

# The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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## THE SECULAR INCORPORATION.

My readers will probably recollect that I took an active part in the work of the Free Press Defence Committee, which was formed to assist the defence of Dr. Havelock Ellis's book against a police prosecution. During the five months' agitation I spoke at several well-attended public meetings. All of them, however, were ignored by the newspapers. Even a paid advertisement of one of them was refused insertion in the *Daily Chronicle*. But when the defence broke down through Mr. Bedborough's pleading guilty, and a Committee meeting was held to consider the situation, and to decide what should be done with the balance of funds in hand, the prospect of internal dissension brought a reporter of the *Daily Mail* on the scene. His presence being noticed, the meeting decided that he should withdraw, as private business had to be discussed. Whereupon the *Mail* twitted the Free Press Defence Committee with stifling publicity. Of course, this was disingenuous as well as absurd. The press had boycotted the committee all the day, and only thought of reporting its proceedings a little before twelve o'clock, when there was a chance of picking up something lively—and saleable.

The attitude of the press towards the Bedborough prosecution is the attitude it has always displayed towards Secularism. Our organisation and propaganda are steadily ignored, but we are welcome to publicity when anything occurs which is thought likely to be to our disadvantage. I could name more than one "advanced" journal which has never a good word to say for me personally, or for the National Secular Society, but which cheerfully prints the nastiest criticisms and allusions. The same policy prevailed in Bradlaugh's time. It is not new, and I am not pretending to a special martyrdom. I am only stating the fact—which, by the way, does not impair my sleep or digestion.

In this frame of mind I was somewhat amused to discover that I had excited the interest of Mr. Henry Hess, who edits (and, I believe, owns) the *Critic*. Mr. Hess is good enough to say that I am "a man of strong personality and great ability." Well, if this be true, he can scarcely expect me to accept his invitation to reply to my domestic critics in his columns. The readers of his paper are not Secularists. They would have the interest in such a controversy that a street crowd has in a dog-fight. I am quite unable to see that the success or failure of the National Secular Society is any concern of the miscellaneous crowd who read the *Critic*. It is idle to talk about "the public." The public has no claims upon me. My life is spent in the service of the Freethought party, and when I appeal beyond it I will acknowledge a wider responsibility.

Mr. Hess argues, however, that I may reasonably be asked questions respecting the Secular Society I have Incorporated. He contends that I "ask people" to support it, and that this gives the Press the right to be inquisitive. But do I ask "people" for support? I ask the Secular

party only, and solely through the columns of the *Freethinker*. Nevertheless, as this is perhaps a point which is open to discussion, I will deal with what Mr. Hess says about the Secular Society, Limited.

Mr. Hess admits that the National Secular Society "lacked specific provision for possible sources of income—legacies and the like." I am in a position to add that thousands of pounds were lost to our movement in this way. This, indeed, was my chief reason for devising a scheme which would practically circumvent the Blasphemy Laws, at least as they were universally interpreted before the judgment of Lord Coleridge on the occasion of my trial in the Court of Queen's Bench. Incidentally, of course, the Incorporated Society involves certain other advantages. It does place both work and funds on a basis of legal security; and the fact that I, and I alone, have provided the Secular party with this legal instrument is a sufficient answer to those who affirm, either honestly or malignantly, that I desire to profit by a state of illegality and confusion.

I have now to say that I hope Mr. Hess studies the Memorandum and Articles of other Companies more profoundly than he has studied those of the Secular Society, Limited. Writing quite recently, he states that the organisation "has this week taken definite form." As a matter of fact, which can be verified at Somerset House, I registered the Society on May 27. It is also alleged that I gave it "much booming in the columns of the *Freethinker*." Where else could, or should, I boom it? And why should I not boom it? Is it not my duty to use the *Freethinker* for the promotion of an object of transcendent importance to the Freethought party? Mr. Hess allows that he can "find no particular fault with the prospectus of the Secular Society, Limited," and then he proceeds to find fault with some of the very provisions which are its highest merits. That as to the admission of members he describes as "curious"—a word so elastic as to be quite unintelligible in this connexion. Now what is this provision? Intending members have to be proposed and seconded in writing, and admitted by the Board of Directors, who are elected at the Annual Members' Meeting. Surely this is the veriest common-sense. It excludes no one who ought to be included. I may add that not a single applicant has yet been rejected. Mr. Hess also applies the word "curious" to the "absence of dividend," but this only shows that he has not grasped the elementary principles of the scheme. By providing that no member, as such, is to derive any sort of profit from the Society, by way of interest, bonus, dividend, or otherwise, all the advantages of a Trust are secured. The funds must be used, absolutely and entirely, in promoting the objects set forth in the Memorandum of Association, and those objects include all the essentials of Secularism. It is easy for Mr. Hess to sneer at "altruistic" language, but what else does he expect in the prospectus of a non-commercial Society, established for impersonal ends? Certainly the language of the prospectus is of severe simplicity. It passed the careful and

protracted examination of a thoroughly competent solicitor, and the close criticism of an eminent counsel.

I confess I do not understand Mr. Hess's remarks on "allusions to the property" of the Society. He says that this is a "trifle premature," and that the Society "apparently has no property, nor seems likely to have any." Now this is worse than "premature." How does Mr. Hess know that the Society will never have any property? How can he tell whether Freethinkers will or will not leave it substantial bequests, or give it substantial donations? To my knowledge several Freethinkers have already put the Society in their wills for legacies which are substantial enough in the eyes of a comparatively poor party. Mr. Hess further sneers at the allusions to debts and liabilities as perhaps "sadly prophetic." But he knows very well that such allusions are inevitable. They are necessary formalities in a document that must contain provision for every possible contingency. Such criticism is really a waste of words. I hope it is not intended merely as a provocation.

One great advantage of this Incorporated Society is glimpsed by Mr. Hess. It establishes "an unimpeachable trust" for receiving, holding, and expending money for Freethought purposes; and if I have achieved nothing else for our party, I am entitled to a little gratitude for this. Not only will funds be guarded by legal security, which no one can infringe, either without or within, but Freethought leaders will be largely relieved from the possibility of certain sinister accusations. Bradlaugh received several personal legacies in his time, and it was always open to anyone to say or insinuate what could not, from the nature of the case, be disproved, that such legacies were *meant* for party purposes.

I have done with Mr. Hess's criticism. Next week I shall deal with the scheme as it affects the future of our party.

G. W. FOOTE.

### THE REAL JESUS.

IN the *Freethinker* for Nov. 27 I pointed out that the modern cry of "Back to Jesus" was remarkable, first for its surrender of nearly all that Christians have hitherto regarded as the essence of their faith, and, second, because of the dishonesty or incompetency manifested by those who set up the plea. For it is evident that underlying most of the pulpit eulogies of Christ there is a desire, not to find out what Jesus taught, but to perpetuate a certain vested interest by creating a character in harmony with modern thought, and affiliating that on the real Jesus as depicted in the Gospels. Apart from prepossessions and self-interest, it is impossible not to realise that the gospel of Jesus presents such a bundle of irreconcilable attributes as to make it impossible to accept him as an ideal without either eliminating certain objectionable features or adding certain very desirable ones. Lectures delivered by such men as Professor Clifford or Dr. Horton are all marked by one or the other of these methods, frequently by both, and one may reasonably question the moral value of a belief which leads to such demoralising results.

To those who impartially study the life of Jesus it is not only plain that his teachings are stated in such an extravagant form as to rob them of all practical value, but that his intellectual limitations are even more clearly marked than is usually the case even with leaders of religious movements.

I have no intention of going over the well-worn ground of dealing with the extravagant and impracticable character of much of his teaching, or the non-moral sanctions attached to all; it will be enough for the present to dwell upon faults of omission rather than those of commission.

Take, first of all, his relation to what is broadly termed intellectual culture. Here his limitations are so clearly marked as to be almost undeniable. His most sanguine supporters have seldom put him forward as a thinker, while even Dean Farrar admits that Jesus was "destitute of all human learning," which, I suppose, is the Dean's way of expressing a truth too ugly to be pleasant, but too plain

to be ignored. A reading of the Four Gospels shows that, considered intellectually, Jesus stands lower than either Mohammed, Buddha, Zoroaster, or Confucius. In the reported utterances of either of the last three one meets with flashes of wisdom, deep insight into human nature, or pithy, fruitful utterances on the problems of life. With Jesus we never rise above the very baldest of moral platitudes. Buddhists, Zoroastrians, and Confucians have built up systems of philosophy from their masters' teachings, but not even the ingenuity of the scholastics was able to do the same in the case of Jesus. So far as intellectual strength is concerned, the Jesus of the Four Gospels appears destitute of any such feature.

In the one case we see the thinker wrestling with the world's problems, in the other the religious enthusiast exhorting his followers to submit to the will of God, or indulging in splenetic outbursts against such as rejected his message. And when we take the reported discourses of Buddha, his exhortation to conduct, with the culture of the intellect as the condition of its right performance, and contrast them with the precepts of Jesus, the two sets of teachings stand as the utterances of heated fanaticism as opposed to philosophic culture. Such expressions as "Blessed is he that hath not seen and yet hath believed," "He that believeth not shall be damned," the constant praise of blind, unquestioning faith, and equally constant warnings against unbelief, all show Jesus to have been practically dead to what we imply by the phrase "Intellectual Ethics."

Although surrounded by all forms of superstition, Jesus raised his voice against none. He accepted all unquestioningly, even eagerly. The belief in legions of angels and devils, witchcraft, demoniacal possession, with many other absurd fancies, was accepted by him with a gravity almost laughable were it not for the disastrous results that followed from his example. It was his beliefs which gave a fuller measure of authority to the witch-hunts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and to the practice of exorcism as a method of curing lunacy. It was to Jesus, the man who walked with devils, talked with devils, and cast out devils, that the people of after centuries appealed to in support of their infamous practices. And if Jesus be what the Churches claim he is—a pattern for all men to follow—their position was a sound one.

