him as a Christian brother. What a cunning bit of compromise, to be sure!

"Suffer little children to come unto me," said Jesus Christ. "I'll see them damned first," says the curate of Heytesbury, "if they don't come to my church and get sprinkled—for the usual consideration."

Dr. William Stokes, whose life has just been written by his son, preserved a story of an Irish peasant who cured his boy's epilepsy in the following extraordinary manner: "I brought him to the edge of your honor's bog," he said, "and threw him in suddint, and lept down upon him under the water till the last bubble was out of him, and he never since had a return of the complaint, glory be to God." We should think not.

According to the *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, a certain preacher of that connection has the sparkle of a dewdrop on a flower, the sportiveness of a lamb in the meadow, and the pathos of a grey, still, summer evening. He is also "able to play upon his audiences like an old fiddle"—which is a pathetic ambiguity after all that horticultural eloquence.

Anyone who attaches importance to the religious changes of a man dying of slow consumption will be interested to hear that Mr. Aubrey Beardsley, the artist, was received into the Roman Catholic Church by Father Sebastian. He awaited death, Mr. Max Beerbohm says, with perfect resignation. So do lots of other people who are not Roman Catholics, including many who have no religion at all.

The Guild of Our Lady of Ransom has for its object the conversion of England to Roman Catholicism. This is a big job to accomplish, but the Guild trusts in the efficacy of prayer to God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost, Goddess the Virgin Mary, and all the blessed Saints. It also believes in the efficacy of street processions. We have a program of one of these affairs lying before us. It comes from the vicinity of Westbourne Park. There are bands and banners galore, relics (probably fictitious) of English martyrs, and a "Statue of Our Lady," which we hear was a much-bedizened, inartistic representation of the Mother of God. Of course there were many priests in the procession, some of them looking far too lusty (a correspondent says) for strict celibates, and some looking as though they had taken a fair share of the liquor which Paul recommended to Timothy. At the bottom of the program is printed this line: "Jesus Convert England, Jesus Have Mercy on This Country." Well, if he had any mercy on it, he would call all the priests "home." We could spare them, and they would be ever so much better off in heaven.

The Socialists are still being harried at Oxford for trying to exercise the same right of public meeting as is allowed to the religionists. They are fighting bravely, however; man after man goes to prison, and we hope they will defeat the bigoted authorities in the end. English university towns are hotbeds of reaction, because the clergy have so much power and influence in the colleges.

Leonard Cotton, the latest Socialist prosecuted at Oxford, was defended at the City Court by Mr. W. M. Thompson, editor of *Reynolds's*, who is a barrister. Two of the Socialist witnesses claimed to affirm on the straight ground that they had no religious belief. This fact is prominently noticed in an *Oxford Review* leaderette.

Rev. Dr. Saunders, of the Benedictine Order, has just died suddenly at Bristol. After singing the rollicking "Father O'Flynn" at a charity concert, he complained of feeling

unwell, and shortly afterwards expired at the Jesuit Presbytery. Was it a judgment? Scientifically speaking, it was heart disease.

The Presbyterians in Toronto want to get a law passed against the use of the bicycle on Sunday. Their object is to keep hell from filling. Some people say they want to keep the churches from emptying.

Ingersoll doesn't like Presbyterians. He considers their creed the most damnable wickedness ever invented. Lecturing at Philadelphia recently, and referring to Robert Burns, he said: "If there is to be a day of judgment, I would rather stand before God on that day dead drunk, if I could truthfully say I was the author of 'A man's a man for a' that,' than stand before God and say that I had lived and died a Presbyterian."

Dr. Moore, of Fyfield, Essex, has obtained a verdict with £50 damages against the Rev. Lewis Elwyn Lewis, the rector of Fyfield, for libelling him on postcards containing charges against him and a young woman who had been in his employ. The man of God denied that he wrote the postcards, but the jury concluded that he was lying. It appears that there had been a dispute between the plaintiff and defendant as to the character of the services in the church. Hence these tears.

Marylebone has disgraced itself by voting for the sixth time against having a Free Library. This time, however, the adverse majority was only 4,617 against 4,241. In 1894 only 1,628 votes were cast for the proposal. There is some hope, consequently, even for Marylebone.

The Congregational Union has passed a resolution condemning the proposed endowment of a Roman Catholic University for Ireland. Why doesn't it pass a resolution condemning the endowment of Nonconformist religion in the Board schools of England?

Mr. G. R. Sims is not too much in love with Missions to the Heathen. After referring to the "foul insults" which rival Christian sects hurl at each other, he asks them to imagine "the feelings of a race with a totally different creed when it finds our missionaries trying to sweep the old faith from the land and offering the wives and children of the devout an entirely new God and an entirely new code of morality." Mr. Sims doesn't say—he can't afford to say—that missionary work is "altogether wrong," but he sneers at its "lamentable lack of discretion."

The Rev. Hugh Price Hughes is begging hard for the West London Mission. An appeal for money, with a copy of the glowing annual report, is evidently being sent out wholesale from the London Directory, as a copy of each has reached us at our private address. In the face of this glowing report, however, it is well to bear in mind that the Methodist Church is suffering from a bad leakage. The "suction" that goes on in favor of such Missions as Mr. Price Hughes's was adverted to by the Rev. N. Curnock in a paper read before the London Ministers' Meeting. This gentleman thought that London, after all, was a source of weakness to the Methodist body.

Who is the fussy religionist that advertises pious texts in the agony column of the *Times*, without any name or address appended? They are all about "faith." No matter how great a scoundrel you are, only believe, and you shall be saved, and heaven is yours for ever. Every Saturday there is a "Personal" in this column of the *Times* bearing the address—Rev. T. G. Headley, Manor House, Petorsham, S.W. He generally gives a diabolically bad bit of verse, probably of his own composition, and a reference to some Bible text. We suppose he does this for the good of the British public. All the same, we should like to know out of what fund he pays for these advertisements, how it is raised, and how it is accounted for.

