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MR. GLADSTONE'S RELIGION.

II.

IN estimating the value of Mr. Gladstone's contributions to the apologetics of Christianity it is well, even now, to bear in mind some of Macaulay's preliminary observations. "It is not by accuracy or profundity," he said, "that men become the masters of great assemblies." Readiness of speech is cultivated in Parliament at the expense of more important faculties. A politician has often to talk first and think (if he can) afterwards. The talent for debate is developed inordinately, and it is fortunate if the "faculties which are required for close reasoning or for enlarged speculation" are retained unimpaired. "We should sooner expect," said Macaulay, "a great original work on political science from an apothecary in a country town, or from a minister in the Hebrides, than from a statesman who, ever since he was one-and-twenty, has been a distinguished debater in the House of Commons." With regard to Mr. Gladstone himself, the essayist remarked that his mind was of large grasp and characterised by dialectical skill. "There is no want of light," he said, "but a great want of what Bacon would have called dry light. Whatever Mr. Gladstone sees is refracted and distorted by a false medium of passions and prejudices."

Perhaps one may be pardoned for turning, at this point, to another of Macaulay's essays—the brilliant and beautiful one on Addison. This great and tender humorist, who wrote so much that is still fruitful and stimulating, fell into the prevailing fashion of his age and tried to "do something" for the Christian religion, which was assailed by a powerful body of Deists. With this object he wrote an elegant, but worthless, little volume on the Evidences of Christianity, which had considerable vogue for several generations. Pulpiters were fond of referring to the "illustrious Addison" as a defender of their faith. Could it be false, they asked, if it satisfied his learned and fastidious mind? But the fact is, that Addison was ridiculously ill-equipped for the task he undertook. He knew nothing at first-hand of the criticism of early Christian literature. And what was the result? Macaulay, who knew almost everything, says:—

"It is melancholy to see how helplessly he gropes his way from blunder to blunder. He assigns, for grounds of his religious belief, stories as absurd as that of the Cock-lane ghost, and forgeries as rank as that of Ireland's Vortigern, puts faith in the lie about the Thundering Legion, is convinced that Tiberius moved the senate to admit Jesus among the gods, and pronounces the letter of Agbarus, king of Edessa, to be a record of great authority. Nor were these errors the effect of superstition; for to superstition Addison was by no means prone. The truth is that he was writing about what he did not understand."

Christian preachers and apologists of the present day—at least the majority of them who address the ignorant and thoughtless multitude—are no less fond of referring to the "illustrious Mr. Gladstone" as a defender of the faith. Can it be false, they ask, if it satisfied his powerful mind, so accustomed to weigh evidence and so practised in sifting arguments? But the fact is that Mr. Gladstone was relatively as ill-equipped as Addison. He did not fall into the same blunders, for they were no longer possible even to a tyro; but he fell into similar blunders, and we may say that his writings on the Bible were just as valuable as

Addison's writings on what are somewhat facetiously called the Evidences of Christianity.

Let us return to Mr. Gladstone's book on Church and State. The position he took, and which he never openly abandoned, was that every nation is a corporate body, that every corporate body must profess and promote a religion, out of mere duty to the lord and ruler of the universe, from whom all power and authority are derived. The following is a statement, in Mr. Gladstone's own words, of the practical aspect of his theory:—

"In fulfilment, then, of his obligations as an individual, the statesman must be a worshipping man. But his acts are public—acting under and by the authority of the law, he moves at his word ten thousand subject arms; and because such energies are thus essentially public, and wholly out of the range of mere individual agency, they must be sanctified not only by the private personal prayers and piety of those who fill public situations, but also by public acts of the men composing the public body. They must offer prayer and praise in their public and collective character wherein they constitute the organ of the nation, and wield its collective force. Wherever there is a reasoning agency there is a moral duty and responsibility involved in it. The governors are reasoning agents for the nation, in their conjoint acts as such. And therefore there must be attached to this agency, as that without which none of our responsibilities can be met, a religion. And this religion must be that of the conscience of the governor, or none."

According to this theory, as Macaulay argued, every corporate body whatever is obliged to profess and promote a religion, and a religion of its own choosing. Banks, railway companies, clubs, and all social aggregates, would have to incorporate a theological creed in their memorandum and articles of association. And the result would be bad religion and bad business. Nor is this all. Persecution would become a logical necessity; it would, in fact, be a regular part of criminal jurisprudence, and heresy would have to be punished like theft or murder. Mr. Gladstone tried to escape from this conclusion, but it was perfectly clear, on his theory, that in India a man should be a Brahman, in Tibet a Buddhist, in Turkey a Mohammedan, in Rome a Catholic, and in London a Protestant, and that his obedience to the spiritual laws of the place he happened to be in, while all the better if voluntary, was as much to be enforced, if necessary, as his obedience to the temporal laws. Mr. Gladstone tried to explain this away by fanciful qualifications. Rulers might ostracise unbelievers, but not actively punish them—which is a ridiculous distinction, and in many cases a distinction without a difference. It must not be supposed, however, that Mr. Gladstone advocated an unlimited right of private judgment. "We have, according to him," as Macaulay put it, "a right to judge all the doctrines of the Church of England to be sound, but not to judge any of them to be unsound." He was willing that men should think so long as they did not differ. He did not see why they *should* differ. Certain doctrines were true, and their truth would be obvious if men were honest and candid as well as intelligent. It did not occur to him that men of high character and powerful minds could form the most divergent opinions when the evidence was not demonstrative—which it never is except in pure physical science. And this idea of the sinfulness of unbelief—that is, really, unbelief in Mr. Gladstone's own religion—clung to him to the very end of his career, as we shall see at a later stage of our inquiry.

Mr. Gladstone held that the Church of England has the

gift and authority of apostolic succession. The clergy, in his view, were the "hereditary witnesses of the truth, conveying it to us through an unbroken series from our Lord Jesus Christ and his Apostles." Of course this is a very convenient theory. It saves the trouble of further discussion. We quite understand its value to the clergy, and Mr. Gladstone was always a bit of a clergyman himself. Curiously, however, it was Mr. Gladstone who disestablished the Irish Church, and came near to disestablishing the Welsh Church. Yet he remained as attached as ever to the English Church, although, if the Liberation movement had been more successful, he would have disestablished that, too, sooner than resign the leadership of the Liberal party. We do not believe for a moment that he was a Christian first and a politician afterwards. He was rather a politician first and a Christian afterwards. Every reason for maintaining the Church of England would have been transformed into a reason for abolishing it if the Liberal party and the country had demanded disestablishment. It is true that Mr. Gladstone was always on God's side, but he managed this by always putting God on *his* side. Whatever it was, his policy had the sanction of the Almighty.

The Church of England owed much to Mr. Gladstone in many ways, but it never trusted him after he disestablished the Irish Church. It felt that its very existence, as far as he was concerned, depended on the necessities of his political leadership. And this was felt as strongly by the Nonconformists, who were the main element of his strength in the constituencies. They admired him as a Christian, they loved him for his Puritan tastes, and they allowed for his attachment to the Church of England, knowing all the while that the moment they were strong enough, and the country was ready, Mr. Gladstone would wield his axe against that dear old tree with all the vigor of a professed enemy. Now that he is dead, however, and no longer a possible source of danger, the Church will make the most of him, and he will probably become less and less a hero with the Nonconformists. No doubt they would indignantly deny this, but we believe it is true.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be continued.)

DEVOTION TO DUTY.

AMONG the many striking utterances of the late Mr. Gladstone there is not one more valuable than the following: "In devotion to duty you have the great secret of life." No doubt this is so. It is, therefore, an advantage to understand what our duties really are, and then to rigidly perform them. Many lives have been rendered comparatively useless in consequence of a persistent manifestation of apathy towards the duties of existence. By the term duty is here meant a recognition of the obligation to perform those actions that tend to promote the individual and general welfare of the community. In other words, it means: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might, for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest." This Bible reference contains an excellent lesson, which all of us would do well to put into practice. It not only indicates how actions are to be performed, but it also gives the reason why our conduct should be thoroughly good, for this world is the only field for active service. Now, if devotion to duty be necessary to personal success, it is equally so in regard to general movements; and our object in this article will be to endeavor to inspire those who profess Secular principles with a love of practical devotion to the Cause to which they are attached.

The marvellous progress of Freethought during the last few decades is a fact of which we are proud, and our desire is to utilize that advancement by strengthening the Secular organisation as much as possible. This can only be adequately done by each member of our Association exhibiting that devotion to duty which is the great secret of success. In our article last week upon "The Secular Party" we pointed out certain social and financial duties which we thought devolved upon all Secularists. But there are other functions that should be observed if we wish to have the satisfaction of feeling that we have done our duty to others as well as to ourselves. With us it has long been a settled conviction that the best way to secure contentment

and serenity of mind at the approach of death is to faithfully perform what we believe to be our duties in life. A great statesman has recently died, and much has been said and written about the calm endurance he evinced during his painful and prolonged illness. This fortitude was attributed to his faith in Christianity, and it was implied that without a belief in religion such resignation and tranquillity would have been impossible. This is a palpable fallacy, for we have known Atheists who suffered as long and as severely as Mr. Gladstone did, yet they bore their affliction without a murmur, and patiently awaited the arrival of the messenger of death. Truly can we vouch for this, having witnessed many Atheists die. Doubtless Mr. Gladstone derived a consolation from his belief, but why? Simply because he was sincere, and had through life devoted himself to what he regarded as his duty. This is the secret of all such deaths. It is not that any one particular faith is indispensable to secure peace and courage at the approach of death; it is rather sincerity in what one believes, and fidelity to conviction, that are required. Hence devotees of all religions, and those of no religion, have met death as fearlessly and as quietly as have the most devout Christians.

The fact is that very few instances of Christian resignation equal the calmness and indifference with which any ordinary Eastern submits to death when it can no longer be avoided. The stories still current among the more ignorant or unscrupulous Christians of the terrible deaths of eminent Freethinkers have been again and again proved to be but pious frauds. Even were they true, they are counterbalanced by the accounts given by the Christians themselves of the deaths of very religious persons who were haunted and agitated to their last moments by dreadful fears of perdition. But, in truth, as those who have had a large death-bed experience can testify, nearly all men die serenely, without reference to their faith or want of faith. Fallen into extreme weakness, they cannot feel strongly on any subject; the past, the present, and the future are but as dim dreams, in which their languor takes but the faintest interest; life slips very easily from the relaxed grasp; exhausted with the long struggle, they are not only willing, but rather anxious, to sleep. But, apart from these considerations, let us take the case of a consistent Secularist lying for weeks upon a sick-bed, regarding with lucid mind the certain approach of death. The written *Thoughts in a Sick Room* of Mr. Austin Holyoake, who suffered intensely for months before his death, show as a matter of fact that in such cases there is no fear. And why should there be fear? If there be indeed a future life, the Secularist must share it with the Christian. Our opinions do not affect the reality. If we are to sleep for ever, we shall so sleep, despite the belief in immortality; if we are to live for ever, we shall so live, despite the belief in annihilation. Our object, however, is not to dwell upon death, but rather to draw attention to the duties of life. We have referred only to the subject here to remind our readers that devotion to duty is the safest preparation for the closing scenes of our lives, and the surest guarantee that we shall be the recipients of any advantages which may await us "beyond the tomb."

It appears to us that the future of the Secular movement should command our special attention. Up to the present great results in the struggles of Freethought have been achieved. Priestcraft, in this country at least, is no longer supreme; theology has lost its former power; the position of the Bible, even in the estimation of Christian professors, has completely changed, and the leading orthodox doctrines no longer influence the intelligent minds of the present day. It is now our duty to follow up these triumphs by preparing for even greater ones in the future. And to do this our efforts should be directed to endeavoring to bring more women into our movement, and to protecting the children from enslavement by the Church. While it is true that the feminine element in our audiences has of late largely increased, still there are many husbands who profess Secular principles, and who attend our lectures themselves, but who never think that their wives should share the same advantage. This is a great mistake, inasmuch as the mother's influence over the formation of children's characters is far greater than that of the father. Until this truth is practically recognised and acted upon, Secular propaganda will be void of one feature of its greatest utility. Of course it is not intended that wives should be compelled to attend any service to which they object.