Upon this question of diabolic possession the verdict of modern science is clear and decisive. No qualified medical man doubts that the people who are represented in the New Testament as suffering from diabolic possession were really the victims of epilepsy or some allied nervous derangement. The symptoms are too clearly described, and analogous cases are too frequently met with to-day, to leave any doubt on the subject. As the late Professor Romanes said, even while putting in an apology for Jesus, "The devils damn the doctrine." A man cannot, with due regard to honesty, believe that a phenomenon due to nervous disorder in 1898 was due to diabolic possession in A.D. 30. We can fully agree with the Rev. Charles Gore that "the emphasis which Jesus Christ lays on diabolic agency is so great that, if it is not a reality, he must be regarded either as seriously misled about realities which concern the spiritual, or else seriously misleading others. And in neither case could he be even the perfect prophet."\* The issue here is a perfectly simple one. Either Jesus knew the real complaint from which the so-called demoniacs were suffering, or he did not. In the one case he was just upon a level with the clowns around him, and in the other he was guilty of gross mendacity in supporting a belief which he knew to be false, and one fraught with immeasurable evils to future generations. Of course, to the Freethinker no such difficulty exists. To him it is perfectly plain that on this subject, as on most others requiring real culture, Jesus was upon the same level as the peasantry around him, and consequently his belief in demoniacal possession was only on a line with his mental limitations in other directions.

Professor Romanes considered it to be counted to the credit of Jesus that he taught nothing "which the subsequent growth of human knowledge.....has had to discount. .... For, when we consider what a large number of sayings are recorded of—or at least attributed to—him, it becomes remarkable that in literal truth there is no reason why any

\* Note to Romanes' *Thoughts on Religion*, p. 180.

of his words should ever pass away in the sense of becoming obsolete.\* And in this respect, it is argued, Christ is superior to other teachers of antiquity, whose doctrines have all been modified by the progress of human knowledge. A better sample of theological special pleading it would be difficult to find. Putting on one side the absolute falsity of the passage in the light of what I have said above, it might well be argued that, if a greater measure of Christ's teaching has survived criticism than has been the case with many of the philosophers of antiquity, it is largely because of the vagueness of his teaching, and because they grappled with the problems of life in a manner absolutely foreign to the whole character of Jesus. It is their versatility, their breadth of view, their attempt to deal with life in all its manifold aspects, which open them to so much criticism; it is Christ's narrowness of view which makes him less liable to definite criticism, but at the same time renders his teaching less valuable as a factor in the development of man. Indeed, it can hardly be said, in the light of the New Testament, that life possessed any problems at all for Jesus. His view of life was narrow, local, and exclusive, while as to much that constitutes the staple of current thought he seemed absolutely indifferent or ignorant.

Such questions as relate to the family or the position of woman in the State are noticeably absent from his teachings; while as to the State itself his view of the matter appears to have been summed up in "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's," which meant with primitive Christianity complete submission to the powers that be.

There is absolutely nothing in the recorded utterances of Jesus that would help us to understand the proper structure of the State, or the most desirable relations between it and its members. Whatever light we need on this subject has to be sought elsewhere. As J. S. Mill says: "While, in the morality of the best Pagan nation, duty to the State holds even a disproportionate place, infringing on the just liberty of the individual, in purely Christian ethics that grand department of duty is scarcely noticed or acknowledged. It is in the Koran, not the New Testament, that we read the maxim, 'A ruler who appoints any man to an office, when there is in his dominions another man better qualified for it, sins against God and against the State.' What little recognition the idea of obligation to the public obtains in modern morality is derived from Greek and Roman sources, not from Christian; as, even in the morality of private life, whatever exists of magnanimity, high-mindedness, personal dignity, even the sense of honor, is derived from the purely human, not the religious, part of our education, and never could have grown out of a standard of ethics in which the only worth professedly recognised is that of obedience" (*On Liberty*, p. 29).

The last thing that Jesus and his immediate followers appeared to have had in their minds was a social revolution, or even a social reformation. "My kingdom is not of this world," said Jesus; while Paul advised his followers to remain content as they were, bond or free, rich or poor, single or married, as the end of the world was at hand. "What difference can it make," asks St. Augustine, "to a man who is about to die whose government he lives under, if only there is no compulsion to impiety or injustice?"† The root conception of Jesus and his followers was the approaching end of the world, and, with this belief strong upon them, earthly government mattered but little. Of the very existence of a social problem there is no hint in the utterances of Jesus. His only cures for such evils as he did see were boundless almsgiving and implicit reliance upon the care of a heavenly father who clothed the lilies of the field, and would therefore all the more certainly clothe human beings. Indeed, granting the accuracy of the Gospel records, it is doubtful whether Jesus ever contemplated anything more than the establishment of a select company of believers, or at best a purified Judaism. Certainly the oft-repeated statement that Jesus worked by his teachings a change in man's conception of the nature of society is one that it is impossible to justify. The gratification of evil feelings was not so much eradicated as they were suspended. "The last shall be first and the first shall be last," the story of Dives and Lazarus, show plainly enough that heaven was imagined as a place where the relative situations of master and servant, tyrant and slave, rich man and beggar, simply underwent a change; and it is

difficult indeed to see where the ethical difference lies. Not inaccurately did the philosopher Ueberweg sum up the teachings of Jesus as follows: "The rich man and poor Lazarus, giving to the poor, earthly resignation and the vengeance beyond the grave, which the God who loves the poor wreaks on the privileged ones by the everlasting torments of hell—these are the fundamental ideas of the founder of the kingdom of the Messiah..... There is no idea of a positive dignity of labor, but misery is to be endured and forgotten in the opium intoxication of the blessedness of the Messiah's kingdom beyond the grave. For the first subjugation of barbarians the intellectual opium intoxication might be necessary; now its results are crippling and depressing."

At its best, Christianity introduced a morbid and anti-social view of life into the world. Its doctrines of passive obedience, implicit and explicit encouragement of celibacy, denunciation of wealth, blessing of poverty, and exhortation to indiscriminate almsgiving, could but lead to injurious results. They are, moreover, all ideals of an essentially Eastern type, and, as such, totally unfit for our Western lives. In the East, where the struggle for existence is, on the whole, less exacting than in the West, and where there is always a strong tendency to quietism, such doctrines may take root and flourish; but elsewhere they must always bear the mark of a foreign import, to be maintained by various artificial agencies and by more or less creditable methods. Only by a continuous method of repudiation and retranslation has it been possible even to pretend that Christianity was fitted to serve as a rule of life. The present plan of dropping the supernatural portion of Christianity, its essence, and preaching the moral part, its excrescence, is only the latest phase of a policy as old almost as Christianity itself. The whole history of Christianity has been a history of accommodation, and, in accommodating itself to the modern feeling that natural conduct, and not supernatural beliefs, is the important thing in life, it is forsaking the only ground upon which it could make authoritative claims on the allegiance of man.

C. COHEN,

## FAITH-HEALING.

(BY THE LATE J. M. WHEELER.)

It is often said that "the age of miracles is dead." What is meant is that the conviction of the uniformity of law is now so generally established that no cultured person ever supposes that any phenomenon, however wonderful, of which he may hear is to be explained by other than natural causes. Yet, if we look a little below the surface, we shall find that the majority of people are far from emancipated from the superstitious beliefs which we have inherited from the past. If any proof were required of this, it might be found in the practice of public and private prayer. Prayer is really a demand for miraculous interference, and while few expect their petition for daily bread to be as literally answered as did the once-famous William Huntingdon ("sinner saved"), who declared that when he was hungry fishes came out of the water and birds from heaven to feed him in abundance, and who did not scruple to pray for a pair of breeches, prayer is still supposed to have some occult effect in the comparatively unexplored regions of mental and moral phenomena. While no one expects a *coup d'état celeste* to decide in an action at law, *Smith v. Brown*, it is still supposed that some Power above will see that the British are not altogether worsted in the Soudan.

Miracles still happen wherever and whenever they are believed in and expected. In our own time we need not make a pilgrimage to Lourdes or La Salette to learn particulars, nor need we even go to Knock or Llanthony Abbey. We have only to enter the first Salvationist barracks to hear of cases of supernatural conversion, and even of the supernatural cure of disease.

There are so many features common to all such revivals and their attendant miracles that it may be worth while looking at them with some attention, more especially as they may throw some light on the boasted superiority of the miracles related in the New Testament. The first point worthy of notice is that revivals of religion and

\* *Thoughts on Religion*, p. 157.

† *City of God*, v. 17.

attendant miracles are by no means confined to Christendom. In India hermits of sanctity are constantly arising and attempting to reform the different sects of Hinduism. They are believed to be incarnations of deity, and in their train many of the sick are cured. Colonel Olcott, at the present day, is asserted to have cured over one thousand persons by occult or magnetic power within the space of one year in India. With the Mohammedans it is the same. Although Mahomet did not claim the power of working miracles, he is none the less credited with them, and dervishes of repute, of whatever sect, are believed by their followers to possess miraculous powers, chiefly manifested in works of healing. Indeed, the "hakim," or physician, is looked on with the sanctity given to one who is devoted to religion. The Roman Catholic Church declares that the power of working miracles, which was bestowed upon her by Jesus, never has been, and never will be, withdrawn. The lives of the saints are full of relations of these wonders; some, as in the case of St. Francis of Assisi and St. Bernard of Clairvaux, being given on the authority of eye-witnesses, and, as I think, with an element of truth in them. Visitors to continental churches cannot fail to notice the number of crutches, sticks, and splints that are said to have been left by the owners, who have been relieved by prayers offered to some saint or by the supposed efficacy of their relics—although, like Diagoras, who, when shown in the Pagan temples the votive tablets of sailors who had been saved by calling on the gods, asked where were the tablets of the drowned, we may ask where are the crutches of the uncured? In many of these cases also, I venture to think, the choice does not simply lie between knavery and miracle; the powers of imagination and faith are sufficient to explain the success of the relics or the prayers, belief in which wrought cures that, both to priests and patients, must have appeared miraculous. Protestants, at any rate since the days of Conyers Middleton, have sought to draw an impossible distinction between apostolic and ecclesiastical miracles; between those narrated in the New Testament and those found in the works of the Fathers of the Church. Yet every revival among Protestants has been attended by its miracles. Anabaptists, Muggletonians, Methodists, Irvingites, and Salvationists have this, among other features, in common. During a Methodist revival in Cornwall four thousand people, it is computed, fell into convulsions. Wesley believed these phenomena were of diabolic origin, but the cures he attributed to the grace of God. Wesley declared himself to have been cured of a fever by meditating on the passage interpolated into Mark in which Jesus is alleged to promise that "these signs shall follow them that believe. In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." Wesley's journal and the early volumes of the *Arminian Magazine* relate numerous instances of miraculous cures attending the propagation of Methodism. The Irvingites, as is well known, claimed to have the Pentecostal gift of tongues, and they considered disease to arise from sin and to be removed by holiness and faith. Mrs. Oliphant, in her *Life of Edward Irving*, gives a striking instance of his curing himself from what he believed to be an attack of cholera, but which was more probably dysentery, by resolutely persisting in attending to his ministerial duties. Yet she also shows that undoubtedly his death was accelerated by want of taking proper sanitary precautions. During the revival in the North of Ireland in 1859 numerous "miracles" occurred, which are described and explained in a work by E. A. Stopford, Archdeacon of Meath. The "miracles," however, consisted far more in believers being "struck" with disease than being healed. Some are said to have become blind and deaf. Others were struck dumb. One girl is mentioned as having been speechless three weeks. "The duration of these affections," wrote a correspondent of Archdeacon Stopford, "appeared to be arbitrary, but both their approach and their assertion were always, I believe, foretold by the patients. . . . The deafness and blindness generally occurred during the absence of speech, and for short intervals only." No test seems to have been applied to ascertain the reality of these deprivations. "Indeed, the friends and bystanders are so persuaded of the miraculous nature of the affections that they would resent any attempt to test them." This observer saw several cases of temporary paralysis—one of