Obituary.

It is with deep sorrow that I have to record the death of my father, Thomas Parker, a life-long Freethinker and great admirer of Mr. Bradlaugh and Mr. Foote, and at one time a member of the committee of the Walworth Branch of the National Secular Society. His opinions remained unchanged through two years of suffering. He was buried on May 6 at Nunhead Cemetery without the Christian ceremony, as a Freethinker should be.—T. PARKER.

"Issue a warrant for the arrest of God, on a charge of being a vagabond, with no known fixed or permanent residence."—*Rigault, "Prefect of Police to the Paris Commune,"* 1871.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, May 15, Athenæum Hall, Tottenham Court-road, London, W. : 7.30, "The Meaning of Death."

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—May 15 and 16, Birmingham ; 22, Sheffield.—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.

J. E. GARNER.—Your testimony is valuable as that of a very old friend of Mr. Wheeler. Our readers look for something from our pen, but we feel more inclined at present to silence and meditation.

W. BRADBURN.—Thanks for the printed enclosure. See "Acid Drops." Yes, there ought to be a fighting Branch of the N. S. S. in your part of London. We have seriously thought of devoting special time and effort to this great metropolis, even to the exclusion of the provinces for a while.

W. MUIR.—Thanks for your cordial letter.

A. E. ELDERKIN.—Yes, the death of Mr. Wheeler is a sad blow to us, as well as a great loss to the cause.

F. H. WOOLLETT.—We have conveyed the Liverpool Branch's "heartfelt sympathy" to Mrs. Wheeler.

W. G. ALLAN.—Your suggestions shall be considered. We are always pleased to receive any hint as to how the *Freethinker* might be made more interesting to its actual and potential readers.

G. W. B.—Thanks for letter and enclosure, which shows what silliness is stood, and perhaps relished, by religionists.

W. T. (Lincoln).—You are not a poet, though you may be a very good *Freethinker*. The "u" is not necessary in words ending with "our." It came into our orthography from the old French, and is a gratuitous addition to the Latin from which such words are mostly derived.

ESS JAY BEE.—We remember that old time well. Thanks for the verses. You will see the sad end of all our hopes for our dear colleague.

J. S.—Shall appear.

B. STEVENS.—Thanks. Probably in our next.

W. D. ROLLEY.—Yes, the book you refer to is by the same Baxter—Prophet Baxter. He has been foretelling the end of the world all his life, giving date after date for the great event.

JOSEPH CLOSE.—Pleased to receive your letter. You will be grieved to hear the sad news.

W. ELCOATS.—You have our thanks.

G. L. MACKENZIE writes: "I thank you for your letter with the sad news of Mr. Wheeler's death. It was a great shock. Every one that knew him will feel quite a specially sympathetic sorrow. Your expression about 'these sarcasms of nature' is sadly felicitous."

J. H. BAIN.—Thanks for your encouraging letter. At such a time especially it is good to hear from those to whom our writings have been helpful.

A. HURREN.—Mr. Forder hands us your welcome letter. Thanks for your kind expressions.

F. A.—Your little skit is humorous, but the subject of IHS had better be dealt with seriously for the present.

SYDNEY H. SMITH.—Müller's Orphanage has already been written about in our columns, in editorial paragraphs, and in a special article by Mr. Watts.

A. B. MOSS writes: "I have heard with great regret of the death of Mr. Wheeler. I know how very much attached you and he were, and how keenly you will feel his loss. His services to the Freethought party were simply invaluable."

J. and F. GARVEN.—Thanks for your kind note.

H. PERCY WARD writes: "I am exceedingly sorry to hear of the death of Mr. J. M. Wheeler, and send you my sincerest sympathy. You must have lost a good friend. Freethought has lost a soldier whose pen helped to shatter many a superstition."

T. DUNBAR.—You are one of thousands who have enjoyed and profited by our dear colleague's writings.

C. COHEN writes: "I have just heard of Mr. Wheeler's death, and need not say how pained I was to learn the news. What a gap his loss will make in our scanty ranks!"

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Crescent—Referee—Oxford County News—Oxford Review—Daily News—Oxford Times—Glasgow Weekly Citizen—Secular Thought—Progressive Thinker—Free Society—Freidenker—Anglo-Russian—Southport Visitor—Isle of Man Times—Torch of Reason—Public Opinion—Sydney Bulletin—Protestant Standard—Solidarity—People's Newspaper—Record—Middlesborough Evening Telegraph—Liberator—Louisville Courier—Sheffield Independent.

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

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

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

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.

THE National Secular Society's office is at No. 377 Strand, London, where all letters should be addressed to Miss Vance.

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.

FUNERAL OF J. M. WHEELER.

THE funeral of the late Joseph Mazzini Wheeler, sub-editor of the *Freethinker* and vice-president of the National Secular Society, has been delayed as long as possible in order to give the fullest opportunity to all his friends and admirers of showing the last sad mark of respect to his memory. It is arranged to take place at Finchley Cemetery (Islington division) on Saturday afternoon, May 14, at four o'clock. Mr. G. W. Foote, President of the National Secular Society, will deliver an address at the grave. Mr. Wheeler was strongly in favor of cremation on principle, but there is no Crematorium near London, and very many friends would have been debarred from attending the funeral had it taken place at Woking.

PERSONAL.