Freedom in such matters is the right of all. But it is well known that in numerous cases wives are indifferent, having no settled opinions either for or against theology. If such were kindly solicited by their husbands to attend Secular halls and to associate with Secular friends, indifference would no doubt soon give way to definite conviction, and thus the evil of the minds of children being perverted by theological surroundings in their homes would be avoided. In some families, where both parents are Freethinkers, we regret to have to believe that the husband makes no effort to induce his wife to be present at lectures. This is neglect born of the old false notion that intellectual pursuits are not so necessary for woman as they are for man. Secularists should never countenance this folly and injustice, the outcome of theological domination.

It is also an imperative duty upon the part of Secular parents to keep their children free from the snares of theology. Without enforcing any views, *pro* or *con.*, as to religion upon the young, their intellects should be kept clear from the blighting effects of doctrines which have a tendency to limit their mentality, and to create within them erroneous ideas of life, its duties and its responsibilities. The advantages to be derived from adopting such a course as is here indicated are, in our opinion, fourfold. First, the allowing the youthful mind to grow and strengthen according to the natural law of development; second, the affording children an opportunity to escape from a burden of purely speculative matters, to contain which the unformed mind of the young is by no means capable; third, the removing of a fruitful cause of party divisions and disunions; and, fourth, the postponing of a decision with regard to the truth or the fallacy of theology until the mind has become strong enough to allow such a decision to be made in accordance with the behests and promptings of the intellect. Theological training is really burdensome to the youthful mind. Children are not interested in creeds or in catechisms; to them life should be a pleasure, and they should be carefully preserved from everything of a saddening or melancholy nature. No sane person will, we presume, pretend that theology is a cheerful subject; it is rather the reverse, and hence we think that the young can derive no possible satisfaction from the study of man's alleged original fall from righteousness, his supposed perversion, his sins against Deity, and God's acts of vengeance for those offences.

We have selected the above-named two duties in reference to the further acquisition of women to our ranks, and the protection of children from the beguilements of the priests, because we believe our devotion to duty in these matters lies at the root of the future success of the Secular movement. The presence of women in our midst has an inspiring influence upon men, and the proper cultivation of the rising generation is a wise preparation of those who will take our place when, in the natural order of things, our work will be done, and we shall lie down to rest. It is gratifying to us to know that in many parts of the country the duties here mentioned are being performed with encouraging success, and our fervent desire is that the useful work shall be more and more extended. True workers will always toil for the future progress of the cause which they have at heart, and our hope is that the co-operation of our wives, daughters, and sisters will be regarded as essential to the ultimate success of Secular propaganda. The correct work of the educationist should be considered to consist in preparing his pupils to successfully take part in the great battle of life, and to strengthen the understanding of those entrusted to his care in all things that are necessary to the thorough development of men and women, so that they can transmit to their posterity a nobler heritage than that previously acquired by themselves.

CHARLES WATTS.

A Fable.

A man met a lad weeping. "What do you weep for?" he asked.

"I am weeping for my sins," said the lad.

"You must have little to do," said the man.

The next day they met again. Once more the lad was weeping.

"Why do you weep now?" asked the man.

"I am weeping because I have nothing to eat," said the lad.

"I thought it would come to that," said the man.

—R. L. Stevenson.

A SERMON NOT PREACHED AT ST. PAUL'S BY THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY.

"Blessed are ye poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God."
—Luke vi. 20.

It is worthy of notice, my brethren, that the text I have just read comes from a passage which appears to form the oldest version of the Sermon on the Mount. It breathes a sentiment which afterwards shocked the more cautious school among the early Christians. It blesses poverty as poverty. It lays God's tender hand upon the head of the beggar, and drops the tear of Christ upon the starving. It sanctifies rags and opens the door of God's palace to the feet of the outcast. It invites the wretched peasant, heavy-laden with debt and borne down with sickness, to look upward and behold a vision of the great banquet hall where sit the patriarchs and the old national heroes, and where a seat is reserved for him, and where he shall eat bread and quaff foaming wine in the Kingdom of God.

You will readily understand, my brethren, that a doctrine like this would outrage the feelings of the more conventional sort of Christians. Such is the power of class prejudice that even into the new democratic religion of Jesus the Carpenter the distinctions of rank soon began to creep. The merchant who wore the gold ring received more honor than the dusty porter. The richer disciples drew lines about their persons and their property which divided them off, more or less delicately, from the common herd. And when the middle-class and aristocratic Christians read in the more ancient records of the Lord's words how he blessed poverty *as* poverty, and hunger *as* hunger, and thirst *as* thirst, they had an uneasy suspicion that such expressions tended to social subversion. They therefore willingly adopted the new reading by which some skillful scribe softened the original harshness of the text—for you must know that there are always able literary men prepared to place their wits at the service of patronising purses. Thus, then, the text was made to read: "Blessed are the poor *in spirit*, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven; blessed are they that hunger and thirst after *righteousness*, for they shall be filled." The new version very well suited the *bourgeois* religious temper—the temper which can give itself passionately to the exercises of piety and the rapture of prayer and praise, but has no inclination to throw all its gold and shares upon the altar.

But it is my function, brethren, to administer the pure word of God, and to lead you back to the original teaching of the blessed Master whose we are and whom we serve. And I declare unto you that, in the first flush and enthusiasm of our religion, the Kingdom of Heaven was offered only to the poor, and accepted by the poor alone. Two rich men figured among the disciples of Jesus; but what an irony was their attitude. One was Nicodemus; he visited the Lord by stealth, by night. The other was Joseph of Arimathea, who never did a stroke of open work for the Christian faith except to bury its founder! You have in these two incidents a striking allegory of the mode in which the moneyed classes have treated our divine religion. If they have come to Jesus, it has been by stealth, with all kinds of reservations, with all kinds of uncandid interpretations, with secret exceptions and provisos; and their main contribution to the triumph of Christianity has been to endow it with a splendid tomb. For, as head of our holy Church in this wealthy country, I fully recognise that our popular religion is very far from representing the true and unadulterated message of the first Christians. We have buried Christ in a sepulchre of dogmas and conventionalities, and we will not let him rise.

I repeat to you, brethren, that the Gospel of Christ was intended for one class only—it was intended for the poor alone. The whole drift of its teaching is a pleading for the rights of the poor. The Initiator of our religion was fed during his ministry by the kindness of neighbors and followers. He had no money to pay the dues of the Temple. The common people heard him gladly, while the dwellers in mansions and villas held aloof. He taught his disciples to pray: "Give us this day our daily bread." This is not the prayer of rich men. Rich men would pray for larger fortunes, for safer investments, for protection from burglars and agitators and popular education. Jesus was the poor man's physician; he was always laying his hands of mercy upon the epileptic, the hysterical, the crippled, the fever-stricken who were unable to pay fees.

He gave meals to the multitude, who would, in passionate gratitude, have made him a king, and rendered him homage for bread.

Consider for a moment, brethren, the significance—the social and economic significance—of the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. Of the beggar it is only related that he was poor, miserable, and diseased. Nothing is said of his moral character. He passed to Abraham's bosom and feasted at the board of angels. Of the Rich Man's character we at least know one thing—he had sufficient kindness of heart to care, even amid the torments of Hades, for the fate of his five kinsmen. But he had possessed much wealth, and he descended to hell.

Or look at the final scene in the Christian drama. Look at the tragic assembly of the nations before the seat of the Judge. The people are divided into sheep and goats. And what is the test which the Judge applies to their conduct? It is the test which would naturally occur to a poor man, to a judge sprung from, and representing, the proletariat. He deals out fiery wrath upon the indifferent and the callous who bestowed neither food nor drink, who furnished no garments to the needy, who offered no shelter to the wayfarer, who neglected to visit the poor artisan or peasant in jail.

You will call to mind how a young aristocrat came to the Master and said: "What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" You remember the answer—clear, emphatic, and crushing: "Sell whatever thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven." The young man's enthusiasm could not bear the strain. He could pity the poor; he could engage in debates on the social problem; he could convene "drawing-room" meetings to discuss measures of amelioration; he could give occasional subscriptions to the Charity Organisation Societies (or whatever corresponded) in Capernaum, Jericho, or Jerusalem; he could pray abundantly for the poor; but give all his property to the poor he would not. The Master used his case as an illustration. "It is easier," said the Divine Teacher, "for a camel to go through a needle's eye than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." You know the effect upon the disciples. They were astonished exceedingly.

And so am I, brethren. It is evident that the Church has not fulfilled its mandate. Its gospel was for the poor; it caters for the rich. Jesus wrote over the portals of heaven, "No rich men admitted here"; and to-day millionaires profess our holy faith, and give donations to our missions. Our Lord made kindness to the poor the sole test of qualification to enter Paradise; yet the Church lays down conditions of faith and ritual. Christianity was born poor; it will die rich—or rather, it will die because it is rich. I repeat, I am astonished exceedingly. It is a mystery how, for so many centuries, the Church could have dared to call itself Christian in opposition to the manifest teachings of its founder. And I put the serious question to you and to myself:—Ought we, even one day longer, to keep hold upon our property?

F. J. GOULD.

WHAT IS FREEMASONRY?

FREEMASONRY has been attracting a good deal of attention lately on account, among other things, of the denunciations hurled against it by continental clericalism. The people of this country, who associate Freemasonry mainly with feasting and dancing and the wearing of aprons in street processions, cannot understand why churches should thunder at such an organisation any more than against Oddfellows, Foresters, and Ancient Buffaloes. On the other hand, they are puzzled by the fact that Freemasons never divulge the alleged secrets of their Order, but, on the contrary, assume an air of mystery, profundity, and self-sufficiency, which their contributions to the world of thought do not seem to warrant.

Continental clericalism is resolutely opposed to Freemasonry, because it is a secret order having international ramifications, and because its members are bound by oaths not to reveal its secrets. But still more, probably, is bitterness inspired by the fact that Freemasonry is not only an organisation which proclaims (in whispers) the brotherhood of man the wide world over, but is a system of religion with an elaborate ritual. The ritual is pub-

lished in England, and an official work on Freemasonry, published in America five years ago, declares that "Freemasonry has no secrets unless the universal and special modes of recognition." The ritual of the Freemasons, however, is interpreted as non-Christian. To be strictly accurate, it is pure Deism, derived from the Old Testament. It embodies nothing avowedly from the New Testament. Belief in the Creator and Maintainer of the material universe is common to all religions; it was common, likewise, to the religions of antiquity. As Freemasonry, therefore, only insists upon the acknowledgment and worship of the Supreme Being, Mohammedans, Buddhists, and other religionists, as well as Christians, are eligible to become members.

This broad basis of theological agreement is decidedly too latitudinarian to be countenanced by the Church of Rome. Moreover, there are some who profess to discern in the ritual of Freemasonry a perpetuation of ancient heathenism. Realising the inevitableness of such antagonism, it is easy to understand that Freemasonry must, of necessity, have been a secret order, assuming that it existed in times when heresy was punished with the stake, and when to proclaim the brotherhood of man was considered almost as great a crime against monarchical interest and class ascendancy.