both hands, one of the right arm, and one of the whole of one side. One girl whom he saw had had seventy seizures, sometimes seven in one day, and had lost her speech and the use of her limbs. When the cure came it was, of course, said that the devils were cast out. The epidemic or contagious character of these maladies was unmistakable. "She took it, and was very bad with it," said an Irish-woman. "Took what?" she was asked. "Oh, just the revival," she answered; "I have a brother and two sisters, and none of us took it." Insanity was a frequent result of this as of other revivals.

Still more extraordinary were the miracles and convulsions occurring at the tomb of the Abbé Paris, the former of which are mentioned in Hume's *Essay on Miracles*, and examined at some length in Bishop Douglas's *Criterion*. A good old priest, the Deacon Paris, who had embraced Jansenist opinions, and thereby incurred persecution from his ecclesiastical superiors, dying in 1727, was buried in the cemetery of St. Medard, Paris. The Jansenist party forthwith beatified him, and began to pray at his tomb. Religious exaltation and persecution speedily induced hysterics in certain young women while praying there, others were soon affected, and the malady spread so rapidly that in two years there were from seven to eight hundred *convulsionnaires*. Some—*les sauteuses*—jumped in the most extraordinary manner, turning completely heels-over-head; some—*les aboyeuses*—barked like dogs; others—*les miauleuses*—mewed like cats. These phenomena were considered miraculous, although similar epidemics have been known to frequently break out among nuns in convents; and numbers of invalids visiting the cemetery to pray for recovery, and inspired with an ardent faith and firm expectation of cure, were observed to be either notably improved or wholly healed. These "miracles" were attested upon the spot before judges of undoubted integrity. Indeed, they were performed and testified to in the face of a strong opposition party of Jesuits and Molinists, and, although there were some cases of fraud and imposture, there was a large residue of undoubtedly genuine cures, which, however, Bishop Douglas sufficiently shows need not be ascribed to supernatural agency. The number of those relieved were but a small proportion of the number of supplicants, and in no certain case of cure could the disease be said to be beyond the reach of natural means. In consequence of the tumult attending these "miracles," in 1732 the Court ordered the cemetery to be closed, thus giving rise to the well-known epigram:—

De par le roi, défense à Dieu,  
De faire miracle en ce lieu.

Closing the gates of the cemetery stopped the miracles at the tomb, but it did not stay the convulsion epidemic, which spread into the provinces and lasted a whole generation.

(To be concluded.)

## THE AGE OF PROGRESS.

It has been well said that "to him who looks at the giant efforts made in that favored age when all things were combining to illustrate and to hasten the progress of mankind, when Cortez led his troops against Mexico, when Luther burnt the Papal Bull and severed the first links of the chain which had so long bound his species to the earth, when Leonardi da Vinci fathomed the depths of every science, and by his exquisite and astonishing eloquence hastened the regeneration of the species; when, side by side with the return to light of the poets, orators, and historians of antiquity, came forth the most glorious monuments of Grecian art; when the system of the universe was discovered by Copernicus, though not published, ere the very year that Columbus died: to him who looks at this sudden and magnificent increase of all the elements of civilisation and knowledge, it would seem that there might well have been anticipated for Europe a destiny far more glorious than she has since achieved, and that, after the lapse of three centuries, a condition would have resulted far more ennobling than that to which she can now lay claim. A history of the follies and absurdities committed by society, if but for the last half-dozen generations, would be one of the most instructive books ever written."

No doubt, considering the many agencies of progress

which for centuries have existed, the advancement to a higher state of general civilisation has been slow. But then it should be remembered that numerous retarding influences have been at work, and that every forward movement has had to cope with ignorance, prejudice, vested interests, and traditional folly. Moreover, the Church and, in too many instances, the ruling monarchs have arrayed their power against the progressive aspirations of the people. Priestcraft and kingcraft have been the deadliest foes to all true progress. Their combined efforts were directed to keep the masses ignorant, and to make them subservient to the decrees of "the powers that be." For centuries science was crushed, education ignored, philosophy tabooed, and the physical and moral condition of the bulk of the nation entirely neglected. And it must be confessed that the Church has been the greater offender of the two in these respects. As Draper puts it: "The Christian party asserted that all knowledge is to be found in the Scriptures and in the traditions of the Church; that in the written revelation God had not only given a criterion of truth, but had furnished us all that he intended us to know. The Scriptures, therefore, contain the sum, the end of all knowledge. The clergy, with the Emperor at their back, would endure no intellectual competition.....The Church thus set herself forth as the depository and arbiter of knowledge; she was ever ready to resort to the civil power to compel obedience to her decisions. She thus took a course which determined her whole future career—she became a stumbling-block in the intellectual advancement of Europe for more than a thousand years" (*Conflict*, p. 52).

Notwithstanding these many drawbacks, it is a fact, thanks to the rise and perpetuation of scepticism, that the age in which we live is pre-eminently one of progress. Whether we recognise the number or brilliancy of scientific discoveries, the application of physical science to manufacturing industry and the concerns of every-day life, the social advancement of the people at large, or the rapid strides made by liberal views in theology, the present age stands unrivalled in the pages of history. Whilst those circumstances which minister to man's physical wants have been undergoing a mighty revolution, the higher and more ennobling faculties of his nature have not been forgotten. A thousand agencies have sprung up on every hand, by which food has been supplied to the intellectual nature of mankind, which expands the mind and elevates the race. Civil government, political economy, mental philosophy, theological opinions, and the numerous minor subjects which mark the civilisation of a people, have been undergoing a revolution, more silent and perhaps less striking, but no less real, than that which has taken place in physical science. The grand social reformation which is now being effected by the thousand schemes for human amelioration is no transient upheaval of the social condition soon to subside, but a mighty tidal rush of the great wave of human progress, which no force can ever drive back.

True, this progress has been gradual in its manifestation, for, as I have already mentioned, it has had to grapple with a combination of obstacles. As the author of *Progress of Science* (J. Villin Marmery) writes: "The ideas which swept away religious terrorism and persecution, torture, mendacity, and brought in philanthropy, were exceedingly slow to germinate. They took over two hundred years to have practical effects. They were at first opposed by an aggravation of the evils they were intended to destroy; they were combated by men of tradition, by scholars, by princes, and law-makers; they were anathematised by the Churches of all denominations; they were checked by fire and sword, exile, confiscation, expulsion, law, by the whole panoply of brute force; but they were triumphant in the end." From the time when Martin Luther appeared progress became an active factor in mental freedom. By him priestly domination was shaken to its very foundation, and the ecclesiastical despotism under which men had groaned for ages received a shock from which it never recovered. He opened up the way for those more liberal views in theology which are now so widely entertained. The seeds of free discussion may be said to have been sown at the Reformation; the plant developed very slowly, still the fruit is now appearing. The untrammelled expression of any views in theology, however heterodox, would perhaps have been as little tolerated by Martin Luther as by the Pope; but then the course taken by him could not but lead to that in the end. It required the greater doings

of such men as Paine, Carlile, Bradlaugh, and others, to thoroughly realise free discussion; but with Luther the movement commenced. The right of private judgment was at least proclaimed, and that with no feeble voice. Monarchy had reached its climax, and universal empire was now wrested from the Pope. The minds of men, roused from the lethargy in which they had so long been resting, became strangely agitated with conflicting interests and opinions. The mere outward trappings and paraphernalia of wealth were seen to be visibly declining, and the reign of mind was dawning.

One of the most striking features of the progress of the age is the fact that the steam-engine and its kindred powers have brought large masses of men together, and rendered easy the transit from place to place, thus opening up a facility for combination, for interchange of opinion, and for mutual improvement. The enormous circulation of books and cheap periodicals testifies to the advancing intelligence of those who are called the lower classes. The eagerness with which great political questions, religious opinions, and social movements for the elevation of mankind are now discussed all tell in unmistakable language of the improvements wrought. Nor have the upper classes escaped the influence of this change. Dissipation and laxity in morals, once the distinguishing characteristics of a gentleman, are now vices only to be practised in secret, and denied in open day, otherwise a good name and an honorable reputation at once disappear. The improvements that have taken place have permeated the whole of society.

It cannot be said with any degree of justice that this improvement has been produced by what is called Christianity, for that existed for centuries when comparatively no progress was effected. No; as Bonham, in his work, *Secularism: its Progress and Morals*, says, "every step of advance since the Reformation has been marked by some degree of scepticism.....As the fruits of physical science grew, they became silent witnesses of natural law; the sceptical philosopher, employing them to illustrate his particular philosophy, gained a new audience in the world. Then theology began to suffer a process of disintegration and dissolution, such as had never before been seen. These influences not only exerted themselves upon the outside, but reached into the very heart of the Church; a kind of erosion of creed set in, which moved the Church from its position of high authority to a point at which explanation, apology, and adaptation became necessary, and from this point to an attitude in which successive adaptations of creed are made as progressive physical science renders such adaptations imperative" (p. 21). The present disunion and unrest in the various Churches fully justify these remarks, and indicate the progress that is now going on in the Christian world. That progress, however, is not in the "religion of Christ," but in the departure from it.