UNDER this heading in last week's *Freethinker* I referred to the fact that I was far from rolling in wealth on the profits of this journal. I said that I was really a poor man struggling against difficulties. A diminished and diminishing burden of debt rests upon me; debt contracted in maintaining the *Freethinker* so long at the popular price of one penny, and in carrying on my publishing business with borrowed capital. The presidency of the National Secular Society, which is an unpaid office, entails much work and pre-occupation of mind; and I have not even asked an allowance for my out-of-pocket expenses, which amount to a good deal annually. Since we left the old Hall of Science, too, I have, on my own responsibility, since others were unprepared for the risk, maintained a Freethought platform in London; first at Milton Hall, afterwards at the Foresters' Hall, and latterly at the Athenæum Hall in Tottenham Court-road. Every lecturer has been paid a fee, whatever the takings at the door, and all deficiencies have been made up from my own earnings. I was also a considerable loser by the Lecture Scheme, which did so much to sustain Freethought propaganda in the provinces. The work is now carried on by a sub-committee of the Executive, who find it difficult to do as much as I did alone, and who are in a position to appreciate the task I undertook.

When I raised the price of the *Freethinker* to twopence I obtained immediate relief, which was absolutely necessary. But in the course of time this was bound to involve a reduced circulation. At the present moment I am receiving next to nothing from this source myself, although I do the largest share of the work. For a while I am writing all the paragraphs and all the correspondence with my own hand, as well as my article; but I cannot go on at this rate, or I shall break down myself. As soon as I can turn round with some measure of serenity I shall have to make fresh arrangements for the conduct of the paper, and these arrangements can hardly be carried out with less than the old expense.

Regular, judicious advertising would certainly improve the circulation of this journal. Indeed, this is quite necessary, for a new generation has grown up since the name of my paper became almost a household word in consequence of its historic prosecution. But I have not the means to do this without assistance. I propose, therefore, to start a Fund for this object, and to aid the competent maintenance of the *Freethinker* until the advertising and other promotion of its circulation has produced the desired effect.

I give my time and energy, and I cannot give more. I have no more to give. There are hundreds, perhaps thousands, who could do something if they would to help me in keeping the old *Freethinker* flag streaming bravely in the wind. Will they do it? I appeal in particular to the rank and file of the party. If they respond as they might, the situation will soon be changed. If they do not, I shall fight on as I can—alone.

G. W. FOOTE.

SUGAR PLUMS.

MR. FOOTE lectures at the Athenæum Hall this evening (May 15). His subject will be "The Meaning of Death." He will take the occasion to say something about the late Joseph Mazzini Wheeler and his work for Freethought. No doubt a good many friends of the deceased, as well as Freethinkers generally, will make a point of attending on this occasion.

Mr. Foote had a good audience at Camberwell on Sunday evening, when he lectured on "The Devildoms and Doom of Christian Spain." For nearly an hour and a half he was listened to with deep interest, and applauded again and again when he resumed his seat. Mr. Hartmann, who presided, made a voice-broken reference to the sad death of Mr. Wheeler. Mr. Foote also said a few words on the same painful subject. The Camberwell Branch has now closed its indoor lecturing season, and is concentrating its energies on the open-air propaganda.

We publish on another page the Agenda of the National Secular Society's Annual Conference, which takes place on Whit-Sunday in the Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, Manchester. It is to be hoped that there will be a large attendance of delegates and individual members from all parts of the country. For the sake of many who do not know the fact, or have forgotten it, we may observe that the Manchester Secular Hall, which is a nice room and handsomely decorated, contains the fine picture, by Mr. Walter Sickert, of Charles Bradlaugh at the Bar of the House of Commons, and a fine marble bust of Charles Bradlaugh by another artist. A view of these objects—to say nothing of anything else—will repay any Freethinker who visits Manchester on Whit-Sunday.

The President, who has lost a most dear friend and invaluable colleague, on the top of other troubles, would be very pleased to see a strong rally of the Secular forces on this occasion, and would take it as a mark of sympathy with him as well as of care for the movement.

Mrs. M. E. Pegg, secretary of the Manchester Branch, 15 Mytton-street, Hulme, will be glad to hear from delegates or other visitors to the Conference who wish accommodation secured for them. She recommends the Clarence Hotel, Piccadilly, to those who can afford a reasonable tariff.

A London friend, who prefers to remain anonymous, once more generously provides luncheon for the N. S. S. Conference delegates. It will take place at the Clarence Hotel, Piccadilly, at 1.15. We have seen the *menu*, and it is all that could be desired. Tickets should be applied for in good time, either from Mr. Forder or from Miss Vance, as it is requisite to know, at least as near as possible, the exact number to be catered for.

We are glad to hear that the debate in Manchester between Mr. Charles Watts and the Rev. A. J. Waldron was a success. The audiences were good and most orderly, and both disputants were in excellent form, and avoided all approach to personalities. There was a good muster of Christians, and Secular friends were present from Failsworth, Oldham, Bolton, Blackburn, and Hyde. The Rev. A. Hall presided on both evenings in a strictly impartial manner. The arrangements were all that could be desired, and reflected great credit upon Mr. and Mrs. Pegg, who were Mr. Watts's representatives.

On Thursday and Friday nights, May 5 and 6, Mr. Watts lectured in Failsworth to good meetings. One-half the audiences was composed of ladies. There was some good singing before the lectures, and at the close several questions were put and answered. We are pleased to hear that the Failsworth friends seem to be in a flourishing condition.

Mr. Watts returned to London last Monday, having been away from London a fortnight. During that time he delivered twelve lectures and held two nights' debate, which is not a bad record of active service. Fortunately his general health keeps good.

To-day, Sunday, and to-morrow, Monday, May 15 and 16, Mr. Watts lectures in the large school-room, Bristol-road, Birmingham, where he hopes to meet the many local friends who usually greet him at his visits.

Thomas Paine is the third figure in the *New Age* gallery of "Fathers of Modern Democracy." Considering the materials at Paine's disposal, the writer regards the *Age of Reason* as "a marvellous piece of scientific criticism," and declares that its conclusions are now "the verified commonplaces of the great majority of Bible students." "Scholarly canons of the Church of England (he says) and eminent

Nonconformist divines openly expound a rationalism of belief that was anticipated in the *Age of Reason*." Yet it was in the present century that Richard Carlile spent nearly ten years in prison for publishing that very book!