But Freemasonry in its present form dates no further back than the beginning of the eighteenth century, and at the commencement of the present century its "mysteries" tended to ceremonial tomfoolery. In 1800, during a trial of so-called "Templars" for alleged sedition in Scotland, it was disclosed that one of the ceremonies consisted of drinking porter out of a human skull. What, then, is the origin of Freemasonry? Freemasonry may be, and probably is, of composite origin, but its derivation from one source is certain. The craftsmen who built the splendid cathedrals and churches of Europe at a time when surrounding civilisation was exceedingly rude, and domestic architecture had scarcely emerged from the wattle-and-daub style—the craftsmen who afterwards built the frowning strongholds of feudalism—were the inheritors of classic skill. If Greece learned architecture and building from Egypt, and Rome from Greece, then the craftsmen who transmitted Roman splendors in stone and mortar throughout Europe were, in a sense, the perpetuators of ancient wisdom. By reason of their skill, and their migrations from one country to another, they found it necessary to form a sort of trade-union. This necessity became stronger when occasion arose to distinguish "free stone" masons from less skilful workmen. Thus came about the establishment of lodges and the adoption of signs and symbols.

Freemasonry, as a trade organisation in this country, came to an end after the fire of London, owing partly to the extensive importation of foreign workmen. But the idea of human brotherhood commended itself to honorary members of the Order with social perceptions in advance of their time, and by-and-by Freemasonry, as we know it, was evolved in this country. From Great Britain it spread to the continent, where it was eagerly welcomed by men resentful of what they considered to be Church and State oppression. Freemasonry, moreover, as an international brotherhood, enabled members of the Order to find friends and assistance, if needed, wherever lodges existed—and that certainly was no slight matter.

Whence came the ritual of Freemasonry? Certainly not from the trade-union of the "free stone" masons. It and the symbols have been borrowed from somewhere. Wildly extravagant suggestions have been made as to the source of these. There are persons with heated imaginations who pretend that the true significance of Freemasonry was the secret doctrine known to Adam. The York Lodge, which formerly claimed ascendancy in this country, cherished a legend that the sciences (masonry being a part of geometry) were derived from the family of Lamech. The science of masonry, which symbolises all the others, was preserved (it was alleged) on a stone pillar from the flood, was taught by Euclid to the Egyptians, and carried by Israel to the building of the temple.

The Rev. George Oliver, a nineteenth-century writer, boldly avowed that Moses was a Grand Master, and Joshua his deputy. The building of Solomon's Temple is the one notable event commemorated in the ritual of Freemasonry. Strictly speaking, the Temple was not Solomon's, but was built for him by the workmen of Hiram of Tyre; for the Israelites, as Scripture explicitly states, were destitute of

the requisite skill. The association of Solomon's Temple with Freemasonry seems to be purely arbitrary, and one of those fragments of Judaism which the Order perpetuates.

There are many who suppose the ritual of Freemasonry was derived from the Templars, who played so prominent a part in the Crusades. Originally the Templars were a religious order of warriors, but in time it was suspected that they had, during their long stay in the East, become tainted with Oriental heathenism, and practised in secret rites which were non-Christian. And so it came to pass—though their enormous wealth and jealousy of their military organisation may have been the reasons of State hostility—that the Templars were suppressed throughout Europe. In France, in the fifteenth century, they were tortured and murdered wholesale. A curious outcome, truly, of the Crusades, that the champions of Christendom—an order of Christian zealots originally—should have been slain for their organised impiety!

The ritual of Freemasonry may or may not have been derived from the Templars. There was no lack of secret and mystic orders in mediæval Europe, whence speculative theories and occult symbols might have been derived. As a matter of fact, the symbols of Freemasonry are simply the symbols of most ancient religions. In this country they date from the time of the Druids; they are found of still greater antiquity in the ruins of Egypt. They have an astro-theological origin, the central idea of which is that the sun's creative and sustaining energy, materially obvious, symbolises the unseen spiritual omnipotence of the Supreme Creator. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, if the symbols of Freemasonry be found in Persia, India, Egypt, and in all the relics of past civilisations. The masonic square symbolises equity, the triangle justice, the compass honesty, the gloves and white aprons purity. In ancient civilisations they distinguished the initiate or hierophant from the vulgar. Present-day theosophy has, like Freemasonry, borrowed ancient symbols.

The perpetuation of solar symbolism in Freemasonry is certainly odd. A golden sun may be seen on the ceilings of masonic temples, and in miniature on the aprons of the craftsmen. Here are passages from the ritual having special reference to the examination of an entered apprentice (there are three grades in all lodges by the way; the second in progression is the Fellow of the Craft, and the third is the Master Mason):—

Q.—How is the Lodge situated?

A.—East and West.

Q.—Why so?

A.—Because all churches and chapels are, or ought to be so.

Q.—Where stands your master?

A.—In the east.

Q.—Why so?

A.—As the sun rises in the east and opens the day, so the master stands in the east (with his right hand upon his breast, being a sign, and the square about his neck) to open the Lodge and set his men at work.

Q.—Where stand your wardens?

A.—In the west.

Q.—What is their business?

A.—As the sun sets in the west to close the day, so the wardens stand in the west, with their right hands upon their left breasts, being a sign, and a level and plumb rule about their necks, to close the Lodge, and dismiss the men from labor paying them their wages.

All this seems useless and meaningless, though it has a certain interest as a curious though, to the initiate, probably unconscious perpetuation of ancient rites connected with sun-worship.

The vows by which Freemasons pledge themselves to safeguard the apparently momentous secrets of their order—secrets which, to real investigators of occultism and the so-called ancient wisdom, are simply comical—seem grotesque. The initiate to Royal Arch-Masonry, for example, pledges himself to cherish the secrets of his degree "under the penalty of having the crown of his skull struck off." The initiate to the entered apprentice degree pledges himself to secrecy "under the penalty of having his throat cut across, his tongue torn out by the roots, and his body buried in the sand of the sea at low-water mark, or a cable's length from the shore where the tide regularly ebbs and flows twice in twenty-four hours, or the more efficient punishment of being branded as a wilfully perjured individual."

We perceive, therefore, that the awful punishments decreed by Freemasons to apostates from their order are

as symbolical as the emblems of their craft. In 1826 there was great excitement in America over the alleged kidnaping and murder of an apostate named Morgan by Freemasons, and convictions for abduction were secured; but there is no proof that Morgan was ever maltreated, still less that he was killed. That an endeavor was made to prevent him from divulging "secrets," and spirit him away, seems to be certain; but all intelligent Freemasons condemn the absurd zeal of the perpetrators.

CLEMENT SHAW.*

MOSES AND THE PROPHETS.

RECENTLY an advertisement, emanating from the offices of the *Prophetic News*, has been freely circulating in the columns of the leading dailies. My curiosity being aroused by its ambiguous wording, I forwarded a post-card to the office, as per instructions, and received by return a copy of a pamphlet entitled *Great Events at Hand*. To my surprise, I immediately recognised it as a compilation of that very old humbug, the Rev. M. Baxter. And here, before proceeding further, I wish to tender my thanks to that gentleman for the permission, contained on the title-page, to reprint or republish the pamphlet; and, although I do not intend to avail myself to the full of this offer, my thanks are none the less due or sincere.

From the book itself I learn that it is upon the following illogical and ungrammatical passage that the Rev. M. Baxter bases his claim to be a prophet:—

"It is utterly unreasonable and unscriptural to suppose that, although the exact date of the end of the Antediluvian, Patriarchal, and Jewish Dispensations was revealed many years beforehand, yet that the more privileged Christian Dispensation should not have the exact date of its termination anticipatively revealed."

If you are able to make any sense from that, you will see why Baxter is a prophet. But the life of a prophet is by no means one of "beer and skittles." And, outside the money-mongering department, Baxter's career has not been marked by any great success.

"It is generally admitted," he remarks impudently, "by the ablest students of prophecy that we are living in the rapids of the stream of time, and are fast approaching the downfall of the kingdoms of this world, and the consequent establishment of Christ's millennial kingdom."

Who are the *ablest* students of prophecy? Baxter and his followers? It is a great pity that these people are obliged to commit themselves to dates. Nothing is more embarrassing than having to effect alterations in them from time to time; and it is no secret that Baxter himself has, more than once, had to resort to this means to prevent our sudden return to chaos. His final shuffling of dates has resulted in fixing the present year of grace for the beginning of "the downfall of the kingdoms of this world." Doubtless Mr. Baxter's pockets are excessively bulged, and himself in high glee at the present plethora of cheap journalistic "wars and rumors of war." Have we not recently had a great famine in India, and is not that country at the present moment suffering under the effects of a terrible pestilence? Of course; so Baxter freely scatters his filthy pamphlet broadcast, and talks joyfully of the "signs of the coming end of the age."

Christ's own statement, it will be thought, would have silenced him once and for all. But no, Baxter contends—and herein is shown the paltriness of his quibbling—that the words, "of that day and hour knoweth no man," etc., were spoken in the present tense, and, therefore, cannot be applied to these latter days.

Nahum ii. 4 says: "The chariots shall rage in the streets; they shall jostle one against another in the broadways; they shall seem like torches, they shall run like lightning." From this Baxter clearly foresees the destruction of our railways. How about that more recent innovation, the motor car? Does this foretell their universal adoption to the annihilation of railways, or are we going back to the days of postchaises and outriders?

Baxter is certain of one thing only: the passage is a clear prediction of the "last days of railways." I sincerely trust he is wrong; either alternative is greatly to be deplored.

* Of L.: Les Vraies Experts, G.: O.: de Paris.

"We also see the energetic and extensive going forth of unclean spirits—from the dragon, Satan—anti-Christian infidelity, especially as developing in Spiritualism and Rationalism....."

Why couple Spiritualism and Rationalism, quackery and common-sense? On page six of my copy of *Great Events* he has been at great pains to insert a "new map of Europe," showing "The Confederation of the Ten Kingdoms." In this map Britain is shown to have an area almost equal to that of France; in one corner of it we learn that the confederation is to occur in 1898, in the opposite one the date is fixed for 1899. He gives Daniel as his authority for this map, but on reference to the passage he quotes I can only find mention of a ten-horned monstrosity, an animal that would not disgrace a freak museum.

Stormy times are ahead for Britain; we are to lose India and Ireland:—

"We may expect Britain at that time (1898-9) to experience great disasters and calamitous commotions by Home Rule (i.e., Rome Rule) in Ireland, and by Mohammedan fanaticism and disaffection in India, and by revolutionary agitation, and perhaps even by invasion."

About this time, also, a Napoleon will rise up, and he will be a "sovereign of fierce countenance, understanding dark sentences (*sic*), and of crafty policy destroying many by peace." Peace as a destroying angel is somewhat original. The italics in the foregoing quotation are not Baxter's, the punctuation is. The Napoleonic Antichrist will either be Prince Victor or Prince Louis Napoleon; but should both these gentlemen die, from natural or unnatural causes, previous to their call to the throne of France, there is no doubt that Baxter will be ready with an excuse or a substitute. During his lifetime Napoleon Buonaparte, on more than one occasion, was proclaimed by the prophets of his day as the future Antichrist. And this simply because they were able, by juggling with figures, to make the letters of his name total the number 666, the numbers of the beast. Baxter we have to thank for an original scheme in reaching that number—a scheme, be it remembered, forced upon him by the untimely death of Buonaparte. The plan adopted by the early prophets was as follows:—

A = 1	N = 40
B = 2	A = 1
C = 3	P = 60
D = 4	O = 50
E = 5	L = 20
F = 6	E = 5
G = 7	A = 1
H = 8	N = 40
I = 9	
K = 10	B = 2
L = 20	U = 110
M = 30	O = 50
N = 40	N = 40
O = 50	A = 1
P = 60	P = 60
Q = 70	A = 1
R = 80	R = 80
S = 90	T = 100
T = 100	E = 5
U = 110	

666*

Simple as this trick is, it is dependent upon the misspelling of Napoleon. Since neither Louis' nor Victor's names will accommodate themselves to this trick, Baxter adopts the Greek word Napolonti, giving to the original characters certain values totalling 666. But there is no end to the tricks of the prophet's trade. Take, for instance, the way Baxter handles verse 27 of chap. xi. of Daniel:—

"And he [Napoleon] shall confirm a covenant with many [of the Jews] for one week [a week of years, that is, seven years] and in the midst of the week," &c.