Science, which wields such a magic power in modern life, has escaped from the destroying hands of theologians, and is now in the custody of men who are sceptical as to the dogmatic claims of theology. Canon Farrar says that science has had a "struggle for life" with theological dogmatists, but frankly admits that "in every instance the dogmatists have been ignominiously defeated." Even Talmage, whose fanaticism as a rule blinds him to facts, acknowledges that our leading men of science are not believers in the Christian faith. Here are his words: "I put upon the witness stand, living and dead, the leading evolutionists—Ernst Haeckel, John Stuart Mill, Huxley, Tyndall, Darwin, Spencer. On the witness stand, ye men of science, living and dead, answer these questions: Do you believe the Holy Scriptures? No. And so they say all. Do you believe the Bible story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden? No. And so they say all. Do you believe the miracles of the Old Testament? No. And so they say all. Do you believe that Jesus died to save the nations? No. And so they say all. Do you believe in the regenerating power of the Holy Ghost? No. And so they say all. Do you believe that human supplication directed heavenward ever makes any difference? No. And so they say all" (*Boston Investigator*, Oct. 8, 1898).

Despite, then, the counteracting influences by which we are surrounded, it is gratifying to know that we live in an age of progress. We must not, however, slacken our progressive efforts; much more is yet to be done. There is still vice to check, errors to destroy, dens of filth to cleanse, distress to alleviate, poverty to relieve, superstition

to crush, and many other ills to cure. Old worn-out systems of theology are tottering and falling, exploded religious dogmas are rapidly passing away, and the reign of reason is dawning. Let us work earnestly with the means at our command, and the result no doubt will be a wide prevalence of true mental freedom, a still further spread of Freethought, and a higher status of ethical and intellectual culture than the world has ever witnessed.

CHARLES WATTS.

## PROFANE PARABLES.

### I.—PRAYER.

Two hungry travellers halted in a forest.

"I will fit an arrow to my bow, and look for conies," said one.

"And I," said the other, "will supplicate the immortal gods."

And while the one went forth to hunt for food the other prayed. And, having prayed, he slept.

When the sun was setting, he awoke and saw his friend returning, weary and footsore, with a bag well filled.

"The gods are bountiful!" he cried. "My prayer is answered. Let us eat in thankfulness!"

### II.—CHARITY.

An idle Rogue met a Fool who labored.

"Give me a moiety of thine earnings," said the Rogue, "and thou shalt have treasure in heaven."

The Fool scratched his head.

"What if I lack bread meanwhile?"

"Fear nothing, my son. If distress should overtake thee, I will e'en return thee a tenth in charity."

And the Fool flung his arms around the Rogue's neck, and blessed him.

### III.—DISTANCE.

"Marvel with me!" exclaimed the Dupe. "I have seen strange and wonderful things. The Prophet laid his hands upon a corpse; and, behold! it arose and lived again!"

"Pooh—nonsense!" said the Christian.

"But mine eyes have seen it. And were there not such things in Palestine years ago?"

"Ah—well!" said the Christian.

### IV.—FAITH.

An orator arose in a public place and addressed the multitude.

"Believe that two and two make five, and thou shalt be saved," said he.

"But I have studied arithmetic," objected one; "and I know that two and two do *not* make five."

"Arithmetic is of the Devil," said the orator. "You must renounce your vain learning, and become as a little child."

Whereat the sceptic laughed consumedly.

### V.—FUTURITY.

A clown in motley met a rich merchant.

"God ild thee, fair merchant," quoth he. "An' thou be willing, I'll tell thy fortune for a penny."

But the merchant shrugged his shoulders, and passed on. And presently there came a solemn man in black.

"Be humble, O merchant, for I am the messenger of the gods," said he. "And if, haply, thou hast wealth, I may e'en secure thee joy hereafter."

And the merchant, prostrating himself, poured his gold at the stranger's feet.

### VI.—PRECEPT.

A traveller was beset by thieves, who belabored him with staves, and stole his possessions. And, as he groaned grievously by the wayside, a stranger condoled with him.

"Blessed are they that mourn," said he. "It is good to suffer here, for thy sorrows on earth shall be the measure of thy happiness in heaven."

And, behold, the robbers espied the stranger, and returned. *And he straightway fled.* E. R. W.

Parishioner—"Yes, mum, I do admire the vicar's sermons, that I do." Vicar's Wife—"I am so glad! And you really understand them?" Parishioner—"Me, mum? Oh, no! I wouldn't presume to understand them!"

## ACID DROPS.

THE Lord Chief Justice and five other judges have decided, with reference to the Senior case, that the Peculiar People, whose children die without medical assistance, are legally guilty of manslaughter. We do not believe there will be any appeal against this decision, which will govern future prosecutions. At the same time, it does not bring us much "farrarder," for a conviction without a sentence is equal to no conviction at all. We are still waiting for a Christian judge who will have the courage to send another man to gaol for being a Christian.

Lord Chief Justice Russell made a curious remark when the point of law was being signed. The Peculiar People's counsel said that Senior had done all he could for his sick child. "Yes," said Lord Russell, "he did everything but the one thing that was necessary." According to the law, then, the one thing necessary in sickness is a doctor. According to the New Testament, the one thing necessary is prayer.

Lord Russell is an excellent judge and a thorough gentleman, but he is a Roman Catholic, and therefore does not believe in the right of private interpretation of the Bible. Consequently it was certain that he would take an unfavorable view of Senior's appeal. Some of the other judges, however, might have remembered that England is still a Protestant country, with a Protestant Queen, and an established Protestant Church. They might have pointed out that there was a conflict between one part of the law and another, and that, as Senior could not possibly obey both parts of the law, he was entitled to make his choice, and not liable to be punished for rejecting the opposite alternative. But they held their tongues, and allowed a Catholic to lay down the law in this matter for a Protestant. Is not this a *reductio ad absurdum* of the State's having anything whatever to do with religious opinions?

According to the law of England, as laid down by six judges sitting on one bench, the Bible is a superstitious book, St. James was a fool, and Jesus Christ was no better. We thank their lordships for the declaration. They have not made it in plain words, for they dare not do so; but they have made it implicitly. The Peculiar People say, "We must obey St. James and the Lord Jesus Christ," and the judges say, "We don't care a tinker's curse for *your* authorities; the only authority we recognise is the law; the law says you must do otherwise, and if you don't do it we'll send you to prison, and then you will see if St. James and the Lord Jesus Christ will get you out of it." What a roaring farce it is, to be sure, in *Christian* England!

Prophet Baxter is advertising his rotten predictions in the *Methodist Times*, which takes his money without warning its readers that he is a self-convicted charlatan. Baxter's fresh date for the great flare-up is 1908 or 1911. He isn't certain to a year or two. The arithmetic of prophets is always hazy.

The *Methodist Times* says that "the infidel movement in this country has reached and long receded from its high-water mark." Supposing this were true, which it isn't, the simile is an unfortunate one, for tides rise again. It is even possible that Wesleyan Methodism may recover some of its lost ground.

Birmingham Christians, or some of them, are still agitated over the National Secular Society's placards outside the Bristol-street Board School. We see by the *Daily Mail* that the Bishop of Coventry is going to have the matter brought before the School Board. Well, if he does so, we hope the Board will send him to Coventry. It is fairly pointed out in the *Mail* that the Secularists have been holding their meetings at the Bristol-street School for the past eighteen months, and that not a single complaint has been made against them. The present complaint is an illegitimate one. It is simply an exhibition of contemptible bigotry.

The Board-school system is the "work of the Devil," and its teaching is "poisonous." So says Dr. Bagshawe, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Nottingham. All he means is what the fishmonger meant when he said of his rival in the same street, "Don't deal at that fellow's shop; his fish stinks."

Thomas Daley ill-used and deserted his wife and children. Then he lived with a paramour, Sarah Ann Penfold, whom he murdered at Chatham on June 4. On Monday (Dec. 12) he was hung at Maidstone Gaol. He took things easy at the finish, feeling booked through to glory. A brief service was held in the cell before the execution, and Daley himself started the hymn, "For ever with the Lord."

Rev. M. McAuliffe, of the Catholic Church of St. Francis of Assisi, Holbeck, Leeds, is raising money for a new organ. He is circulating lists which people are asked to fill in with the names of their departed friends and relatives, who are to "participate in all the Holy Masses offered for their repose during the lifetime of the good pastor," the said Rev. McAuliffe. Of course, a donation is expected with the list, which is ornamented at the top with a picture of a lot of poor wretches writhing in flames. This sort of cadging is lawful in England, but if an old woman takes sixpence for fortune-telling she is sent to prison.

St. Kilda Presbyterian Church, Jarrow-on-Tyne, has been having an "Arabian Nights' Bazaar" to raise the wind. One of the mottoes on the program is excellent:—

For what is worth in anything,  
But so much money as 'twill bring?

We congratulate the Rev. David Annal on speaking the truth for once in connection with his gospel-shop.

Dr. Eugene Yarrow, deputy-coroner, who recently held an inquest at Bethnal-green, is not a philosopher. A boy witness was asked by this gentleman where he would go if he told a lie, and he said he didn't know. "Well, who goes to hell?" Dr. Yarrow asked, and the boy replied, "I don't know, sir." Whereupon he was told that they hadn't taught him much at school, and that his evidence was not very valuable. Most people, however, will think that the boy was honest and straightforward, and that he might have learnt a good deal at school without being posted up in the criminology of Gehenna. It was the deputy-coroner, not the witness, who evidently had something to learn.

Mr. Robert Newman has very neatly dished the "Progressive" bigots on the London County Council. The Sunday Concerts at the Queen's Hall are resumed, but instead of being advertised as under the management of Mr. Newman himself they are advertised as under the management of a committee. And as the committee includes men like Sir E. Clarke and Mr. Shaw Lefevre, it is hardly likely to be worried by the bigots, and we presume it will take care that Mr. Newman gets all the profits that are made, barring perhaps a formal donation to a hospital or some other charitable institution.

What will the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes do now? He is done brown. So is Mr. John Burns. But will both their heads together be clever enough to circumvent Mr. Newman? We doubt it.

Mussulmans at Constantinople view with consternation the approaching departure of the British. They do not feel safe in being at the mercy of Prince George and the Cretan Christians. According to the *Daily News* correspondent, they have "had the opportunity of witnessing personally the immense damage done to their properties by the Christians," and they "despair of ever being able to live peaceably under the new régime."

Poor old Spain! After being licked and despoiled she still trusts in the Lord. "God in time will avenge us," says her Premier. It would be safer to say "in eternity."