Mr. Chilperic Edwards occupied the Athenæum Hall platform on Sunday evening, and gave great satisfaction to a good audience. Mr. Forder, who took the chair, referred to the death of Mr. Wheeler as a sad loss to the Freethought movement.

Secular Thought (Toronto) reproduces Mr. Foote's article on "Zola's Trial." We are glad to see that the Toronto Secular Society is now holding regular Sunday evening meetings.

The Attorney-General of Missouri has just given his opinion that it is a violation of the State laws to make pupils recite the Lord's Prayer, or for teachers to read from the Bible at the opening exercises of the public schools.

Mr. C. Cohen lectured on Sunday in the Alexandra Hall, Liverpool. His evening address on Foreign Missions, with its analysis of the various balance-sheets, was a surprise even to Freethinkers. Mr. Cohen lectures in the Alexandra Hall again to-day, May 15, and every reader of the *Freethinker* in the neighborhood should go to hear him and take a Christian friend if possible.

On Sunday, May 22, Mr. Chilperic Edwards and Mr. F. W. Read will be pleased to conduct a party of Freethinkers through the Egyptian galleries and rooms of the British Museum. A start will be made from the vestibule at 3.30 prompt. The Rosetta stone will be the first object of interest, and the other contents of the galleries will then be described. Mr. Read is probably known to many of our readers as an earnest student of Egyptian antiquities, and an able exponent of them.

Sympathetic announcements of the death of Mr. J. M. Wheeler appeared in several of the London papers, including the *Daily Chronicle*, the *Westminster Gazette*, the *Weekly Sun*, *Morning Leader*, *Reynolds'*, *Weekly Times and Echo*, and the *Star*.

THE BUTCHER, THE SUN, AND THE POULTICE.

JOSHUA X.; 2 KINGS XX.

THE Lord, who loves a bloody deed,
And likes to make his creatures bleed,
To help a cut-throat once, we read,
Arranged a special solstice;
And, just as "cabby" halts a hack,
He once compelled the sun to back—
The rhyming halts, as well, alack!—
To advertise a poultice.

He said that killing wasn't right,
But yet he told his folk to fight,
And actually *held the light*,
That blood might flow like water;
Said he: "Slay on! Thou Son of Nun!
And slit the throats of ev'ry one!
By heav'n! I'll rather stop the sun
Than stop the bloody slaughter."

Jehovah *stopped*—the parsons say—
The *pre-quiet* orb of day,
That Joshua the folk might slay
Whose country he did covet;
But, though His optics all things scan,
He won't to-day o'en stop a van
From running o'er a child or man,
But rather seems to shove it.

God, hearing once a sick king pray,
Prescribed a poultice straight away,
And even changed the time of day
To show he'd cure a pimple;
But now—as ev'ry parson knows—
No thought on poultice He bestows,
Nor cares a boil to diagnose—
The explanation's simple.

G. L. MACKENZIE.

To enjoy a thing exclusively is commonly to exclude yourself from the true enjoyment of it.—*Thoreau*.

KISSING THE BOOK.

ONE of the echoes from the Lobby is that a Bill will shortly be introduced in Parliament to make the Scotch form of swearing general. Such a measure may, in a way, be acceptable. It will dispense with the present absurd and dangerous custom of kissing the book in Courts of Justice. But there is the disadvantage that, connected with this Scotch form of swearing, there is a stupid rigmarole commencing with "I swear by Almighty God," and an uplifting of the right hand which irresistibly reminds one of children in a school where little Johnny Green or little Jenny Jones raises a hand to indicate preparedness to answer some testing question put by the teacher.

The obvious thing is to abolish legal swearing altogether, especially as the swearing is done on a book which says, "Swear not at all" (Matt. v. 33-37).

The intelligence of the age has gone quite beyond this stupid old piece of ecclesiasticism. It is an insult to the intellect of people, who, *volens volens*, find themselves in a Court, to ask them to "kiss the Book." Why should they kiss the Book, even if they accept the major part or the whole of its contents? They do not go there to make any profession of theological belief or unbelief, but for some entirely different purpose.

People may, if Freethinkers or otherwise qualified, affirm; but very often magistrates' clerks and coroners, particularly in rural districts, purposely make a fuss, and consider themselves permitted to ask impertinent questions. The result is that timid persons, overwhelmed by their first appearance in a witness box, often prefer to go through the prescribed form—a hurried and perfunctory ceremony, absolutely devoid of impressiveness, thereby showing its inutility—rather than enter into some preliminary squabble quite apart from the matter upon which they come to depose.

Freethinkers, as the law stands, are in a very much better position than Christians. Their mere affirmation must be accepted if they insist upon it. Christians—or rather the bulk of them—can only be believed on oath. It has long been a matter of surprise that these Christians—not being Quakers, Moravians, or the like—should be content to submit to such an invidious distinction. It is for them to ask, and to ask with a fair show of indignation, Why cannot our evidence be accepted on mere affirmation the same as that of Freethinkers? It is they really who should endeavor to abolish the oath altogether. Freethinkers, thanks to the heroic exertions in the past of Mr. G. J. Holyoake and Mr. Bradlaugh, have in this respect secured practically all that they want. Now they are not only willing, but anxious, to assist Christians to attain to an equal status. The Scotch proposal is but a half measure. Let Christians go for abolishing the oath altogether, out of fairness and in justice to themselves.

In the present state of thought, so far advanced beyond anything that could have been hoped for twenty years ago, it should not be difficult to get rid, once and for all, of this silly old remnant of sacerdotalism. That the question is one of practical importance must be apparent to all who enter our Courts of Justice, or have any contact with law which involves the making of affidavits. Let us try to number the "kisses" bestowed in the Metropolis alone on this volume, which no one nowadays really believes in, or believes in only with serious and vital reservations.