The contents of the brackets are supplied by Baxter, and this is only one of many instances where he mutilates the Scriptures for his own ends.

The second coming of Christ is to take place on March 12, 1903, and great things are predicted for that day. No less than 144,000 "translated living Christians" will sever the natural laws of gravitation and ascend bodily to—well, their exact destination is not stated. Would it be presumptuous to advise these said Christians to provide

* The number of the beast.

themselves with parachutes? To quote the one and only Baxter again:—

"It is a remarkable fact that this Thursday, March 12, 1903.....will be a week of days before March 19....."

What is there remarkable in seven and twelve making nineteen? What mysterious meaning underlies this commonplace combination of figures? Wonders will never cease!

Someone, armed with a trumpet (tin?), is going to usher in astounding physical phenomena on the earth, seas, and constellations. Hail, fire, and blood will be rained upon the earth. Will these things happen simultaneously? If so, will the fire melt the hail, or the hail quench the fire? But more follows. A burning mountain will be cast into the seas; a third of the seas will be turned into blood; a third of the living creatures therein will die; a third of the ships on the seas will be destroyed. Will the "living creatures" (fishes, we presume) die of fright or curiosity? Will the mountain be cast into the seas bodily, or portions at a time? Will the blood, into which the seas will be changed, be human or animal? Finally, how will the ships be destroyed, and what proportion of their crews will escape with their lives? Will Mr. Baxter kindly make these things clear in his next edition? He would thereby oblige a great many, and probably make a few converts. The information about the ships should prove interesting reading to shipbuilders and the allied trades. Labor agitators, also, should note the date; such another opportunity for strikes may never occur again.

In addition to the above, we learn that his Satanic Majesty will be very busy about this time. After being cast down (Baxter does not say from where), he will rage furiously on the earth for some months, and will wind up his carousal by becoming incarnate in Napoleon. What has Napoleon done to deserve this fate?

Another interesting period should be that between March and August of the year 1904. "A great RED dragon—a murderer from the beginning—having been cast down to the earth and inflamed with great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short time, raises up his RED horse of RED-republican war to go forth on its career of world-wide carnage." After that, we naturally look forward to a period of peace. But no. Napoleon (with the Devil in him), mounted on a pedestal, will require all and sundry to bow down and worship him. Those who obey him will be branded with the number of the beast, both on their foreheads and the palms of their hands. To those who refuse death will be meted out with unflinching severity. Baxter goes so far as to hazard the opinion that he will compose for his worshippers a Napoleonic Koran, and start a new calendar dating from some notable epoch in his dynasty. Unfortunately for him, his success will only be short-lived.

The trumpet is again to be called into use. At one blast Demon Scorpion Locusts, Demon Lion-headed Horses, Famine and Pestilence, will spring up and scatter death and destruction among the followers of the Antichrist. And so on, wonder increasing on wonder, and then the millennium in 1908. This is graphically pictured on page thirty-five. A child is seen leading a Lion; the Lamb and the Wolf are dwelling together; the Leopard and the Kid, the Cow and the Bear, are doing likewise. The child, of about two years old, is head and shoulders taller than the lion, and the lamb is only one degree smaller than the cow. But that is the fault of the artist. Another plate worthy of notice is that depicting the Great Earthquake of the same year. A sailing-vessel in the foreground is seen gracefully shooting a rapid, compared with which Niagara would appear insignificant. In a sense, however, this vessel is a drawback, as without it the picture, when inverted, might very well do duty for a sunrise on the Regi.

J. H. D.

Still men hold the belief that the gods were born and begotten, Have such thoughts as themselves, and have like bodies and voices; Yet it is likely, if hands were bestowed upon oxen or lion, If with their hands they could draw, and the works of men should accomplish— Horses like unto horses, and oxen in likeness of oxen— So they would draw the figures of gods, and fashion the bodies Like in every way to their own.—*Xenophanes (B.C. 500).*

THE IMPOSTURE.

Is it not all a delusion,
Based on a fabric of lies?
A force of fraud and collusion,
Whose life, through the ages, dies!
Men seeking to rise to glory,
Niched in this temple of fame;
Great through the scheme of a story,
Wrought round an innocent name!

Martyr or myth, real or fabled,
Words of pity, deeds helpful to pain,
Are pictured, and he as enabled
To stand for his faith and be slain.
So he died—if he lived—and forever,
Though vision'd as rising again;
Mighty that fiction's endeavor
Truth's holy semblance to feign!

Fancy and legend and falsehood
Round the stern faith—to our loss—
Raising a mortal to godhood,
Turns what were golden to dross.
Hard and cold grew the teaching,
Rough and thorny the way,
Repressive and gloomy the preaching,
That promised eternal day.

Few now heed the laws of the Teacher,
Nor practise the precepts he taught;
Alike are the pew and the preacher,
And both with hypocrisy fraught!
For all is pretence and scheming,
Scorn still lashes the "sinful and weak";
Forgiveness and mercy are seeming,
And hate hath its vengeance to wreak.

Joy, when the system is vanished,
Far from the worship of men—
Joy, as its terrors are banished,
Ne'er to bear thralldom again!
Joy, as the mighty delusion,
Sinks in the grave of the past;
And out of its fear and confusion
Man's happiness triumphs at last.

GERALD GREY.

ACID DROPS.

THE Christian Evidence Society "devoutly expresses its thankfulness to Almighty God for the noble testimony which the Right Hon. William Ewart Gladstone bore to the truth and power of Christianity." What the Christian Evidence Society should now do is to explain why testimony to the truth and power of Christianity is requisite nearly two thousand years after Christ. The heads of this Society might also tell us, either publicly or in confidence, what they really think is the value of Gladstone's testimony to the truth of Christianity.

"Mr. Gladstone as a Theologian" was the title of some notes by Mr. A. W. Hatton in the *Daily News*. The G.O.M. spoke of Dr. Robertson Smith's work, especially with regard to the date of the Levitical Law, as "poor and thin," and of Bishop Butler as the "guardian angel" of modern thought. He also spoke of the "terrible moral decline" of the civilized nations "down to the time of the Advent." All which shows that Gladstone was substantially (in these matters) on a level with the common garden Christian Evidencer. The "terrible decline" which led to Marcus Aurelius and Epictetus, to say nothing of Seneca and Plutarch, is simply a terrible absurdity.

Gladstone's faith in Christianity has been a godsend to the pulpits and pious journals during the past fortnight, and they have worked it for all it was worth. "Should we be told," says one orthodox publicist, "amid scenes of perplexity, that 'religion is a disease,' then we can point to him as to one who possessed at all times a fulness of vigorous and buoyant life beyond all we had ever known." The absurdity of this is obvious when we reflect that the expression "religion is a disease" is a metaphorical one. It is not meant that the brain or any other part of the body is actually diseased. Gladstone had immense vitality, but so have many savages, and most Christians look upon their religion as something very much like a mental disease.

Gladstone's death has given a fillip to the sale of his *Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture*. It is pretty safe to prophesy, however, that in the course of a few years this volume will fall amongst the threepenny lots. It has not the slightest value apart from the author's name.

The Archbishop of Canterbury participated in the religious ceremonies at Gladstone's grave, and a very flattering description of him appeared in the *Manchester Guardian*: "Dr. Temple on the right hand of the Dean, grave, dark, dignified, and majestic in his mien, as becomes the Primate of all England." Only a few months ago a London paper described Dr. Temple's mouth as being like a rat-trap.

Indignation is expressed at the conduct of the Parnellite members of the House of Commons, who did not attend Gladstone's funeral at Westminster Abbey. But this feeling is surely ill-placed considering the part the G. O. M. played in the deposition of Parnell.

It appears there are 1,493 soldiers in our army who are prepared to sing "God Save the Queen" on their bended knees. They belong to the Army Guild of the Holy Standard, but they do not appear to meet with the approbation of their fellow soldiers just at present, as, after being in existence for a quarter of a century, last year the Guild, instead of increasing, lost fifty-nine members and six branches, while its periodical has fallen £14 in debt.

What the "Holy Standard" may be perhaps these pious Tommy Atkinsons may know: we do not. Jesus certainly at one time went in for drilling his disciples under the cover of a pic-nic, but it does not appear that he ever went so far as to adopt a standard. However, it is no doubt the cross that is intended, which is as much the standard of Christ as the gallows would be of "General" Booth if he should chance to wind up by being hanged.

Some bandsmen may now be seen wearing splendid new swords with golden handles resembling Gothic foliated altar crosses. It will be remembered that it is the duty of bandsmen to attend to the wounded and dying in battle, and this may be taken as another indication of the manner in which superstition is being "pushed through" by those in authority.

The St. Winifred Well holy water has had to go to Chancery to discover when it is to be holy water sold in jars and bottles, or merely a common millstream forming the motive-power of an unsanctified factory. The question was altogether too deep for the court to settle off-hand; consequently, for the present, it is only to be holy from twelve on Saturday night to twelve on Sunday night; but as this gives four millions of gallons of holy water a week, we suppose nobody will be a bit the worse.

Referring to the death of Mr. Edward Bellamy, the American Socialist and author of *Looking Backward*, the *New Age* remarks that he had advanced beyond all theological dogmatisms, yet "the essence of religion—an enthusiasm for everything making for righteousness, an awe and reverence for everything of good report—remained as the mainspring of his nature." Well, if *this* is the "essence of religion," it is dead certain that Atheists are quite as religious as Theists.

Miss Marie Corelli, the pious novelist, has informed the *Daily Chronicle* through her solicitors that she is *not* going to publish a new romance entitled "The Sorrows of Christ." Our contemporary says that the lady's denial of the rumor is couched in language which is "a trifle more lurid than the published advertisement" of the said romance. It remarks, however, that an anxious world will be relieved to hear that the lady is not an Atheist.

Dr. Sabatier, in his little book on *The Vitality of Christian Dogmas*—just translated into English—remarks that "the belief in the personal, historical Devil acting supernaturally in our life is seen to be moribund." It will be remembered that Jesus Christ believed in the Devil, and is reported to have had many encounters with him. But, although the Bible is still the Word of God, we must read all this with a very large grain of salt. Of course it won't do (for Christians) to say that Jesus Christ or his biographers were mistaken. The proper way is to consider the demonology of the Gospels as exhibiting what is "transient in the words of Christ." We borrow this wonderful phrase from the *Literary World*.

It appears from a communication in the *Rock* that "Christian working men" are often "assailed by ungodly shop-mates," and in order that they may defend themselves it is necessary for them to have "free grants" of suitable tracts, which are fortunately provided (when the funds permit) by a certain professional "infidel slayer." Unfortunately the Distribution Fund is at present overdrawn, though we are not told how this miraculous feat was accomplished. Anyhow money is wanted, and wanted badly; and surely it will not be withheld from the great "infidel slayer" when "Freethinkers (so he says) readily supply their leaders with funds for the purpose of attacking Christianity."

The latest news from the Philippines is that the Religious Orders have declared their readiness to clear out if their absence is necessary to the pacification of the country. They feel that they are intensely hated by the natives, who have to support them in idleness, luxury, and ostentation.

According to the French law, ancestors are protected against attacks on their reputation. "If Pontius Pilate," says the Paris correspondent of the *Daily News*, "were not an historical character, his heirs, were there any now alive, might sue the publishers of the Gospels for libel." In that case it would be requisite to object to every Christian on the jury.