The Chaplain of the American Congress would deserve to be kicked if he were not blind. The other day he officially supplicated the Almighty for the Royal Family and people of Spain. This is making a burlesque of religion. But we don't mind that. What we object to is the execrable ill-taste of the thing.

The *National Review*, dealing with company-mongers, points to their patronage of religious institutions. The *Irish Times* takes exception to the accuracy of the allusion, so that there must have been some misunderstanding in the public mind about Hooley and "Holy Joe" Savory, not to mention Jabez and others.

We seem, however, to be pretty certain of this—the Church of God is open to gifts, and does not make too many inquiries as to the donors. That shows its simple faith in the goodness of human nature. If a scandal arise, the Church would retain the gifts, and disown the hands from which it received them. That shows its desire to maintain a high standard of purity in its relations with the world.

A sad complaint is published in regard to the perpetual attacks on "our oldest missionary societies, such as the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, the Church Missionary Society, and the Universities' Mission to Central Africa." The wail proceeds from a gentleman who writes to a Dublin paper, and proudly signs himself "An Incorporated Member of the S. P. G." He says: "The sooner friends of missions give up answering objections, the better." Certainly; let them take a period of repose and employ it

in reflection. They may then discover better answers to give when objections are raised. Present replies seem only to afford material for crushing rejoinders. Hence, apparently, the present advice.

The new Bishop of Bangor, being Dean of St. Asaph's, wrote on the 28th ult. a curt and exceedingly uncivil letter to the *Daily News*, calling upon it to correct its statement that he had been selected for the Bishopric. The *Daily News* now caustically "leaves it to his lordship to decide what amend is due to us, and to the diligent correspondent whose prompt and gratifying information he so ungraciously requested."

Dean Williams probably knew, when he wrote the "correction," that he was actually selected. We say so because precisely the same sort of thing has occurred before between newspapers and clerics, who were practically Bishops-elect. It is only of a piece with the insincerity with which Bishops-elect declare that they do not desire to be made Bishops, when, perhaps, for years they have been eating their hearts out with expectation of the preferment.

The divisions in the Church demand its division from the State. That seems to be the main point in the recent address by Mr. Augustine Birrell, M.P., to members of the London Free Churches.

"Christianity must be introduced" in the Gordon Memorial College. So says the Dean of Exeter, and so say many other clericals in the *Times*. Lord Kitchener, however, says otherwise, and the matter lies in his hands, which the clergy are not likely to force. "I am sure," he says in a letter to Professor Josnett, "that any idea of using the College for religious instruction would ruin its utility."

Lord Wolseley gives heaven—or is it the other place?—a new attraction. Speaking at the re-opening of the London Library, he touched on the prospect of there being no libraries in another world, and said that "he could not imagine a state of things in any world in which there would be no books." Let us hope the celestial (or infernal) library will not include the Bible. Most people will have had enough of it on earth.

Rev. Samuel Walton Kay, vicar of Butlers Marston, near Stratford-on-Avon, is doing twelve months' hard labor for forging a promissory note for £500. According to the common scale, his punishment is not excessive. We once saw a boy doing four months for stealing two shillings. On the whole, this man of God is rather lucky.

This servant of the Lord Jesus could not even take his gruel, as so many common culprits do, without a lot of whining. In his appeal to the judge for mercy he recited some of his own "pathetic" verses, talked about "the eternal goodness of God," begged to be restored to his "stricken wife and little ones," and wound up by saying: "I humbly beseech you to allow my tender spirit to lean hard, my lord, upon the full strength of your mercy." What a ghastly exhibition!

Parson Kay is the author of one book. It is entitled *Resist Not Evil*. Was it an anticipatory appeal to the Bank on which he planted that forged promissory note?

A Battersea curate, the Rev. Alfred Ernest Taylor, being summoned by his wife for persistent cruelty, the magistrate adjourned the case in order to let the man of God agree to his wife's offer to take thirty shillings a week, without washing all his dirty family linen in court.

This man of God became very excited. "Please keep quiet," he was told; "remember you're not in church." There is a difference between being in the pulpit and standing in front of the dock. The men of God, it is satisfactory to know, cannot have it all their own way in both places.

An old woman, Mary Ann Pritchard, died in the Medway Workhouse, Chatham, recently, at the age of eighty-two. She had been a pauper inmate for forty years. It would have been interesting to have heard her opinion about Christ's remarks on the blessings of poverty.

Some liars, for the glory of God, once invented the yarn about the Queen having styled the Bible "the source of England's greatness." As a matter of fact, the English are only referred to once in the sacred volume: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."

A Church Guild for Journalists! The thing sounds absurd. Yet Mr. A. Ceston Kelway, who for a short period was on the *Sun*, is endeavoring to establish such an organisation. The idea, of course, is received with ridicule in press circles. Press-men in the bulk are a distinctly unbelieving lot.

Church journalists, as a rule, are the very people who have the greatest contempt for Church matters. They know too much about them. As the *Westminster Gazette* observes, there is about as much need for a "Church Guild for Journalists" as there is for a "Church Guild for Shoeblocks."

In the recent libel action by Sir Joseph Savory, M.P., against London, the plaintiff's cousin, Mr. Joseph Braithwaite, elected to affirm, "on the ground that Christ forbids swearing." A very good ground, too—from a Christian point of view. Millions of times a year Christians are swearing upon a book in which Christ is represented as commanding his followers to "Swear not at all." The note in the Cambridge Bible to Matthew v. 33-37 is: "This does not, of course, apply to judicial oaths." There is no "of course" about it. It distinctly applies to all forms of oath-taking, as any one may see by referring to the passage.

Sir Joseph Savory is the godly man who, a few years ago, was found out in a very funny pious fraud. Having to address a meeting of the Young Men's Christian Association, he palmed off upon them as his own a discourse of Spurgeon's. His hearers thought it was a bit above the mark of Joe Savory, and inquiries led to detection. One of the "dailies" printed Savory's sermon and the sermon by Spurgeon in parallel columns. The duplication was perfect.

"Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." This, we presume, is one of the precepts that the thirty Army Scripture Readers, who attended the recent Military Convention at Exeter Hall, are engaged to enforce. It seems admirably calculated to make the British soldier—in the words of Lord Chelmsford, who was one of the speakers—"not only a courageous man in the field, but courageous in quarters, upholding his position and self-respect."

"All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword" is another good text to impress on the Soldiers Christian Association.

The dying cabman complained that he had been bilked of his Sundays. At least, that is what the following leaflet says: "Sunday travellers—Pause! Before entering a public conveyance on the Lord's Day, consider what you are doing. You are injuring men's souls by hindering them from attending to spiritual things. Remember a dying cabman's cry: 'I have had no Sundays!'" The correspondent of the *Daily News*, who was presented with one of these leaflets in a 'bus, showed it to the conductor, and asked him what he thought of it. "What do I think?" he replied, "why that"—using an expressive gesture. Asked how he spent his Sundays off, he said he lay on his back, smoked his pipe, and read the Sunday papers. Which is pretty much what the dying cabman would have done if, like many of his class, he had had his Sundays off. He probably had plenty of time on the rank during the week to read pious publications, if his taste lay in that direction, rather than reading the latest betting and sporting news.

The Kaiser is disappointed with the Holy Land—now that he has seen it. Many people are disappointed with the Holy Book—when they have read it. Investigation dispels many illusions.

Women preachers are multiplying in America. One woman—the only one—has a D.D. degree. Her name is the Rev. Augusta J. Capin. The Universalist Church, which she belongs to, has fifty-seven ordained women among its ministers. What a treat for St. Paul if he could only witness it!—St. Paul who suffered not a woman to teach, and told her to keep silence in the churches.

Dr. Beattie was a pleasant writer on philosophy and aesthetics, but he quite overrated his powers when he wrote a book on *Truth* to refute the dangerous opinions of David Hume. His portrait was painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds, who placed over his head the Goddess of Truth driving away Sophistry, Scepticism, and Infidelity. These demons were said to be veiled likenesses of Voltaire, Hume, and Gibbon; all three of whom are read now—but who reads Dr. Beattie? We have read him, but it has been our lot to read piles of books for reasons of necessity.

A *Daily News* correspondent has been giving an account of his experiences amongst the poor children in Lambeth. One little flower-girl, aged eleven, said that her father had been dead four years, and her mother had a baby a year old. Asked whether her mother had married again, she replied "No." "And does the baby belong to her?" the visitor asked, and the answer was: "Jest think it do, sir. She says Gawd sent it speshul for her, from Favver wot's in heaven."

"Providence" doesn't seem particularly pleased with the

Czar's efforts in the peace line. The Neva suddenly rose nine feet above its ordinary level, and all the low-lying quarters of St. Petersburg were inundated. Much property was destroyed.

A book recently published by Smith, Elder, & Co., entitled *Pages from a Private Diary*, gives some entertaining stories. One relates to a fine old Berkshire farmer, who said: "Us wun't be prosperous till us have fewer of they black parsons, and more of they black pigs." Here is a quaint advertisement from a bookseller's catalogue:—"Clergyman—A fine collection of 200 clergymen, consisting of Protestant ministers, Roman Catholics, Wesleyan Methodists, Unitarians, and Presbyterians, nice clean lot—5s." The following is about a charitable lady, whose efforts had been assisted by an ill-bred but very wealthy neighbor. "Mr. X. is dead," she said; "he was so good and kind and helpful to me in all sorts of ways; he was so vulgar, poor dear fellow, we could not know him in London; but we shall meet him in Heaven."

The East London Church Fund received a generous donation from an undertaker as a thankoffering because "the death-rate had lately been exceptionally high."

Mr. Justice Day seems to be a firm believer in the moral efficacy of the "cat," and we have been reading an account in a local paper of the infliction of this punishment, under one of his lordship's sentences, on a prisoner in Swansea gaol. The man's hands and feet being bound to a bar, an officer "slowly, but strongly, laid the lash upon the prisoner's bare back until the blood flowed freely." After receiving twenty strokes, the prisoner "had to be moved to the infirmary, where he is expected to lie for some weeks to come." Now we do not care a bit what the man's crime was. It is really nothing to the purpose of a rational jurisprudence. The "catting" of this man was simply a disgusting exhibition of sheer brutality. Only a fool or a bigot—which is much the same thing—could suppose for a moment that it was calculated to improve its victim; and, on the other hand, the infliction and witnessing of such physical outrage must have a debasing effect upon the participants. When will judges learn the most elementary principles of moral philosophy? When will they understand that punishment of any sort is of very questionable efficacy as a deterrent from crime? When will they perceive that the brutalisation of a criminal, who will some day be turned loose again, only makes him a more cunning and dangerous enemy to society?