There are seventeen police-courts which may be said to be included in the metropolitan area. Let us say there are twenty witnesses sworn per day at each, which will be a very moderate average. That means 340 "kisses" a day, or 2,040 in a week, or over 102,000 in a year. There are ten metropolitan county-courts; here 50 oaths a day at each would be far below the average, but that would give 500 "kisses" a day. Then there are all the High Courts of Justice and the Bankruptcy Courts, the Old Bailey and other Sessions, the Coroners' Courts, the City Courts, the Parliamentary Committees, and the hundreds of affidavits privately sworn every day. Without troubling the reader with detailed estimates, it will perhaps be sufficient to say that (with the assistance of a legal assessor) I arrive at the conclusion that the book is "kissed" judicially not less than 2,000,000 times a year in the Metropolis alone! And then what about the provinces throughout Great Britain, where there are Assizes and

Quarter Sessions, in addition to the Police and County Courts and Coroners' Inquiries, and solicitors' private practice. The mind—knowing anything of legal procedure and the work of all the enrolled Commissioners for Oaths and Affidavits in the realm—stands aghast, the brain reels in the endeavor to estimate the millions of "kisses"—many of them Judas kisses, I fear, in the sense that they accompany treacherous designs—bestowed upon the book.

The aggregate osculation must be enormous. If the lip-smacks, subdued as they are in individual cases, were massed together in one volume of sound, what a detonation should we hear! Or the aggregate sound might be imagined dragging itself out like the bellow of a fog-horn, or, more appropriately, the bray of a colossal ass!

But, however we think of it, it is clear that the prevalence of the form is so great as to render the question one of real practical importance, to which no apology is needed for directing the attention of Christian reformers.

It is incumbent, of course, upon all Freethinkers to invariably claim the right to affirm, which is best done in country places by a little private and polite intimation previously given to the magistrates' clerk or other official. It is open to those who may not choose to call themselves Freethinkers to make a similar claim, if they are able to show that an oath is not binding upon their consciences, and are prepared to answer satisfactorily questions that may be put.

A little time ago I was the amused spectator of an incident (unreported) at the London Guildhall Justice Room. An eminent publisher, whose name is known the wide world over, was called to give evidence. An officer of the Court, pompous as becomes a uniform gorgeous with scarlet and gold facings, handed him the book preparatory to the oath. With a dignified gesture, the great publisher gently pushed the book aside, observing: "I do not use the Bible in that way." The magistrates' clerk—who at this Court knows his business—said: "You would prefer to affirm?" The witness replied, "Certainly"; and then he duly affirmed. The Alderman, who is a great light in religious circles, hid his feelings beneath a feeble, sickly smile.

FRANCIS NEALE.

DARWINISM TRUE; CREATIONISM A FICTION.

(Concluded from page 299.)

THERE are more creatures born or hatched than can possibly survive. Suppose every acorn became a new oak, where could room be found for them in a year or two, even if each oak produced but a dozen acorns? The case of other trees would lead to similar results. Take the grass, and let us suppose that every seed there produced a blade of grass. In the first year more than all the available soil would be occupied by grass. There is no sort of vegetable which, unchecked, would not very quickly have the entire world to itself, so fast would it multiply and replenish the earth.

Any species of fish would, if unchecked in its increase, soon fill the entire ocean with its progeny, and would soon turn the ocean into a kind of cold-water soup.

The house-fly produces about twenty million progeny in one season. The plant-louse, or aphid, is said to breed so enormously fast that its tenth generation (not reckoning the earlier generations) would weigh more than all the 500,000,000 people in China. Should a plant of any sort produce fifty other plants per year, in nine years the progeny of that plant would have all the available soil of the world to themselves. Some fungi increase a billion-fold in a few hours.

Slow-breeding man would very soon fill the earth if unchecked in his increase. One woman is mentioned by Derham (one of our older naturalists) who died at ninety-three leaving a progeny of 1,298. Let us put them at 1,000, and say that she and her husband had multiplied five hundred times in one hundred years—a very long way below the actual number. In five hundred years those people, breeding at the given rate, would amount to about 50,000,000,000—that is, about thirty-five times the entire population of the globe. If the human race were not checked, it would multiply faster than that; and in a few generations there would not be standing-room for them on the earth's surface.

As human beings tend to multiply far faster than the possible food supply, it is clear that the enormous majority must be destroyed and leave no progeny behind them. And the lower animals breed enormously faster than man. Hence the incessant battle for life, the ceaseless struggle for food, the murderous contest all are compelled to engage in, and in which only the few can survive.

This battle is nature's means of selecting the fittest and destroying the unfit.

Do not misunderstand that phrase, as most do. When the Darwinian speaks of the survival of the fittest, what does he mean? Not that the plant or animal which survives is better in any high, useful, or moral sense, but just this:—There is a constant battle in fields and gardens between weeds and useful plants. Left to nature, the weeds will survive, the useful plants not. The weeds are fit to take care of themselves, fit to fight, and fit to beat and kill out their opponents. And that is all that is meant by the survival of the fittest.

Men and snakes may be left in some parts of Australia, and more snakes than men might survive there. That is the survival of the fittest—the fittest for the conditions, those who can best battle with the conditions and surmount them.

Take a particular genus or a race. They must be checked in their multiplication somehow, or they will more than people the earth. What decides which shall live and which shall die? One child may be of a hardy constitution, and he will survive where a thousand others shall die. The fittest survives. Any race of plants or animals must be thinned out some way. It is some peculiarity possessed by the survivor which secures him from the fate of his kindred.