Father Lepsenyi, a member of the Hungarian Diet, advertised that he was offering a certain book gratis to religious orders or students of theology. It was written by two priests, and is a base attack on the private character of the great and noble Kossuth. Deputy Komlathy denounced it with the approval of all parties, and when Father Lepsenyi entered the House he was greeted with cries of "Scoundrel," "Out with him," and so forth. Afraid of the storm he had raised, he proceeded to ask pardon of the House, and declared that the book should not be circulated. There was dead silence when he finished his apology, but suddenly the cry arose, "Honor to the memory of Ludwig Kossuth!" Father Lepsenyi was seized outside by two members of the Independent party, who boxed his ears. He was only able to enter his carriage with the assistance of the police.

The *Daily News* says that the most peaceful solution of the difficulty raised by Mr. Kensit would be "for the advanced Ritualists to join the Church of Rome." Yes, but what about the nice fat livings of the Church of England? Are these things to be abandoned? Perish the thought!

Labor not for the meat that perisheth. Take no thought for the morrow. Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth. Blessed be ye poor. Such are the texts, and now for the illustration. The will of the Rev. Edward Jones Brewster, of Eastbourne, has just been proved, and his personal estate is valued at £83,729 18s. 9d. The personal estate of another parson, the Rev. John Richardson Selwyn, of Cambridge, is valued at £24,421 0s. 9d. How the deuce will these two disciples of the poor Nazarene be able to thread that needle's eye and get into heaven? We guess they'll have to fall into the fireworks establishment.

Orthodox morality is sometimes as vicious as orthodox religion. We have just been reading a curious case of lynching in the *New York Journal*. It occurred at East Hampton, Connecticut. The victim was a married woman who is said to have neglected her husband and children, and "whose conjugal morals were believed to be below the East Hampton standard." She was seized by a party of men, stripped stark naked, tarred and feathered, and then allowed to make a frenzied run for her home, a mile distant, her only covering being such garments as she could carry in her hands. On the whole, the "sinful" woman could hardly have been as hateful a beast as any one of the "virtuous" men who subjected her to these brutalities.

A member of the Woman's Temperance Union, at Ottawa, was recently horrified at seeing two men looking into the window of a well-known tailor's shop on a Sunday, and actually talking about what patterns they would like for their new spring suits. She demands that every tradesman shall pull his blinds down on Sunday, and calls upon the Legislature for a law compelling them to do so. Perhaps it would be still more conducive to the public welfare if the Legislature passed a law compelling the lady to hold her tongue.

Henry Otway, an aged clerk, hung himself at 54 Gloucester-street, Pimlico. Several pious letters from his pen were read at the inquest. There was also found on his table a written prayer to the "Lord God Almighty," in which the deceased stated his belief that by trusting in his Savior he would "have at the last a place with the Ransomed." This was enough to prove his irrationality. The coroner's jury said he was insane.

On and Off Duty, a policeman's paper, draws attention to the new law in Germany providing that witnesses should take the oath after giving their evidence. Our contemporary, which is very pious, forgets that "Our Master," as it calls Jesus Christ, said "Swear not at all."

Mr. Justice Lawrence has just said that it "seemed to be one of the great misfortunes connected with the subject of temperance that people acted so intemperately with regard to it." This was said in connection with the suit of Mr. Thomas Jephcott, proprietor of the Ship Hotel, Margate, against the Rev. Benjamin Briggs, a Baptist

minister, for slander. The rev. gentleman got off by apologising in court.

A curious instance of superstition is reported from Central Hungary. It appears that a young engineer, a native of Ischl, died at Nagy Vaszony, and was buried there. His mother obtained an order from the authorities to disinter the body and bring it home. Accordingly she went to the cemetery with some workmen to take out the coffin. But the superstitious population would not allow this to be done, as they believe that the taking of a dead person out of his grave will be followed by a terrible hailstorm. The priest of the parish, who interfered on the mother's behalf, was nearly murdered, the gendarmes were pelted with stones, and military aid had to be summoned. One man at least was killed, and several were wounded—and all over a corpse!

Rev. C. G. Gull, head master of the Grocers' Company's schools, is evidently a good Christian with a profound belief in vicarious punishment. One of his pupils, a solicitor's son, was kept from school by his father for a day's holiday, and on returning he brought with him a letter stating the reason of his absence. The master, however, ignored the father's note, and gave the boy a thrashing. Mr. D'Eyncourt, the magistrate, upheld the parson in this singular proceeding, on the ground that discipline must be maintained. But why thrash the innocent boy? Why not thrash his guilty father? Because the father could hit back, and the boy couldn't. Go for the little one, therefore, and call it Christian morality.

FROM THE COAL COUNTRY.

REVIVALIST PREACHER (addressing blackened mincer, thinking to score a point)—"My friend, do you know that your soul is blacker even than your face?" Huge Miner—"I'll make your face even blacker than my soul in half a moment." (Revivalist finds he cannot stay.)

Very High Churchman (to profane friend whom he has induced to accompany him to his church)—"I noticed with pleasure, Jack, that you were quite overcome during our beautiful service. Tell me, what was it moved you?" Profane Friend—"It was that damned incense. For God's sake let me go and have a B. and S. to get the filthy taste out of my mouth."

The congregation of the Rev. Silas Supplehank were building him a chapel. He gave special instructions for the mason to carve on the stone front the Biblical quotation, "My house shall be called the House of Prayer." Unfortunately the mason completed the text, adding "but ye have made it a den of thieves." The truth will slip out occasionally, even in the best-regulated places of worship.

WHEELER MEMORIAL FUND.

SYDNEY A. GIMSON, £3; F. Simons, 1s.; J. Kimberley, 2s. 6d.; John Grange, 2s. 6d.; Henry Smith, 1s.; D., 2s. 6d.; James and John McGlashan, £1; H. Portlock, 2s. 6d.; W. Lamb, 10s.; A. J. Hooper, 2s. 6d.; M. Christopher, 10s.; J. Greevz Fisher, 10s.; E. Lawson, £1; Mrs. Daniel Baker, £5; Alice M. Baker, £2; C. H. Gask, 10s.; S. Burgon, 5s.; W. Carter, £3 3s.; G. L. Alward, £2 10s.; Furneaux Jordan, 10s.; E. G. H., 2s. 6d.; T. R. H., 2s. 6d.; D. P. Sweetland, 5s.; W. Mumby, 10s.; William Bell, 10s.; A. G. Scopes, 5s.; M. W. R., 5s.; G. Dickinson, 1s.; Thos. Dobson, 5s.; Charles A. Watts, £1 1s.

Collected at N. S. S. Conference:—

Mr. Escric, 1s.; G. Hintage, 1s.; E. R. Shaw, 3s.; W. Rogers, 2s. 6d.; W. Gliddon, 2s. 6d.; Mr. Edmunds, 2s. 6d.; Mr. Ollerenshaw, 2s.; W. H. Spivey, 5s.; C. E. Hall, 5s.; Friend, 6d.; Derby Branch, 5s.; Dundee, 11s.; F. Thornett, 1s.; Thomas Cook, 2s. 6d.; Joseph Crompton, 2s. 6d.; John Umpleby, £2 2s.; John Ross, 10s.; Fred Phillips, 2s. 6d.; H. Jones, 1s.; Joseph Seddon, jr., 2s. 6d.; Mr. Leek, 1s.; Mr. Ambery, 1s.; W. Humphreys, 5s.; Friend, 6d.; Friend, 1s.; Friend, 6d.; F. Evans, 2s.; Friend, 1s. Total, £5 17s.

A colored brother, preaching a funeral sermon over a member of his flock who had committed suicide, said: "We is called on ter-day ter pay de las' tokens er disrespect' to our late brother, who taken the golden bowl in his own hands, an' drapped it, an' spilled the sop er life!"—*Atlanta Constitution*.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

- MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—June 5, Athenæum Hall, Tottenham Court-road, London, W.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent to him (if a reply is required, a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed) at 81 Effra-road, Brixton.
- F. SIMONS.—As soon as the holidays are over we hope to receive a larger number of subscriptions to the Wheeler Memorial Fund.
- J. W. GOTT.—A halfpenny stamped wrapper reached us from you on Tuesday with no enclosure.
- ESS JAY BEE.—Yes, we received it. Thanks. Pleased to hear you "greatly admired" the address at Mr. Wheeler's grave. Of course the ordinary press will not report such things.
- E. LAWSON.—Subscription acknowledged elsewhere. The late George Müller got splendid advertisements as the man who never advertised, and he frequently addressed public meetings on the subject of his philanthropic and religious enterprises.
- SYDNEY A. GIMSON, subscribing to the Wheeler Memorial Fund, kindly says he will subscribe more if required.
- S. BURTON.—Thanks for your sympathetic letter and enclosure.
- D. P. SWEETLAND.—Not at all "vexed." Quite the contrary. We are always pleased to receive suggestions from our readers.
- M. W. R.—Pleased to have the expression of your warm appreciation of J. M. Wheeler's articles in this journal.
- G. ROBERT.—What are the *facts* you have to complain about? That is all we could possibly be concerned with.
- D. (Lincoln).—There is some force in your criticism, and we will bear it in mind.
- A. B. MOSS.—Sorry to hear of your wife's illness. Should have been glad to see you at the Conference.
- H. R. CLIFTON.—Done as desired.
- A. J. HOOPER.—See acknowledgment in the list this week.
- TOUR (Dewsbury).—A poet often uses words and phrases that must not be taken as the language of an affidavit. Mr. Gladstone did not make money out of the slave trade. It has been said that his father was one of those who received compensation when slavery was abolished in the West Indies. Whether that is true or not, he was not responsible; and what is the use of harking back so far?
- PAPERS RECEIVED.—Public Opinion—Truthseeker—O. and Off Duty—Sydney Bulletin—Independent Pulpit—Secular Thought—Glasgow Weekly Citizen—New Century—Isle of Man Times—People's Newspaper—Progressive Thinker—Discontent.
- It being contrary to Post-Office regulations to announce on the wrapper when the subscription is due, subscribers will receive the number in a colored wrapper when their subscription is due.
- 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.
- 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.
- FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish to call our attention.
- LECTURE NOTICES must reach 28 Stonecutter-street by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.
- SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS.—Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*:—One inch, 4s. 6d.; half column, £1 2s. 6d.; column, £2 5s. Special terms for repetitions.

How to Help Us.

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

A Publisher Arrested.

As we go to press we hear that Mr. George Bedborough, secretary of the Legitimation League, and editor of the *Adult*, has been arrested for publishing what is called an "obscene" book. We have not seen the work in question, and are therefore unable to express a definite opinion at the moment. But we are not fond of police interference with social—or, indeed, any kind—of literature, and we shall do our best to ascertain the precise facts of the case immediately.

SUGAR PLUMS.

MR. CHARLES WATTS occupies the Athenæum Hall platform this evening (June 5). For the sake of provincial friends who may be visiting London we may state that the Athenæum Hall is at No. 73 Tottenham Court-road, on the west side, nearly opposite Store-street, and about four or five minutes' walk from the well-known "Horse Shoe" Hotel. Mr. Watts's subject will be "Gladstone's Death-Chamber."

The National Secular Society's Annual Conference was a great success. The skeleton report, which we print elsewhere, naturally conveys no idea of the life and temper of the gathering. It was pleasant to see so many ladies at the Conference as well as at the evening public meeting. The veteran J. Umpleby, of Blackburn, reminded us of the older and stormier days of our movement. Mr. G. J. Warren, of London, confessed it was the first Conference he had attended; and he liked it so much, and was so pleased with the reception of his proposals, that he felt it would not be the last. Mr. Foote's re-election as President was proposed by Mr. E. Bater, of the Finsbury Branch, who made some flattering observations. It was seconded by Mr. Ross, of the Liverpool Branch, who said they were all satisfied that Mr. Foote was the strongest man for the post.