Our readers would probably guess a hundred times before they spotted the officer who wielded that lash in Swansea gaol. It was the *schoolmaster*! What a task to be committed to such hands! By-and-bye, we presume, it will be delegated to the chaplain.

Mr. Wordsworth Donisthorpe, the brilliant Individualist writer, has just published an account of his recent Eastern travels under the title of *Down the Stream of Civilisation*. Like the German Emperor, he found Jerusalem a great disappointment. He calls it "the offscouring of all nations and the cesspool of all sects." Referring to the harmony that prevails amongst the followers of Jesus, he writes as follows: "The Jews hate the Mohammedans; both hate and despise the Christians; but their united hatred is as charity itself compared with the hatred with which Christians hate one another. Latins, Greeks, and Armenians alike seem to wallow in a slough of religious bigotry and intolerance fouler even than the mire in which their bodies stew."

Another heavy blow has been struck at the clerical and military intriguers in France. The Court of Cassation has stopped the court-martialing of Colonel Picquart—perhaps the most heroic figure in recent French history. The "brave generals" trained in Jesuit schools, and willing instruments of Jesuit designs, are thus completely foiled. They cannot murder their intended victim in prison, for he has told the world that if he is found dead it will not be a case of suicide. Nor can they try and condemn him in huffer-mugger. Justice has stretched forth her strong hand, and reassured the conscience of France.

The latest newcomer amongst newspapers is the *Yellow Journal*. It combines sport and piety, offering prizes for a best-hymn competition and prizes for a football-skill competition. The last page contains some suitable lies about the deathbeds of Voltaire and Thomas Paine, whose name is spelt "Payne."

An Aitchison girl says such long prayers every morning that by the time she gets downstairs her sister has the breakfast prepared. In this way the girl's prayers that her life may be made smooth are answered at the first jump out of the box.—*Aitchison Globe*.



### Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, December 18, Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road, London: 7.30, "The Babe of Bethlehem: A Christmas Fairy Tale."

### TO CORRESPONDENTS.

ALL communications for Mr. Charles Watts should be sent to him at 24 Carminia-road, Balham, S.W. If a reply is required, a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed.

H. PEACOCK.—It is difficult to advise you. If the magistrates did not grant you an exemption for your child, you might at least wait until the authorities take the next step. Perhaps you will write again if necessary. Nothing could be more wickedly absurd, or absurdly wicked, than the action of the Government and the magistrates in connection with the new Vaccination Act.

WEST LONDON BRANCH.—It is no use sending us lecture notices that arrive on Wednesday. We cannot keep our pages open for such things. It has been repeatedly emphasised that notices should reach us by Tuesday morning.

W. P. BALL.—Thanks again for your welcome batches of cuttings.

J. SHIRKEY.—Will probably appear in an early issue.

IGNOTUS.—Mr. Foote hopes to see the second volume of *Crimes of Christianity* through the press early in the new year. He much regrets that his other duties leave him so little time for book and pamphlet work.

M. LOAFER.—See paragraph. We hope the social function has resulted in some pecuniary help towards the East London Branch's propagandist work.

W. COX.—Glad to hear Mr. Watts was in good form at Liverpool, and that his lectures were "splendid." Mr. Foote will write you as to another date.

C. H. CATTELL.—Thanks for papers, &c. See paragraphs.

T. WILMOT.—See "Sugar Plums." But, after all, is this quite a suitable time of the year for such meetings?

"FREETHINKER" CIRCULATION FUND.—A. E. Elderkin, 1s.

W. T. HERBERT.—Some paragraphs were already written on the subject. Thanks all the same.

A. BODDY.—We have handed your order to Mr. Forder, 28 Stonecutter-street, E.C., to whom please send direct in future.

W. M.—Thanks.

A. E. ELDERKIN.—Mr. Charles Watts, senior, has been our printer for the last four years. Thanks for the cuttings, &c.

H. MACLACHLAN.—See paragraph.

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY AND OTHERS.—Lecture notices must reach us by the first post on Tuesday, if you want them inserted.

G. BRADY.—Received. Thanks for your good wishes.

HORACE DAVIDSON.—You are quite right. The Public Prosecutor ought to tackle the Railway Companies for placing the Bible in their waiting-rooms. Many of its passages, as you say, are too obscene for indiscriminate reading. But there is no likelihood of such a prosecution being started, for Bible filth is privileged in England.

A. J. MARRIOTT.—Received. Will look through it as soon as possible.

J. R. WHITELL.—The edition you refer to is fairly good, but you should get Professor Bury's new edition of Gibbon if you can. The volumes are sold separately; you can buy one at a time.

RECEIVED.—Crescent—Two Worlds—Lucifer—Blue Grass Blade—New York Times—Torch of Reason—Der Arme Teufel—Free-thought Ideal—Tongues of Fire—Open Court—Ethical World—Birmingham Mail—New York Truthseeker—Public Opinion—Boston Investigator—Progressive Thinker—Sydney Bulletin—Liberator—Free-thought Magazine—Isle of Man Times—Secular Thought—Birmingham News—New York Journal—People's Newspaper—Liverpool Weekly Mercury.

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

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

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

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.

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

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

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.

### SUGAR PLUMS.

THERE was a capital audience at the Athenæum Hall on Sunday evening, when Mr. Foote lectured on "Souls, Spirits, and Ghosts." This evening (December 18) Mr. Foote lectures again from the same platform. Mr. Watts will preside, and say a few words of farewell on the eve of his departure for America. Mr. Foote's subject will be "The Babe of Bethlehem: A Christmas Fairy Tale." Incidentally he will deal with Professor Ramsey's new book on *Was Christ Born at Bethlehem?* This book is a "vindication" of the historical character of Luke's story, and very much needs a vindication itself.

Mr. Watts has altered the date of his departure for America. He intended to sail on Wednesday, December 21; but, as he was informed there is some doubt if the steamer he had selected to go in would leave on that day, he has taken passage on the *Aurania*, which leaves Liverpool on Saturday afternoon, December 24. Mr. Watts will leave Euston Station by the special boat train at 10.50 Saturday morning, and he hopes to arrive in New York on Sunday January 1.

During Mr. Charles Watts's visit last week to Scotland he lectured at Paisley and Motherwell to good and highly appreciative audiences. Friends came several miles to say good-bye to Mr. Watts before his departure for the United States and Canada. We are pleased to hear that the Motherwell friends are getting on exceedingly well. They hold their weekly meetings, which are well attended, and at which original papers are read and discussed.

Last Sunday Mr. Watts lectured three times in Liverpool, to the best morning and afternoon audiences he has ever had in that town. In the evening the hall was packed. Several questions were asked, and some opposition offered. All the meetings were very enthusiastic, and many good wishes were expressed for Mr. Watts's safe voyage to America and his early return.

The Annual Congress of the American Secular Union, held at Chicago, appears to have been fairly successful. Mr. John E. Remsburg was re-elected President, and Mr. E. C. Reichwald continues as Secretary. We hope the Union will gain many new members through Mr. Watts's tour in the States.

Ingersoll's lecture in the New York Academy of Music is given prominent notice in the *Journal* for Monday, November 28. There are three illustrations of Ingersoll's oratorical attitudes—all caricatures. Then follow a few of his most pointed epigrams. Next come a lot of "opinions" from ministers of the Gospel. One of them says Ingersoll is not worth answering; another says he cannot discuss with Ingersoll, because "to do so would be dignifying him." Thus they drivel on to the end of the chapter.

The Freethinkers are bravely "holding the fort" at Deptford Broadway. More tumult was raised by the Christian roughs, including "Happy Jack," last Sunday, and an attempt was made to rush and break up the platform. However, the Secular party held their ground, and closed their meeting in good order.

Of course the Birmingham Branch is profiting by the bigots' advertisement. This is admitted by the *Mail*. Mr. Willie Dyson, of Sheffield, gave good addresses to large meetings on Sunday. Every copy of the *Freethinker* was cleared out at the bookstall, and there was a demand for more.

We have received a report and balance-sheet from the committee of the Truelove Tributary Fund, to which the N. S. S. subscribed £5. £72 18s. 3d. has been subscribed altogether, of which £36 14s. has been paid to Miss Truelove, and the balance, less £3 for expenses, remains in the hands of the Treasurer, Mr. Alfred Marsh, 62 Pentonville-road, N. Mr. Truelove's health improved in spite of the doctors' fears, and he was able to be removed to the seaside. He is now in his eighty-ninth year, and we are glad that his last days are rendered as comfortable as possible.

This is how the New York *Truthseeker* refers to Mr. Watts's approaching visit to the land of the Stars and

Stripes: "In further support of the Anglo-American moral alliance, and to cement the good feeling between the tight little island and the greatest country on earth, one of the British Lions is coming over this winter to help the Eagle in its fight against the Church, whose symbol is the snake." Our contemporary says "he will do good wherever heard," which is a statement we are not prepared to contradict.

The *Freethought Magazine*, edited by H. L. Green, Chicago, is well up to the mark in the December number, which opens with a fine portrait of Kate De Peatt, an American lady Freethinker, which is followed by a capital article from the pen of Elizabeth Cady Stanton against the use of the Bible in the public schools.

Editor Moore, of the *Blue Grass Blade*, Lexington, is still enlivening the public with his racy writing, but it is a pity that he is so fond of running amuck amongst his fellow "infidels." He seems to detest Ingersoll for no other reason than that the Colonel is a successful orator and not a Prohibitionist. He also digs away at the *Truthseeker* and *Secular Thought* in the most reckless fashion. Brother Moore should really devote his talents and energies to fighting the common enemy.

Mr. F. J. Gould paid a lecturing visit to the Chatham N. S. S. Branch on Sunday, and was much pleased with the brave spirit he found amongst the members, who have worked so hard, first in building their hall, secondly in maintaining it, and thirdly in improving and redecorating it. We regret that Mr. Gould's lectures did not appear in our last week's list. The notice was sent to us too late for insertion.