Thus Nature in every generation is carrying on her selection and her breeding, and thus species arise, and genera, and races, and thus Darwinism accounts for the wonderful varieties found in living forms. Probably all living things sprang originally from a very few living cells, and have diverged from each other by constant natural selection—a process going on to-day as rapidly as ever, perhaps.

Those who believe in Creation are compelled to believe in Evolution. They tell us all men are descended from Adam and Eve. Be it so. What was the color of those two? What their build? What race now living is most like them? Were their heads round or long? Were their features those of the Negro, the Western Australian, or of the highest European types? Were their eyes aslant as in the Mongolian, or like those of Europeans?

There is an immense variety in man in all these respects. How does this variety come? Only Evolution could produce it—that is, change after change from the primal type, the formation of families and groups, as we find them to-day.

Ever since Darwin launched his theory, those who know not what they clamour for have been joking about and demanding the "Missing Link." Probably not one in ten thousand of those who use that expression have any idea of what the words mean. Darwin thinks that man and monkeys are akin—are of common parentage—a sort of distant cousins, we may say. But critics have demanded the "Missing Links," the intermediate forms between men on the one side and monkeys on the other. There is really very little in the cry, as could easily be shown. But a "Missing Link" has recently been found. In the *American Journal of Science*, 1896, p. 475, etc., there is an account of some bones discovered in Java in 1894. The skull shows that the creature's brain was much larger than that of any monkey—being about two-thirds of that of the average man. The animal walked erect, and is called *Pithecanthropus erectus* (Upright Monkey-man). To all intents and purposes this is an animal between man and monkeys. He was not a monkey, nor yet a man; but partook of the nature of both.

Professor O. C. Marsh thinks he must have lived in the Pliocene age, a period long antecedent to the arrival of man, according to most geologists.

Every new discovery adds firmness to Darwin's theory; and the principal opposition to it now, as during the past thirty-nine years, arises from superstition and priestcraft. A better testimonial could not be given to it. The priests have cursed everything true and good until they found it wise to adopt it and use it for their own ends.

—*Liberator*.

JOS. SYMES.

THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.

REPORT of adjourned meeting of the Executive, held at 377 Strand on Thursday, May 5, 1898; the President in the chair. There were present: Messrs. E. Bater, J. Neate, S. Hartmann, F. Schaller, G. J. Warren, W. Heaford, P. Sabine, M. Loafer, W. Leat, E. W. Quay, Miss A. Brown, and the Secretary.

A heavy gloom settled upon all present in consequence of Mr. Foote's sad announcement of the death, a few hours previous to the meeting, of our valued friend and Vice-President, Mr. J. M. Wheeler.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

Correspondence was read from the Manchester and Liverpool Branches re a certain membership, and the following resolution was moved and carried unanimously: "That, having regard to the circumstances under which Mr. ——— was expelled from the Manchester Branch, the Liverpool Branch be informed that Mr. ——— cannot be accepted by the Executive as a member of the Society, and instructs the Secretary to return his subscription to the Liverpool Secretary."

The report was then discussed, and it was agreed that it should be submitted to the members of the Council by post.

The notices of motion for the Conference Agenda were next considered and remitted to the Committee, and the Executive proceeded to nominate the list of Vice-Presidents and Officers, which will be found on the Agenda printed in this issue.

The following vote of condolence was then unanimously passed, and ordered to be sent to Mrs. Wheeler: "That the Executive of the N. S. S. tenders to Mrs. J. M. Wheeler its deepest sympathy in her sad bereavement, and puts on immediate record its recognition of her dead husband's great intellectual gifts, high character, and most loyal devotion during so many years to the cause of Freethought." Other matters were then discussed in connection with this sad incident, and it was resolved: "That the Executive defray all the expenses of Mr. Wheeler's funeral, leaving the President to see to the necessary arrangements."

The Secretary was instructed to publish the list of attendances, and the meeting closed.

E. M. VANCE, *Secretary*.

N.B.—The printed forms issued to Branches for appointing delegates are much overdue, and should be returned immediately.

LIST OF ATTENDANCES DURING THE YEAR 1897-8.

Summoned to 13.	Attended.	Summoned to 13.	Attended.
<i>President</i> :—		J. M. Wheeler ... 9	
G. W. Foote ...	13	W. Heaford ...	12
<i>Vice-Presidents</i> :—		A. B. Moss ... 9	
E. Bater ...	12	<i>Branch Delegates</i> :—	
*C. Cohen ...	6	Bethnal Green ...	7
R. Forder ...	1	Camberwell ...	10
T. Gorniot ...	5	Edmonton ...	1
S. Hartmann ...	9	East London ...	9
†V. Roger ...	4	Finsbury ...	12
F. Schaller ...	9	N. W. London ...	9
‡H. Stace ...	6	West London ...	13
§E. Truelove ...	—	Wood Green ...	7
†G. J. Warren ...	8	Chatham ...	2
*C. Watts ...	7	Auditor (H. Brown)	2
Annie Brown ...	9		

A LOVING TRIBUTE.

THE almost sudden death of Mr. Joseph Mazzini Wheeler must be a shock to all. It is now more than thirty years since I first had the privilege of becoming one of his friends. He was then an interesting and amiable youth of some sixteen or seventeen years of age. By my side he fought his first battles in the cause which he afterwards learned to love so well. What he was when he died is part of the history of Freethought.

But it was among his many friends that his lovable disposition was best known and appreciated. His self-abnegation, his diffident earnestness in the cause, his entire freedom from all malice, his nervous sympathy with and generosity to those in trouble, are proverbs among his more intimate friends. Love for children found in him its most passionate expression. He was one of Nature's noblemen—few and far between. In him Freethought has lost an honest and learned advocate. In him his poor wife has lost a husband such as few women have possessed. In him his friends have lost a friend, than whom none could be dearer. He deserved a far longer life, and a more kindly death. Oh! the pity, the pity of it all!