The luncheon at the Clarence Hotel, between the morning and afternoon sessions, beat the record. Everything was good, well cooked, and plentiful. A longer time was wanted to do justice to such an excellent repast. The President had to hurry off in a cab in order to begin business punctually. Others came after him as quickly as possible.

The evening meeting was a success in every way. A few people had to leave before it was over in order to catch local trains, but all the rest were eager listeners until the benediction. The collection for the Benevolent Fund realised £4. During the day the collection sheet for the Wheeler Memorial Fund was filled in to the amount of £5 17s.

Mr. S. Hartmann, the N. S. S. Treasurer, was re-elected in his absence through indisposition, from which we hope he has recovered. The Conference thanked him heartily for his services during the past year.

The new addition to the list of Vice-Presidents, Mr. Quay, has long been a valued member of the Executive. He is also a member of the Finance and Propaganda Committee.

The weather was mixed and Manchester-like. On Saturday it was brilliant, on Sunday morning dull, on Sunday evening miserably wet, on Monday chill and bleak, with a menace of further water-spouts, which were happily delayed.

Colonel Ingersoll holds to his promise to visit England next year. It is now impossible for him to come over *this* year. He has just written to Mr. Watts that the war, and its business results, will oblige him to remain in America for the present. He rejoices at the growing friendship of the English-speaking people all over the world, and says so in this letter as well as in interviews with American journalists.

Mr. C. Cohen has returned to London after a long absence. He addresses open-air meetings to-day (June 5) at Camberwell (11.30) and Peckham Rye (3.15 and 6.30). No doubt he will have large audiences.

Mr. Joseph McCabe, ex-Catholic priest, has been appointed as organiser to the Secular Society at Leicester. His clerical experience ought to serve him in good stead there, and his accomplishments should make him welcome in such platform work as he will be called upon to perform.

Secular Thought (Toronto) for May 14 reproduces Mr. Foote's article on "Christ in London," also Mr. Wheeler's article on "Shakespeare and St. George." We note from our ever-welcome Canadian contemporary that a Rational Sunday League is likely to be established over there. The movement has the support of the influential *Toronto World*, which says it is "much needed to off-set the pernicious influence of the Lord's Day Alliance," a bigoted Sabbatarian body which is almost ready to go to the length of boycotting every dairyman whose cows have the profane perversity to yield milk on Sunday.

Victor Charbonnel, the French priest who has unfrocked himself and publicly severed his connection with the Church, writes as follows in a newspaper article: "I could no longer, without blaming myself, abandon my faith, my humble devotion, and all my soul to a Church which is simply an organised administration of pontiffs, who proclaim themselves the sole masters of the word of Christ, using this

organisation simply to give the appearance of truth to their injurious or ambitious lies, and to produce, as is apparent to everybody, an intellectual enslavement, a moral nihilism, and social immobility in a world which has to be made entirely new again by means of an ideal—I might almost say, by a religion of charity and by fraternal justice."

Humanity (organ of the Humanitarian League) for June pays the following tribute to our lost colleague: "The humanitarian cause has lost a good and true-hearted friend by the death, on May 15, of Mr. Joseph Mazzini Wheeler, the sub-editor of the *Freethinker*. A man of great culture, sensibility, and refinement of feeling, Mr. Wheeler was a zealous advocate of freedom in every form, and his life (as those who know him will testify) was a signal instance of what great services may be performed by a quiet worker whose modesty withholds him from public notice. He frequently attended the meetings of the League, and was one of those who most heartily enjoyed Mr. Shaw's lecture in March. We very deeply and sincerely regret his loss."

A correspondent (the *Christian World* says) sends us the following incident, which happened in connection with the great speech of Mr. Gladstone on the Affirmation Bill. When a certain stage had been reached in the argument, and the distinguished statesman, in pleading for the rights of liberty, was making some generous reference personal to Mr. Bradlaugh, that member rose from his seat, and, turning to Mr. Alfred Illingworth with his eyes suffused with tears, exclaimed: "Illingworth, I cannot stand this; it overcomes me. I must go out." And in the lobby of the House that misunderstood reformer might have been seen struggling to master the emotions the noble champion for justice had stirred within his heart.

The *Christian World* devotes a couple of editorial paragraphs to the Moral Instruction League, whose object, as our readers will perhaps recollect, is to introduce non-theological moral instruction into Board schools in place of the present religious teaching. It also mentions Messrs. Foote and Watts's connection with the League. Its comment is as follows: "The League is, without doubt, actuated by the best motives in this action, but we doubt very much whether the way out it suggests is as easy as it seems. A system of morals cannot get very far without running up against such fundamental matters as the sanctions of morality, and the chief impelling motives and incentives to it. The teacher would, we cannot help thinking, be vastly cleverer than the average if he could deal with these points without declaring himself on one side or the other in the immense questions of philosophy and religion which lie immediately behind."

This is quite true, as we long ago told Dr. Coit and the Ethicists. It is idle to suppose that Church clergymen and Nonconformist ministers will not see the value (at least to them) of religious sanctions, and will not fight to retain their connection with morality. Yes, the battle will be hard; nevertheless, it is worth fighting.

"The time is ripe," Colonel Ingersoll says, "for a union of England and America to act together in the name of progress and humanity, and civilise the world. Such a combination will possibly come sooner than we expect. Let them combine, and do it peacefully if possible, but by the persuasive eloquence of the cannon's mouth if necessary."

"I am in favor," Ingersoll also says, "of an international court, the members to be selected by the ruling nations of the world; and before this court I think all questions between nations should be decided, and the only army and the only navy should be under its direction, and used only for the purpose of enforcing its decrees. Were there such a court now, before which Cuba could appear and tell the story of the wrongs, of the murders, the assassinations, the treachery, the starvings, the cruelty, I think that the decision would instantly be in her favor, and that Spain would be driven from the island. Until there is such a court there is no need of talking about the world being civilised."

The Creation.

God made the world. But all who see the light
Have to create again this universe,
And color it, apportion day and night,
Make it a paradise, or else a curse.
And so I shaped it with the tools I had,
And lo, I looked at it—and it was bad!
It happened, as it mostly does to men,
That I began to rave and rhyme and flirt;
To cut it short: I fell in love, and then
I thought a reconstruction would not hurt.
I shaped the world anew in Love's sweet mood,
And lo, I looked at it—and it was good!

—Von Kotze.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY'S ANNUAL CONFERENCE.

THE National Secular Society's Annual Conference was held last (Whit) Sunday in the Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, Manchester. The local friends worked hard to make a success of all the arrangements, in which there was neither a single failure nor the smallest hitch. Of course a great deal of the labor devolved upon Mrs. Pegg, the secretary of the Manchester Branch, who must be very glad (in one sense) that the Conference is over. The Secular Hall, which has recently been redecorated, was a pleasant surprise to those who had not seen it before. Much admiration was expressed of the fine picture by Walter Sickert of Charles Bradlaugh at the Bar of the House of Commons, and also of the fine marble bust of him which rests at the same end of the room. The platform was beautifully adorned with flowers. Altogether the surroundings were delightful and inspiring.

The full list of delegates appears below. Amongst the individual members and visitors, in addition to the President, were Mr. Charles Watts; Mr. and Mrs. Fisher, of Leeds; Mr. J. Thurlow, London; Mr. George Bedborough, London; Mr. and Mrs. Sunderland, Bradford; Mr. and Mrs. Gott, Bradford; Mr. Lees Sumner, Birmingham; Mr. and Mrs. Charlton, Hanley; Miss Black, Glasgow; and last, but not least, the veteran Mr. J. Umpleby, of Blackburn.

The following Branches were represented:—Birmingham, J. H. Ridgway, R. Taylor, and W. T. Pitt; Bethnal Green, Chapman Cohen and H. P. Ward; Bolton, Annie Hampson and J. F. Hampson; Blackburn, J. Umpleby and J. Titherington; Camberwell, A. C. Bain and F. Cottrell; Cardiff, James Edmunds; Cheshire, J. Fish and J. Edwards; Derby, W. H. Whitney and F. W. Swain; Dundee, W. McLean; East London, M. Loafer and G. J. Warren; Finsbury, E. Bater and E. W. Quay; Glasgow, Donald Black; Huddersfield, W. H. Spivey, T. Whiteley, and T. Ollerenshaw; Liverpool, John Ross and Laurence Small; Manchester, A. L. Hurd and Charles Pegg; North-west London, Annie Brown and Von Audenburg; Oxhill and Stanley, Chapman Cohen; South Shields, W. Cook and R. Chapman; Stanningley, J. W. Gott; Wigan, John Graham and A. Gibson.

Mr. G. W. Foote, the President, who was warmly received, took the chair at 10.30; Mr. Charles Watts, Mr. R. Forder, and Miss Vance accompanying him on the platform.

In formally opening the proceedings, the PRESIDENT expressed a hope that each one participating in the business of the Conference would recognise an equality of good motives, and that, although there would be differences of opinion, they would debate the business in a spirit conducive to the object they had all so much at heart—the success of the movement.

The roll having been called, the PRESIDENT asked that someone would move that the minutes of last Conference be passed as read, whereupon Mr. PEGG rose and proposed that, for perhaps the first time in the history of the Society, the minutes be read, as he had an impression that an important resolution passed at the last Conference had been wrongly recorded.

The PRESIDENT pointed out that in Mr. Bradlaugh's time the minutes were always taken as read. He remembered the resolution, and it had been recorded correctly. If the reading of the minutes were insisted upon, it would necessitate the whole of the proceedings as printed in the *Freethinker* being read, and that would occupy at least half an hour.

There was some further discussion upon the matter, but upon Mr. GREEVZ FISHER (Leeds) pointing out that the motion had not been seconded, Mr. E. W. QUAY (Finsbury) moved, and Mr. CHAPMAN (South Shields) seconded, "That the minutes of last Conference be taken as read." Carried.

The PRESIDENT then read the report of the Executive, which was as follows:—

EXECUTIVE'S REPORT.

Your Executive regrets to open this Annual Report with a note of sadness. During the past year two distinguished Freethinkers have been removed by death. In the month of September the decease was announced of Mrs. Harriet Law. This lady had for some time withdrawn from active work for the cause, but she retained her interest in it to the last. Many years ago, in the harder and more troublous days of advocacy, she was a familiar and capable figure on the Freethought platform. She was a very brave woman, who faced many rough experiences, and the older members of our party will always remember her bright energy, strong common sense, and ready mother-wit. More recently the Freethought party has sustained a greater loss in the death of one of this Society's vice-presidents—Joseph Mazzini Wheeler. He had been so long connected with the Society, and always so ready to serve it gratuitously and unostentatiously, that the Executive resolved to defray the cost of his funeral as a prompt testimony to the high esteem in which it held him; and in doing this it felt sure that it was interpreting the feelings of all the members of the Society.

A modest grave has been purchased in Finchley Cemetery, so that when Mrs. Wheeler's turn comes she may rest by her beloved husband. Having done this, your Executive has now to place on record, in this Report, its profound recognition of the great services which Mr. Wheeler rendered to our movement. Never was there a more earnest and loyal soldier of Freethought. All his life was given to what he regarded as the greatest cause in the world. He read widely and deeply, he thought strenuously, and with his pen he labored incessantly, to promote truth, to destroy superstition, to broaden freedom, and to hasten on the great day of Humanity. He was also gentle, tender, modest, and generous; one who made no pretensions and advanced no claims; one who had to be known long to be understood and appreciated; and one who, having been known, can never be forgotten. He attended many of the Society's Conferences, where he seldom said anything, his pen being busy with a report of the proceedings. He will never attend another Conference, and those of us who do will miss his presence and see with the mind's eye a vacant place that no one else will ever fill.

One of the things which Mr. Wheeler did regularly was the editing of the Society's Almanack. Nominally it was edited by your President as well, but the principal part of the work fell upon his colleague. This year the Almanack has been saved financially by Miss Vance's success in obtaining advertisements. Next year it will probably be worth while to introduce new features in this publication, although its sectional character excludes the possibility of its competing with publications that appeal to a wider public.