The East London Branch had a very successful social gathering at the King's Hall, Commercial-road, on Sunday evening. The place was crowded to overflowing, the stage and off-rooms having to be utilised for tea-tables, and all the tables having to be cleared away to make room for those who attended the concert. There was a long program, including songs by Edith Light, Lily Crystal, and Ernest Pack; a flute solo by G. Balchin, and piano selections by Mr. Wright. Mr. John Warren's absence through indisposition was much regretted. Mr. G. W. Foote arrived from the West-end a little before ten o'clock with Mrs. Foote, and was enthusiastically welcomed. He read Marc Antony's oration over the dead body of Cæsar. A vote of thanks to the artistes was moved by Mr. Haines, seconded by Mr. Thurlow, and carried with acclamation. Altogether, it was far and away the best gathering of the kind ever seen in East London, thanks in good measure to the indefatigable exertions of Mr. M. Loafer.

### AN OUTFIT FOR THE NEXT WORLD.

At a town between Paris and Dijon a vestry clerk employed in the local church heard a noise in the cemetery (says a *Telegraph* message). He then saw a man named Penisson rolling a wheelbarrow containing a coffin towards an open grave. The clerk asked the man what he was going to do, whereupon Penisson calmly replied that he was tired of existence, and intended to bury himself alive near the side of his father. Hearing this, the clerk resolved to go for the local mayor, in order to take combined action with him about the lunatic. In about half an hour the two men entered the cemetery, and went towards the place where they saw Penisson's wheelbarrow. They found that the coffin had been lowered into the grave. They descended into the pit, and tried to open the lid, which resisted their efforts. It was fastened inside, and they next used a pick, and with it lifted up the lid by their joint efforts. The lunatic was laying down in the coffin, but as soon as the cover was taken off he jumped up, clambered out of the grave with the greatest celerity, and ran away. Penisson has not since been seen. The inside of the coffin was comfortably lined with wool, and in it were a dictionary, a prayer-book, Penisson's record of military service, a certificate of his good conduct, and his savings bank account.

The Co-operative Socialistic Community, which was established in the neighborhood of Vancouver (B.C.) by certain ardent British reformers, has completely collapsed, says a New York telegram to the *Morning Post*. The losses of the promoters of the scheme are declared to be not less than £30,000. The Colony seems, from the outset, to have attracted numerous idlers and ne'er-do-wells, and these have managed to live at the expense of the industrious members of the community. There have recently, too, been many deserters, and the experiment has throughout been a disastrous failure.

### THE "FREETHINKER" AND "PICK-ME-UP."

A CONTRIBUTOR of ours who signs himself "Mimnermus" has been writing a series of "Prehistoric Peeps." The fourth of these appeared in the *Freethinker* for November 9, and was entitled "The First Policeman." Three weeks later we inserted in "Book Chat" a paragraph sent us by a friend of this same contributor. It may be found on page 765 of the *Freethinker* for November 27, and it ran as follows:—

"This paper suffers from the Press boycott. This has, however, never prevented rival editors from stealing our ideas. Our esteemed contributor, 'Mimnermus,' has published in our columns a series of 'Prehistoric Peeps.' A recent 'Peep' was entitled 'The First Policeman.' A fortnight later *Pick-Me-Up* paid us the compliment of publishing an imitation—'Pre-History: the First Policeman.' We apologise to the editor of *Pick-Me-Up* for having dared to anticipate his thoughts in this way."

This paragraph has elicited an indignant letter from the editor of *Pick-Me-Up*, who demands an apology. This gentleman says that he has never been under the necessity of stealing anybody's ideas, and that, so far from borrowing from the *Freethinker*, he has never seen a copy of this journal. His letter also contains some splenetic observations which we need not reproduce.

We have looked into this matter personally, and we find that the mere statement of fact in our "Book Chat" paragraph is quite accurate. Our contributor's article did actually precede the similarly entitled one in *Pick-Me-Up* by a fortnight, and the similarity is certainly curious, but we cheerfully accept our contemporary's assurance that it belongs to the chapter of undesigned coincidences. We may add that the similarity is confined to the titles. Our contributor did not achieve the preternatural task of anticipating the "thoughts" in *Pick-Me-Up's* article. We apologise to our contemporary for giving publicity to such a suggestion.

### HARK! THE HERALD ANGELS SING.

#### A CHRISTMAS HYMN, "ANCIENT AND MODERN."

HARK! the herald angels sing—  
Bloody strife Christ comes to bring.  
Peace on earth and mercy mild—  
Battlefields with corpses piled.  
Joyful all ye nations rise—  
Damn each other's limbs and eyes.  
With the angelic host proclaim—  
War and bloodshed in His name.  
Hark! the herald angels sing—  
Bloody strife He comes to bring.

Christ by highest heaven adored—  
Comes to earth to bring a sword.  
Late in life behold Him come—  
King of beggars, dregs, and scum.  
Veiled in flesh, the Godhead see—  
Sowing seeds of misery.  
Pleased as man with man to dwell—  
Making of this earth a hell.  
Hark! the herald angels sing—  
Racks and stakes He comes to bring.

Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace!—  
Neath His banner kill and fleece.  
Light and life to all He brings—  
Maxim guns and other things.  
Mild He lays His glory by,  
Born that "infidels" may fry.  
Born to make the sons of earth—  
Kne the day that gave Him birth.  
Hark! the herald angels sing—  
Devil take the "new-born King!"

ESS JAY BEE.

The National Women's Christian Temperance Union, which has just held a convention in St. Paul, declines to assume the burden of redeeming the Willard Temple in Chicago, which is heavily mortgaged. The Temple has been a white elephant ever since the Rev. Dr. Rusk was expelled from it for inviting Ingersoll to his pulpit.

## READER HARRIS'S "CASE AGAINST ATHEISM."\*

MR. READER HARRIS is a gentleman who combines the lucrative duties of a Q. C. with the not altogether unprofitable occupation of running "the Pentecostal League," a sort of miniature Salvation Army, engineered in the especial and exclusive interests of the third person of the Holy Trinity, who, but for Mr. Harris's crazy revivalism, would stand a good chance of being forgotten altogether by the rest of Christendom.

The worthy Q. C., the "General" Booth of the Pentecostal League, usually confines himself to lecturing his fellow Christians on their shortcomings and failures. He is filled with the Holy Ghost, they are not; hence the Pentecostal League. But now he has kindly bestowed his attention on the benighted Atheist, whom, on page 34 of his book, he calls a fool (in the Scriptural sense, he is careful to explain), whatever that may mean. He leaves the believers *pro tem.*, and attacks "Unbelief," which is, he says, "the mother of all sin" (p. 22).

May I suggest to Mr. Reader Harris that, in future, he will do well to confine himself to the platform of Exeter Hall? His addresses are admirably adapted for Y. M. C. A.'s and Mothers' Meetings. They are not worth the consideration of an intelligent thinker. They will only amuse every Freethinker who comes across them. But then our lecturer or author does not believe in argument. On page 22 he says: "Give up arguing and take to accepting." That is so much more convenient—for Reader Harris.

The Preface informs us that these addresses are printed in order to "stem the tide of scepticism." We are glad to have it confirmed from the hero of Exeter Hall that there is "a tide of scepticism." And if Mr. Harris likes to play the rôle of Mother Partington and her broom, that is his business. The tide of scepticism will roll on all the same. Mr. Harris opens his first address with a testimonial of himself—by himself. He says: "Seldom, if ever, in the history of modern Christianity, have these great questions been approached, as they will be here, from the standpoint of Christian perfection" (p. 8). Hear, O Heavens! and give ear, O earth! Reader Harris is a perfect Christian. In the first place, our perfect author "proposes to prove the existence of a God, and, in the second, to bring our readers into personal acquaintance with him" (p. 8). It does not occur to the militant Q. C. that, if he were to satisfactorily demonstrate his second proposition, he need not waste any time over the first.

He proceeds "to prove the existence of God" by an argument entirely worthy of Paley's Evidences. "I am. Who caused me? Adam. Who caused Adam? God." The sceptic might legitimately ask, Who caused God? Mr. Harris does not entertain the possibility of such a dilemma.

The next argument is: "That the perfect order of the universe is a proof of an omniscient intelligence." Such trifles as cyclones, earthquakes, tidal waves, epidemics, &c., do not disturb the equanimity of the argument.

Mr. Harris next calls himself as a witness, and declares that God reigns in his soul. This declaration, he expects, will be sufficient to bring the hardened sceptic to his knees, and to "accept" salvation forthwith. Unfortunately for our author, sceptics are not exactly lunatics, or they might be inclined to "accept" on such "evidence" as this. Mr. Harris undertakes to remove the unbeliever's "difficulties." This he does by affirming that "pain, suffering, and sorrow are from the devil." Where the devil is from he does not say, or why the devil there is a devil at all.

Mr. Harris asks: "Suppose all men were Atheists, what would London be like?" Well, as it is, Mr. Hugh Price Hughes says London is the wickedest city in the world. "Suppose all men were Christians, what would London be like?" asks Mr. Harris. Indeed, we tremble to think. Fancy four million Reader Harrisises. Heaven forbid!

Mr. Harris quotes two texts to prove the immortality of the soul, and affirms that the Bible is perfectly plain on this subject and never contradictory! I commend Mr. Harris to Ecclesiastes iii. 18-22. But, there, what is the use of pointing this out to the Apostle of Pentecost, for he is filled with the spirit, and consequently cannot see contradictions, for hear him: "To-day, under the light of the Spirit of God, I see no contradictions in the Bible" (p. 48).

"Where will you spend the next ten hundred million centuries of your existence?" asks Mr. Harris (p. 32). Why only ten hundred millions? Why not fifteen hundred millions? This, says our magician, is a matter that very probably will be settled by the answer you give to this appeal, which is a polite intimation that, if you don't accept Reader Harris's gospel, you will go to hell!

"The Pentecostal League is a wide-world union of praying believers who have learnt something of the miracle-working power of prayer" (p. 46). Well, they tried it on the Sultan of Turkey when he was butchering Armenians; but I have not yet heard of the conversion of the Sultan to Christianity.

Again: "No one can fully understand the written word of God till he has the incarnate word of God abiding in his heart" (p. 60). Therefore, if you find errors, contradictions, etc., in the Bible, rest assured that you do not understand it. You must stifle your reason and crush your intellect before you can ever hope to comprehend the Impregnable Rock.

Mr. Harris devotes a whole chapter to proving that "there were twenty-four hours interpolated into the history of the world on Joshua's long day" (p. 82).