J. E. GARNER.

*	Cause of absence	Lecture engagements.
†	"	Board of Guardian meetings.
‡	"	Four notices undelivered.
§	"	Old age and indisposition.

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.

FRIENDS,—I have been fifty years a Freethinker, and helped the cause all that time. I have always been a temperate man, yet I never became a teetotaler, because I considered that superstition was the monster evil that enslaves man, and does a thousand times more evil than does drunkenness, and, if not curbed, will ruin my country.

Our ability to live depends on our dexterity in producing the articles that the world requires. America, Germany, France, and Belgium now compete with us, not only in the markets of the world, but in our home markets, in the supply of the very things in which thirty years ago we held prominence. We let their products enter our country duty free, while they put duties, varying from ten to thirty per cent. of their total value, on all goods of ours entering their countries. Their young people are becoming adepts in most of the employments in which we are engaged. Germany and France have a lead in this respect. Belgium sends to London most of the wrought-iron binders that are used in house-building. America is sending such heavy articles as cast-iron pipes to Glasgow in competition with the Glasgow foundries. Scarce a week passes that I have not circulars from abroad offering numerous engineering appliances, and referring me to their local agencies in this country.

Now, why is all this? I think because for the last thirty or more years their children have been better educated. Their children while at school have not had their heads stuffed and their time occupied in learning catechisms, psalms, and other religious nonsense; their whole time is occupied in secular instruction; they learn only that which can be submitted to proof by their reasoning faculties; and, at the age at which they leave school to begin the business of life, they must know more than our youth do, whose minds have been distracted by much that they do not understand, and which their parents even don't agree upon.

Some years ago I bought the whole set of books used in the polytechnic schools of France. Religion was entirely absent, and I daresay it is the same in Germany and Belgium. One of my sons was chiefly educated in Germany; he tells me they had no religious lessons.

It appears to me that English Freethinkers don't look on this as a national matter, on which the trade of the country depends, and, consequently, their own happiness. We have no advantage in the world beyond the excellence and price of our goods; and, unless Freethinkers combine to get a more secular education for their children, one can only see disaster for the future. But in the matter of combination I think the present Freethinkers are very deficient; some Branches are content to go on "on their own hook," quite independent of the central body, and affording the latter little, if any, support. Without union there is little strength. Remember the rich man on his death-bed calling his sons before him, and making a bundle of a few small sticks, which, as a bundle, none of his sons could break, but, taking each stick singly, they could break with ease. He told them to keep united, and they would be strong. I give the same advice to the Secular body.

A single Branch may be placed in difficulties, trodden on by local opposition, which it would not likely see had it the support of the whole body. You want to open your hall, or to hire a hall, on Sunday, and charge at the door for admission. By an old law you musn't, and proprietors of halls are afraid to hire you a hall for fear they may get into trouble; but, by acting in a determined manner, and facing out your breakage of the law, you can have a fair chance of winning, for the authorities are in many cases too advanced to convict. The whole intention of this old law is to starve any cause that may interfere with the Church, and there is no way so good as to prevent you earning your expenses; but, outside you, is there no one else who takes money for Sunday service done? What about our railways and steam-boats, who even give cheap trips on Sundays? You see the pretence is a hypocrisy.

I say you are deficient in the faculty of combination and what combination you have you do not support financially to enable it to do much good. While Mr. Bradlaugh was President he stipulated for no remuneration; he was too generous, but he died in debt. We should all support the President. You will have your annual Conference soon, and I pray you act like men and put your shoulders to the wheel, for your own and your children's sakes.

I have throughout these remarks used the term "you" instead of "we," because I do not attend your gatherings; but I can, in a few minutes' reference to my cheque-book, show that since I became a member I have contributed in various ways over one thousand pounds in support of the N. S. S.; but if I find that you fail to take a business view of a business question, I shall reconsider my future course.

When I have spoken to leaders of the N. S. S. on this question, I have had for reply the poverty of many members. In a large society there will always be some poor members, but as for general poverty I don't believe it.

It is want of thought, want of the combining faculty. Your leaders are not such good beggars as are those of the most spurious superstition. I wish I could invent a hell to frighten you into doing your duty—that is, "the hangman's whip that holds the rogues in order."

I shall be glad to hear from anyone who has any objection or amendment to make to the views I have laid before you.

GEORGE ANDERSON.

35a Great George-street, Westminster.

BOOK CHAT.

ENGLISH Positivists are not a very numerous body, yet they are divided into two not over-friendly sections. Even in the Religion of Humanity it is impossible to find an ideal amity and concord. One of the Positivist sections—the one that meets at Newton Hall—issues a little sixteen-page monthly called *The Positivist Review*. It is published at threepence by Reeves, of Fleet-street, and edited by Professor Beesly. Small as it is, it generally contains something worth reading. The May number opens with an interesting and, of course, well-written article by Mr. Frederic Harrison on Zola's *Paris*. The editor follows with a strong and sensible criticism of what may be called "the policy of Wei-hai-wei." Next comes a suggestive article by Mr. Henry Ellis on "Comte's Conception of Western Europe as a Republic." Among the editorial paragraphs is an obituary notice of the late Mr. Alfred Cock, Q.C., who was a member of the Newton Hall society, to which he gave "wise, practical counsel and material support."

CORRESPONDENCE.

THE REFORM OF THE HOME OFFICE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—It is much to be regretted that the Home Office should have pursued the dog-in-the-manger policy of defeating Mr. Pickersgill's Bill for the Establishment of a Court of Criminal Appeal, which, I was pleased to mark, received your cordial approval in a favorable notice which you gave of our little pamphlet, *A Plea for a Court of Criminal Appeal*. As the passing of any such measure has been postponed for at least another year through the Home Secretary's action, I trust you will allow me, as secretary of the Prisons Department of the Humanitarian League, which did its best to support the Bill, to make some suggestions as to the improvements in the conduct of the Home Office which may make its procedure less objectionable until it is replaced by a more satisfactory tribunal.