At the last Conference, owing to the time consumed by other matters, the Society's treasurer, Mr. S. Hartmann, was unable to elaborate his scheme of financial reorganisation. It was, however, remitted to the Executive, with a view to its immediate adoption as far as it was found possible. The scheme itself was large and comprehensive. Mr. Hartmann aimed (1) at paying the President a salary, and attaching more duties to his office; (2) at engaging a Financial Secretary to travel through the country, visiting Branches with a view to assisting their organisation, and calling upon members and sympathisers with a view to obtaining subscriptions; (3) at engaging three Lecturers at a reasonable salary, who would deliver lectures in London and in the provinces without a fee; (4) at circulating leaflets, manifestoes, and other literature, and organising a system of correspondence in the press and otherwise on matters in which the Society is interested; (5) at maintaining the Society's office, and providing for the salary of the General Secretary in London.

Upon this general basis, which was calculated to involve an expenditure of £1,500 per annum, the President drafted an appeal, which was also signed by the other officers of the Society, and by the sub-committee appointed to superintend the practical operation of the scheme. Mr. Foote dropped his old Lecture Scheme, which he was very glad to do, as he only undertook the responsibility until others were prepared to accept it; and Mr. Hartmann led off the subscription list for the new departure with a handsome promise of £50 for the first year. This was an excellent start, but the Executive was not sanguine enough to expect immediate success on a scale so magnificent. Still, it determined to work in the direction of the new scheme as far as resources permitted. Mr. C. Cohen was authorised to collect subscriptions on his travels through the country, and he has done a considerable amount of lecturing under the Scheme. Mr. Charles Watts has also delivered several lectures in the same way, and a few have been delivered by Mr. Heaford. Owing to the lack of means, however, the sub-committee has only been able to work along the lines of Mr. Foote's old Lecture Scheme, and in some respects less efficiently, for it has been impossible to do anything as yet in London, and Mr. Foote himself has not been able to do any lecturing under the new scheme, as it was scarcely convenient—at least in his judgment—for the President to be employed by a sub-committee of the Executive. There were also other reasons—frankly stated to the Executive—why he declined to receive any money from the Society except under the conditions indicated in the Treasurer's original plan. Those reasons justify the Executive in stating what might otherwise need no mention—namely, that the President has not during the past year, any more than during previous years, derived any sort of pecuniary benefit from the Society's exchequer. Nor must it be supposed that the lecturers who have taken engagements under the Scheme have derived an enormous advantage from it. A glance at the balance-sheet will suffice to dissipate any uneasiness on this account.

The Executive ventures to hope that the Treasurer's Scheme will be better supported next year. Meanwhile the Society may be congratulated on the fact that all liabilities have been met, that the considerable deficit in last year's balance-sheet has been wiped out, and that the Benevolent Fund, thanks chiefly to a special donation of £100, is in a most flourishing condition.

Certain items in the balance-sheet call for particular observation. In the month of August your Executive joined other progressive Societies in publicly protesting

against the infamous torture of political prisoners in Spain. The fact of the torture was beyond dispute. Painful and even obscene inflictions had been suffered by many prisoners, some of whom were amongst the Spanish exiles in London. Men who were finally liberated, after twelve months' detention, and liberated as innocent, bore upon their persons the marks of the instruments used in torturing them. As a protest against such brutalities, a large and successful demonstration was held in Trafalgar-square—your President and Mr. Cohen being amongst the speakers on that occasion; and the sum of £13 was collected on behalf of the exiles who were stranded and destitute in London.

With regard to the Browne case, your Executive feels that the right thing was done in the light of such information as was available. It was no fault of the Society that it was subsequently found impossible to do anything more for the prisoner than to spend the money that was collected in assisting his family.

Another small item in the balance-sheet relates to the Conference which led to the establishment of the Moral Instruction League. The object of this League is to substitute non-theological moral instruction for the religious teaching which is at present given in the State elementary schools. Your Society has been affiliated to this League, and four of your officers—Messrs. Foote, Watts, Cohen, and Hartmann—are members of its executive committee. The League is supported by the Ethical Societies, and by several Radical and Socialist organisations. At present it is obtaining signatures to a memorial to the London School Board of parents who prefer moral instruction to Bible reading for their children. This will probably show that the number of objectors to the existing policy is immensely in excess of the number of those who withdraw their children from religious instruction under the Conscience Clause. When the memorial is completed it will in all probability be presented to the London School Board by a deputation from the League, who will be prepared to back it up if they are afforded the opportunity of doing so.

It is a matter of congratulation that there has been little bigoted interference with Freethought propaganda. Under this head there is nothing to record except the action of Sir Charles Warren in stopping the Secular open-air meetings on Chatham Lines. Probably in consequence of the protests of the Chatham Branch, by letter and in the newspapers, meetings of all kinds were put an end to at that place. The Secularists have thus no special grievance in this respect; and, as a matter of fact, they continued to hold open-air meetings just outside the Lines and within a few yards of their former position.

Perhaps it is worth mentioning that the Society's annual dinner, held as usual in January at the Holborn Restaurant, was more largely attended than on any previous occasion.

With regard to the Branches of the Society, it has to be said that some of them—for instance, Glasgow, Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, and Camberwell—have shown much activity and maintained an efficient propaganda. Others, however, have fallen into a state of quiescence, which is much to be regretted. In this connection it may be observed that Branches which fall into this state are seldom revived except by external agencies. Branches have been known to go under for years in consequence of the lack of outside help at a critical moment. This, of course, is a good reason for a strong central Executive, provided with adequate resources, and able to nurse the movement in localities where, for one reason or another, it is in a feeble or sickly condition.

Several public debates have been held during the past year in various parts of the country, in which the Secular cause has been championed by representatives of your Society. Mr. Charles Watts, who is as active and energetic as ever, in spite of advancing years, has borne a large share of this labor. Mr. Cohen has also borne his share, and some of it has fallen to Mr. Percy Ward, a new and young lecturer, who has apparently given satisfaction to the Branches he has visited.

In London your President has maintained, on his own responsibility, a regular Freethought platform at the Athenæum Hall on Sunday evenings. There is a charge for admission, and the hall has sometimes been inconveniently crowded. Some day or other—and that not very distant—it is to be hoped that the Secular party will have a large hall of its own in West London, with adjuncts for the purposes of organisation, education, and sociability.

Freethinkers in this country are looking forward anxiously to the visit of Colonel Ingersoll. He has definitely promised to come at least in 1899, and according to a communication received by your President from Mr. Farrell, the Colonel's relative and agent, it is quite possible that he may visit us next October or November. All we can do is to await his convenience, but the sooner he comes the better we shall be pleased. Whenever it is he will have a sincere and magnificent welcome.

One of your vice-presidents at Melbourne—Mr. Joseph Symes—still maintains his gallant journal, the *Liberator*. It is very pleasant to note, also, that he is once more

ecturing in the Hall of Science. This building was erected mainly through his efforts, but it fell into other hands, and finally came into the market. It was purchased by a friend of Mr. Symes's, and is now let to him at a yearly rental. Mr. Symes is therefore to be congratulated on this happy issue out of so many afflictions.

Your Executive closes this report with a feeling of some satisfaction with the work of the past year. There has been a slight change for the better in nearly every direction, and it is to be hoped that this will be continued and increased during the coming year. Whenever work is done some measure of success is achieved, and if all co-operate according to their capacity and opportunity, the progress of our movement might be much accelerated, and our propaganda carried through the length and breadth of the land.

The Report elicited much applause. Mr. SMALL (Liverpool) moved, and Mr. HURD (Manchester) seconded, its adoption. Carried unanimously.

The Liverpool and Manchester Delegates then wanted to know why their corresponding members had received from the secretary no intimation respecting the business of the Executive as promised. Nothing is known of the Executive's proceedings by the Branches, they said, from year's end to year's end, except through the *Freethinker*. When the Conference passes resolutions they ought to be executed.

The PRESIDENT agreed that when possible the resolutions should be carried out; but he contended that the particular resolution and rule to which reference had been made was not practicable. However bad a business man he, the present President, might be, it could not be said that Mr. Bradlaugh was so, and he never found it possible to carry out this particular rule. It was easier for the Conference to pass resolutions than for the Executive to carry them out. The Executive did not know, any more than the country Branches knew, what important business would be brought forward at their meetings, as so many things occurred but a few days beforehand. If there were anything in the nature of a committal of the Society to new procedure or new principles, the Executive would feel it incumbent upon them to consult the Branches, but in the transaction of ordinary routine business, even when it happened to be important routine business, it would be extremely difficult to do anything of the kind. He, as President, would not be responsible. They could put it upon the secretary and the Executive if they liked. It was not true that the wishes of the Conference were not respected. The Executive did its utmost to further the interests of the Society.

Mr. CHAPMAN (South Shields) thought it would be satisfactory if the Executive consulted the Branches on such matters as (to take recent instances) the torture of Spanish political prisoners, the Brown case, and the Moral Instruction League. It would, he thought, show a respect for the Branches, and would do away with the impression that the Executive were carrying a high hand in leaving out the Branches altogether.

The PRESIDENT explained that the matters to which Mr. Chapman had referred were matters which demanded immediate action, and that to circularise the Branches and receive replies would have taken at least ten days, and this the circumstances would not allow.

Mr. SMALL (Liverpool) asked a question as to the right of the Executive to refuse to accept any person as a member of the Society who had already been accepted as a member of a Branch. A long discussion ensued, but the matter was settled ultimately, and apparently to the satisfaction of the Conference.

The Financial Report, in the absence through illness of the treasurer, Mr. Hartmann, after a few questions had been asked and answered by the President and Miss Vance, was adopted on the proposal of Mr. BLACK (Glasgow), seconded by Mr. PEGG (Manchester).

The next business on the Agenda being the election of President, Mr. Foote vacated the chair, Mr. Watts taking his place *pro tem*.

Mr. BATER (Finsbury) then moved, on behalf of the Finsbury Branch: "That G. W. Foote be re-elected President." Mr. ROSS (Liverpool) seconded. Mr. WATTS asked if there were any other nominations, and, as there were not, he put the resolution, and it was carried unanimously, and with enthusiasm.

Upon resuming the chair Mr. FOOTE was accorded a fine reception, and, in acknowledging his re-election, said:—I only desire to say, in acknowledging your apparently unanimous vote of re-election, that it will be my aim to go on exactly as I have been going on all along—simply doing my best. I was never so foolish as to promise more, and I have never been so recreant as to try to do less.....When Charles Bradlaugh nominated me for election as President, I promised him that, come what might, I would stick to it, and do my best; and, while I can, and while you want me, I will do so. I promise no more. (Loud applause.)

Mr. SMALL (Liverpool) then moved for a suspension of the Standing Orders, so that clause *a* of Motion 14, standing on the Agenda in the name of the Liverpool Branch, could be taken before the election of the vice-presidents was pro-

ceeded with. Mr. SPIVEY (Huddersfield) seconded. Carried with a few dissentients.

Mr. ROSS (Liverpool) then proposed the incorporation of clauses *a*, *b*, and *c* of Motion 14; but the PRESIDENT ruled that, as a matter of procedure, that could not be done. Clause *a*, which reads as follows: "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," was then discussed. Mr. SMALL contended that, at the present time, no one knew who was going to transact the business at any given meeting of the Executive, on account of there being so many vice-presidents; and he thought it would be better to elect sixteen members of the Society in place of them.

The strongest argument in favor of this motion which was elicited by the discussion was, as Mr. CHAPMAN (South Shields) pointed out, "That, if passed, it could not do much harm." He thought that the only objection to the present constitution of the Executive was that there were too many Londoners on it. He, however, recognised that that could not be avoided, as it would be impossible for country Branches to send representatives to attend the meetings except at great expense.