1. It should be recognised that every prisoner who can make out any plausible case, either of doubtful guilt or of excessive punishment, is entitled to the independent opinion of each successive Home Secretary. This would do something to palliate the evil of an ultimate appellate tribunal composed of a single judge, with perhaps very little training for his duties.

2. The judge, being usually the cause of a wrongful conviction, and always the cause of an excessive sentence, ought not to be the principal person consulted with respect to any appeal.

3. In cases of doubtful guilt the prisoner should be afforded every possible facility for collecting evidence in his favor or refuting evidence against him.

4. When the application of such a prisoner is refused, the points in which his case is regarded as deficient ought to be clearly pointed out, and he should be allowed reasonable facilities for supplying the deficiency.

5. Secret information should never be used against a prisoner, and in doubtful cases all facts, whether in his favor or against him, that may be brought to light subsequent to the trial should be communicated to the public.

6. When the evidence is in such a condition that if it occurred at a trial the jury ought to acquit the prisoner, he should receive a free pardon as the only equivalent for an acquittal.

7. Excessive sentences should be *at once* reduced to their legitimate dimensions, instead of being left over for periodic revisions at long intervals, and at a time when the facts cannot be so well ascertained and weighed.

8. No prisoner should be detained in prison for a day longer than would otherwise have been the case on account of any agitation or other movement in his favor. There is at present every appearance of making the clemency of the Crown a matter of favor or of caprice, instead of the simple exercise of a duty imposed by the nation on a responsible Minister.

JOSEPH COLLINSON.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

[Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday, and be marked "Lecture Notices," if not sent on post-card.]

LONDON.

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30. G. W. Foote, "The Meaning of Death."
BRADLAUGH CLUB AND INSTITUTE (86 Newington Green-road, Ball's Pond): May 19, at 8.30, H. P. Ward, "Freethought and Free Love." May 18, at 8, Complimentary Concert and Ball on behalf of W. Simons, secretary.
SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Surrey Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road, S.E.): 7, Stanton Coit, "The Idylls of the King"; 3, Peckham Rye (near band-stand), H. O. Newland.
WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall): 11.15, Stanton Coit, "The Idylls of the King."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH (Victoria Park, near the fountain): 3.15, R. P. Edwards.
CAMBERWELL (Station-road): 11.30, Peckham Rye: 3.15 and 6.30, H. P. Ward.
EAST LONDON BRANCH (Mile End Waste): 11.30, E. Pack, "The Speculative Faculty"; 7, E. Pack. May 18, at 8, W. J. Ramsey.
EDMONTON (corner of Angle-road): 7, Mr. Rowney, "The Atonement."
FINSBURY BRANCH (Clerkenwell Green): 11.30, E. White.
HAMMERSMITH (The Grove, near S. W. Railway-station): 7, A. lecture.
HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): A. B. Moss—11.30, "Darwin and Design"; 3.30, "The Trial of Theism."
KILBURN (High-road, corner Victoria-road): 7, A. B. Moss, "The Trial of Theism."
KINGSLAND (Ridley-road): 11.30, W. Heaford.
LIMEHOUSE (The Triangle, Salmon-lane): 11.30, R. P. Edwards. May 17, at 8, W. J. Ramsey.
WESTMINSTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Grosvenor Embankment): 11.30, F. A. Davies, "Reasons for not Believing in Christianity."
WOOD GREEN: (Jolly Butchers' Hill): 11.30, Stanley Jones, "Is the Bible Inspired?"

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM (Bristol-street Board School): O. Watts—11, "Is Religion a Blessing or a Curse?" 7, "Decline of Paganism and the Dawn of Christianity." May 16, at 8, "Can God Do Wrong?"
GLASGOW (Lecture Hall, Brunswick-street): 12, Annual business meeting, election of office bearers, etc.; 6.30, Social meeting in commemoration of Mill and Owen.
LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): O. Cohen—3, "Is there a Future Life?" 7, "The Meaning of Atheism."
MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, W. Simpson, "Is Poverty a Cause of Progress?"
NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE (lecture-room, corner of Raby and Parker-streets, Byker): 7, Carl Aarstad, "Did Christ Practise his Own Precepts?"
SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, W. Melton, "Cruelties of Christianity."
SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, Market-place): 7, Business meeting.

Lecturers' Engagements.

O. COHEN, 12 Merchant-street, Bow-road, London.—May 15, Liverpool; 22, Manchester; 29, N. S. S. Conference. June 5, Camberwell; 12, m., Mile End; a., Victoria Park; e., Edmonton; 19 and 26, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

A. B. MOSS, 44 Oredon-road, London, S.E.—May 15, m. and a. Hyde Park; e., Kilburn; 22, m., Wood Green. June 5, Mile End; 12, Mile End; 19, m. and a., Hyde Park; e., Hammersmith; 26, m., Finsbury; a., Peckham Rye. July 2, m., Mile End; 10, m., Mile End; 17, m. and a., Hyde Park; e., Kilburn; 31, m., Camberwell; a., Peckham Rye; e., Camberwell.

H. PERCY WARD, 4 Sidmouth-street, Gray's Inn-road, W.C.—May 15, m., Camberwell; a. and e., Peckham Rye; 19, e., Bradlaugh Club; 22, m., Clerkenwell Green; a., Victoria Park; e., Edmonton; 24, e., Limehouse; 25, e., Mile End Waste; 29, N. S. S. Conference.

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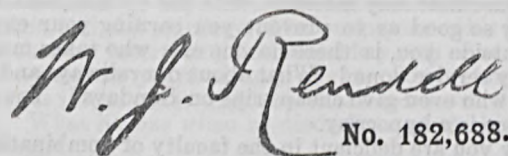
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