The PRESIDENT was not favorable to the motion, and he instanced the case of gentlemen who support the Society financially very generously, but have never attended a meeting of the Executive, and never would do so. The President did not say that they would not assist the Society if they were not vice-presidents, but he considered the vice-presidency to be a link of attachment, and that in itself was something. Men (he said) are not governed absolutely by logic; they have feelings.

Mr. TITHERINGTON (Blackburn) said that, had this motion been put forward by the Liverpool Branch in order to waste the time of the Conference, they could not have succeeded more completely.

Mr. COHEN thought that by depriving a man of his vice-presidency he would be injured, and that if he were deprived of his right of sitting on the Executive the Society would be injured.

A remark of Mr. Small's concerning the share the Branches take in the financing of the Society brought from the President the quick reply that, of all the money subscribed during the past year, all that had been received from the Branches was £20 7s. 6d., the rest having been begged by the Executive and by himself through the *Freethinker*.

The resolution was then put and rejected.

At this point the morning sitting was closed, and the Conference adjourned till the afternoon. An excellent dinner (provided at the expense of a London friend) was served at the Clarence Hotel. About 90 delegates and friends partook thereof.

Upon the re-assembling of the Conference the PRESIDENT read the following list of vice-presidents:—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; and then, on behalf of the Executive, formally moved their re-election, Mr. COOK (South Shields) seconding. Carried.

The PRESIDENT then moved that the name of Mr. E. W. Quay, of Finsbury, a useful member of the Executive, should be added to the list of vice-presidents. Mr. SPIVEY (Huddersfield) seconded. Carried.

Messrs. W. B. Thompson and Harry Brown were elected auditors—proposed by the PRESIDENT, seconded by Mr. GREEVZ FISHER.

The election of treasurer was unfortunately omitted from the Agenda, and upon this being discovered the PRESIDENT moved, and Mr. GREEVZ FISHER seconded: "That Mr. Hartmann be re-elected." This was carried, with thanks to Mr. Hartmann for the way in which he had managed the financial affairs of the Society during the past year.

Mr. RIDGWAY, on behalf of the Birmingham Branch, then moved the following: "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." He thought that if this motion could be carried out it would be the means of advancing the Secular movement more than anything else could at the present time. This was seconded by Mr. SMALL, put to the meeting and carried.

Motion 11, clause *a*, standing on the Agenda in the name of G. J. Warren, was lost, and an amendment moved by H. P. WARD, seconded by Mr. CHARLES WATTS, and supported by Mr. ARMFIELD (Birmingham) and Mr. SMALL (Liverpool), was carried. The rule now reads: "And on admission of the member a certificate, signed by the Presi-

dent, will be issued by the Executive, if desired, on payment of one shilling for same."

The following motions, moved by Mr. WARREN, were then, after some discussion, carried:—

(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."

The PRESIDENT then asked for someone to move: "That this Conference deplores the great loss to the Society in the death of Mr. J. M. Wheeler, and hopes that the Fund which is being raised on behalf of his widow will be promptly and generously supported by the Freethought party."

Mr. WATTS, in doing so, said that it was not his privilege to know Mr. Wheeler so intimately as the President did; but he knew him for some years, and in all sincerity he could say that he never met anyone who showed such honesty of purpose, such sincerity of intention, and such consideration for the comfort and desires of others as did Mr. Wheeler. What he knew of him was in his favor. He admired him; he respected him. The estimation in which he (Mr. Wheeler) was held by the President was quite justified by his own (Mr. Watts's) acquaintance, and he trusted that those who are left behind will remember the example Mr. Wheeler set, and will endeavor to emulate all that was good, noble, and dignified in his nature.

In seconding the resolution, Mr. ROSS (Liverpool) expressed the great pleasure and instruction he had received from the perusal of Mr. Wheeler's writings.

Mr. THURLOW (London), in supporting the resolution, spoke feelingly of Mr. Wheeler, and the great loss the Society had suffered by his death. He urged that everything possible should be done to make the lot of Mrs. Wheeler as happy as possible.

The motion, being put, was carried unanimously.

The PRESIDENT then proceeded to make his statement *re* the Secular Incorporation. What he said on this matter will appear in an early number of the *Freethinker* (perhaps next week), with proper elaborations for a wider public.

The PRESIDENT at this stage, on behalf of the Executive, moved: "That Mr. Robert Forder be re-elected Honorary Secretary." Mr. BLACK (Glasgow) seconded.

Mr. WATTS then made a statement somewhat as follows, which he said was for the satisfaction of others, and not for himself. He had received several letters asking him to explain what the duties of the Honorary Secretary really were, and what he does for the movement. Mr. Watts said he knew perfectly well what Mr. Forder did, and could have answered the letters easily enough: but he thought it best to let him answer the questions for himself, so that the people in general may know what he is doing.

Mr. SMALL thought Mr. Watts's remarks were too insidious, but this opinion did not appear to be shared by the rest of the Conference.

The PRESIDENT hoped that no animus would be brought into the affairs of the Conference. He had a motion before him: "That Mr. Forder be re-elected Honorary Secretary." According to the present constitution of the Society, they were bound to elect an Honorary Secretary, and Mr. Forder was the only nominee.

Mr. WATTS repeated that he knew all about Mr. Forder, but he wished the answers to the questions to come from him.

Mr. BLACK thought there was no need for them to be answered, or for any explanation whatever.

The resolution was then put, and carried with acclamation.

Mr. FORDER said he felt it imperative upon him to say a few words. It was at Manchester eight years ago that he gave in his notice of resignation, and the President had said that his services to the Society entitled him to the honorary secretaryship as long as he lived. He had done much work in officiating at funerals, having attended quite an alarming number, and if he had only been present at one meeting of the Executive lately, it was owing to his bad health, and the fact that he lived five miles distant from the place of meeting. He could not tell Mr. Watts what he was going to do in the future. He had worked in the movement for forty years, and would continue to do so. He hoped that the young and energetic workers in the cause would only do as much as he had done. In concluding his remarks, he said that if there were any of this unpleasantness another year he would object to re-election.

The PRESIDENT remarked that others would have to say something on that matter. He remembered the Manchester Conference of eight years ago quite well. He did not himself wish to lose Mr. Forder.

Mr. PEGG, on behalf of the Manchester Branch, moved, and Mr. HURD (Manchester), seconded, the following motion:

"That the Secretary be appointed by election at the Annual Conference." The mover and seconder thought that, if this motion was carried, the secretary would be more directly the servant of the Society than is the case at present.

Mr. SUNDERLAND (Bradford) said he was ashamed at this resolution coming from Manchester, and asked how it would work if a meeting of citizens were called to elect the Town Clerk at Manchester. There was some further discussion, and, upon the resolution being put, it was defeated.

Mr. PEGG moved, on behalf of the Manchester Branch, the two Liverpool delegates seconding, the following: "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," which was carried.

Motion 14 (b) of the Liverpool Branch was introduced by Mr. SMALL: "That no lecturer or other member paid by the Society shall be a member of the Executive." After the PRESIDENT had explained that the Lecture Fund was managed by a sub-committee on which no lecturer sat, the resolution was withdrawn.

The time for closing the business of the Conference (4.30) had now arrived, but Mr. SMALL asked for an extension until 5 p.m. This was put to the Conference and carried; whereupon Mr. SMALL proposed the following: "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)." This, after Mr. Greevz Fisher, Mr. Watts, Miss Vance, and the President had spoken against, and only Mr. Pegg for it, was put to the Conference, and defeated.

The PRESIDENT said it was no use appointing an Executive and then tying its hands for specious interests of the Branches. If the Branches would suggest something practical to the Executive, they would only be too pleased to consider it and, if possible, carry it out.

Resolution 14 (d) of the Liverpool Branch, "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," gave rise to a long discussion, which caused Mr. SUNDERLAND to humorously remark that the best way of getting through the business would be to shift the Executive to Liverpool.

This resolution, by permission of the Conference, was ultimately withdrawn, also 14 (e): "That honorary membership may be conferred upon distinguished Freethinkers in recognition of their services to the cause." This latter was taken up afterwards by Mr. WHITNEY (Derby), seconded by Mr. QUAY, and was carried.

This concluded the business of the Conference, and, in closing, the PRESIDENT said that he congratulated the Conference on the businesslike, friendly spirit in which the proceedings had been conducted. He hoped that whatever new features were introduced into the Constitution as the result of the day's proceedings would be carried out to the advancement of the cause (applause). The Executive would always do its best to carry out the decisions of the Conference, and he (as President) promised for his part that those decisions should be treated with the most loyal respect.

Tea was provided for many delegates and visitors who did not wish to leave the hall. In the evening, at 7.30, the place was filled with a large, attentive, and enthusiastic public meeting. Mr. Foote occupied the chair, and called upon Mr. Cohen for the first speech, which was excellent and much applauded. Mr. Percy Ward followed, and showed himself to be the possessor of a good voice. Mr. Small, of Liverpool, spoke next on the philosophy of Secularism, showing its profoundly scientific character. Then came Mr. Charles Watts with one of his short, energetic, rousing addresses; after which a good collection was taken up for the Benevolent Fund. Mr. Thurlow then delivered a little mirth-provoking speech, and was followed by Mr. Forder, who was also in a facetious vein. The President's speech, which was greatly cheered, terminated the proceedings.

The next morning, being Bank Holiday, a number of delegates and visitors started from the Hall very early for a long excursion by brakes through some fine scenery, returning at 6.30, when a tea was provided, after which the evening was devoted to various forms of sociability.

The June number of the *Literary Guide* (Watts & Co.) opens with an able article by J. McCabe, the ex-Catholic priest, on "The Growth of Myths," with special reference to the myth of Christ. C. E. Hooper writes thoughtfully on "The Nature Idea," and Mr. Gould asks "Will Women Help?" An anonymous writer begins a critical account of the Polychrome Bible. There are also some good book-reviews and interesting paragraphs. We cannot say we admire the paragraph on the death of the late J. M. Wheeler.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

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

LONDON.

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (78 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, C. Watts, "Gladstone's Death Chamber."

BRADLAUGH CLUB AND INSTITUTE (36 Newington Green-road, Ball's Pond): June 9, at 8.30, F. C. Woods, M.A., "The Inoculation Craze."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Surrey Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road, S.E.): 7, Debate on "Spiritualism" between Stanton Coit and W. E. Long.

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall): 11, Stanton Coit, "The Ten Commandments."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH (Victoria Park, near the fountain): 3.15, Stanley Jones.

CAMBERWELL (Station-road): 11.30, C. Cohen. Peckham Rye: 3.15 and 6.30, C. Cohen.

FINSBURY PARK (near bandstand): 3.15, E. Pack, "Science and Superstition."

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30 and 3.30, A lecture.

KINGSLAND (Bidley-road): 11.30, E. Calvert, "Does the Bible Sanction Slavery, and is it the Friend of Woman?"

WOOD GREEN: (Jolly Butchers' Hill): 11.30, A. Guest, "What Religion Does and Does Not Do."

COUNTRY.

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, Report of Conference delegates.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE (lecture-room, corner of Raby and Parker-streets, Byker): 7, Mr. Reid, "Agnostic versus Christian Ethics."

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Hockingham-street): 7, Willie Dyson, A lecture.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, Market-place): 7.30, Conference delegates' report.

Lecturers' Engagements.

O. COHEN, 12 Merchant-street, Bow-road, London.—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.—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.

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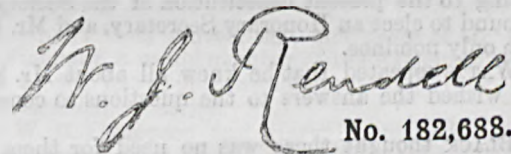
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