The final chapter is on "The Divinity of Christ," in which our author advances the astonishing argument "that the very failings and corruptions of the Church prove the divinity of its founder" (p. 89). The greater the corruption, the greater the divinity! With this precious extract we may well close this very brief *résumé* of a book that is too stupid and weak to impose on even a child. If Atheists wish for an hour's amusement, they cannot do better than read this book. I am sorry to say it will cost them a shilling.

ARTHUR E. ELDERKIN.

## MEDITATION MONKHOUSE.

## A STORY OF THE SECOND COMING.

His real name was not "Meditation," but Michael Monkhouse. That, however, was a detail of little consequence to his ungodly acquaintances. They rose superior on that point to his parents and sponsors in his baptism. It pleased them to call him "Meditation" for fun, and occasionally "Mad" for short.

He was, it must be confessed, a somewhat eccentric gentleman. Nevertheless, his piety was beyond dispute. He kept, at the time of which I write, a small shop in the Borough. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that that excellent lady—the hard-working and not unnaturally-anxious Mrs. Monkhouse—really kept the "Noted Fried Fish Emporium," as her husband grandiloquently described it on the sign which stretched itself above the shop-window front.

Mr. Monkhouse, having purchased the business and set it going, had other fish to fry than that which was dispensed across the counter. The oil he chiefly occupied himself in consuming was midnight oil, which he burned at such a rate as to quite unfit him for the ordinary duties of the day. He excused himself on the ground that the "still small hours" supplied the only period of peace and quietude requisite for the stupendous problems on which he was engaged.

In earlier years Monkhouse was sufficiently 'cute and industrious. But soon after the establishment of the Emporium his interest in mundane affairs underwent a remarkable change. It did not, it is true, suffer any diminution, but it took a new direction and shape. He began now to regard himself rather as an interested spectator than as an active agent in sublunary concerns. This occurred about the time he joined the "True and Reformed Ecclesia of Danielites."

The Danielites, according to the description of Mrs. Monkhouse, were a "set of long-haired, long-eared idiots." In the eyes of Mr. Monkhouse, they were the sole depositories of the most startling and portentous truths. He meditated all day on their interpretations, prognostications, and signs, and sat up nearly all night to work out the puzzles that their doctrines presented. A change speedily manifested itself in his outward man. His iron-grey hair he allowed to grow in long and shaggy tangles; he cultivated a patriarchal beard, and hung upon his lank body a suit of rusty black, which carried about in its folds and creases a more than sufficient abundance of the grease and odor belonging to his ostensible trade. His long and solemn visage, his air of abstraction, and his general inattention to business became, in time, the subject of remark, and "Meditation" Monkhouse found himself before long a person of local, and not very enviable, notoriety.

But what did that matter to him? He knew the mystic

\* *The Case Against Atheism*, by Reader Harris, Q.C.

meaning of the "ten horns" of the Apocalypse. He had worked it out with anxious thought and much devout prayer, with the friendly assistance of the True and Reformed Ecclesia of Danielites. There was little else now to live for but to watch that fulfilment which he felt sure was not only inevitable, but imminent.

"My dear," he started on one occasion to explain to Mrs. Monkhouse, in the retirement of their little back parlor, "the ten-horned beast" —

"Ten-horned fiddlesticks!" interrupted his irate partner; "come and help me to fry the fish."

"But, my dear, let me at least explain to you that the eleventh Little Horn" —

"Don't talk to me about eleven little horns. Little horns, forsooth. You've got seven little horns of your own here. And the agent has been three times for the rent."

"Meditation" Monkhouse groaned in spirit. Alas, his "horns," great or little, were not "horns of plenty."

"And the fire insurance agent," pursued his relentless spouse, "has given notice that the premiums are so long overdue that the policy is lapsed. That comes of your seven-headed beasts. If their heads aren't any better than yours, then God help 'em."

"What do we want with ungodly, unbelieving fire insurances?" demanded the Danielite, now rising somewhat in wrath. "Don't I tell you that the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ is at hand? Have I not fought and wrestled it out with that pious and precious vessel, Presiding Brother Jennifer? The Day of Judgment is at hand —"

"Yes," observed Mrs. Monkhouse, "there are three judgment summonses on the mantel-shelf."

"Oh, these unbelieving women!" exclaimed Monkhouse, snatching up his hat in utter despair. "Far better is it to dwell in a corner of the housetop than with a brawling woman in a wide house." Emphasizing the "wide house" by barking his shin against a table in his twelve-foot-wide apartment, he flung out of the shop, determined at least to shake its dust off his feet, if he could not quite dispel its aroma from his apparel.

On a certain Sunday evening, two or three months later, there was a special gathering of the Ecclesia at the little Bethel which they hired. Brother Monkhouse was announced to deliver himself, on this occasion, of an exceptionally important discourse. It was known that he had been wrestling with the topic day and night for more than a month past. He had even been seen rushing bare-headed along Newington Causeway as if in pursuit of somebody or something that he meant to capture, or perish in the chase. He narrowly escaped being "run in" at the police-station, where the only "second coming" they know of implies a previous conviction. Fortunately, he was recognised and rescued by a neighbor in the nick of time. A light now burned regularly in the back parlor of the Emporium long after the witching hour. In vain did the lady of the establishment, first coaxingly and then indignantly, shout downstairs to her recalcitrant husband to find his way to bed. Long and unceasingly, in spite of all expostulation or worldly appeals, he labored on with texts, maps, histories, newspapers, hieroglyphics, chronological tables, and charts.

Daniel could hardly have experienced greater agony in the lions' den than he occasioned "Meditation" Monkhouse in that back parlor, where he was always getting within an ace of a solution, only to find it evade his grasp like one of his own slippery eels. John, at Patmos, was not more delirious "in the spirit" than Monkhouse was intoxicated with the hope that, sooner or later, he would successfully "work it all out."

The Ecclesia, on this memorable Sunday night, was agog. There was a full attendance of the brethren. The bare, white-washed walls of the little Bethel had rarely beheld a gathering so full of expectancy and subdued excitement. Presiding Brother Jennifer had a look upon his grave visage which clearly betokened foreknowledge of something unusually important and quite unique.

Brother Monkhouse, though really the central figure of observation, sat on his right, with clasped hands, and eyes steadfastly fixed on the ceiling. It was noticed that he looked more hairy, gaunt, and careworn than the brethren had ever seen him before. But his pale, drawn countenance was devoid of any indication of what was passing in his mind.

Prayer and praise after the manner of the Danielites, and some introductory remarks by the President, being over, Monkhouse rose slowly to his full height of six feet two, cleared his long, thin throat, and oracularly commenced: "Presiding Brother and my dear Brethren of the Ecclesia of True and Reformed Danielites, in the name of God, Amen. To-night I purpose to unfold to you, after much prayer, anxious thought, and self-communing —"

"Rats!" The exclamation proceeded from a juvenile interloper near the door, who was at once hotly pursued into the outer darkness.

"No, my dear brethren," resumed Monkhouse, with his

eyes still on the ceiling, and looking somewhat aggrieved, "it is not rats. Brother Mumpus may call it rats, if he pleases —"

"The Presiding Brother: "But it was not Brother Mumpus. Pray proceed."

Though still somewhat discomposed, Monkhouse resumed. First of all, he asked his Danielite brethren to bend their minds upon the "healing of the deadly wound" of the seventh governmental headship of the Roman Empire, prophesied in Revelation xiii. 3.

Here twenty Bibles were hurriedly turned over for the text, as though the Ecclesia had never seen it and pondered over it a thousand times before.

The seven-headship, Monkhouse continued, had been supposed to be the Napoleonic dynasty "wounded to death by the sword of war" in 1815, and again "wounded to death" in 1870. Why wasn't it dead? Because it was to be "healed of its deadly wound." Then the wound, it might be said, was not deadly. Of course not; but in explanation of that he asked them to consider Daniel vii. 24.

Another rustle through twenty Bibles to another well-thumbed spot.

That meant, they had heard, the formation of an invincible Allied Confederacy of the countries of Cæsar's Roman Empire, prefigured by the Ten-horned Wild Beast—namely, France extended to the Rhine, Britain, Spain-with-Portugal, Italy, Austria South of the Danube, and other nations, forming a Decemregal Alliance which would dictate its own terms. According to Daniel vii. 24 and viii. 9 (more rustling in the way of verification), the ten allied horns or king would appoint a Napoleon as an Eleventh Little Horn or King to reign over a little State (probably Macedonia) inside Alexander the Great's former Græco-Macedonian Empire, denoted by the He-goat in Daniel viii.

The Ecclesia hurriedly proceeded to identify the He-goat.

Forthwith, said Monkhouse, this Little Horn would take the place of the King of Syria (one of the ten kings), and make a covenant with the Jews for seven years, according to David ix. 27. That would be the last seven years of this age.

Here another interruption was occasioned by a disturbance at the door. All eyes momentarily turned in that direction. The stern janitor posted at the entrance was perceived to be in deadly conflict with an obstreperous juvenile who was making frantic efforts to force his way in.

Loud murmurs of indignation ensued among the elders at this repetition of lawless and unseemly intrusion.

"Drat them boys!" growled Brother Mumpus. "I wish I had my whip here." Brother Mumpus was a carter, and had been twice fined at the Guildhall for his treatment of aged quadrupeds.

"Withhold not correction from the child," quoted Brother Ezekiel, "for, if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die."

Meanwhile Monkhouse had come to a standstill in his discourse, and like the other brethren, directed his gaze to the door. He saw, at first, a juvenile—hatless, breathless, and very red in the face—writhing and wriggling about the door-keeper's rheumatic legs. The next instant he recognised in the intruder his own youngest son.

As their eyes met, the juvenile gasped out: "Father, I've come to tell you—"

The rest of the sentence was choked by the grip of the door-keeper, who now had him by the throat.

Brother Monkhouse paused for a moment. Then, in his sternest, most deliberate and unflinching tones, gave forth the command: "Remove that boy."

The boy was at once fired out.

Murmurs of approval at this instance of parental firmness ran round the assembly.

"Even as Abraham prepared to sacrifice his son Isaac," whispered Brother Binks.

"My son," was the Scriptural comment of Brother Mumpus, "despise not the chastening of the Lord, neither be weary of his correction." The Brother did not look as if he would be weary of administering any amount of correction.

Order being once more restored, Monkhouse took up the thread of his discourse. He said that all he had so far recited was familiar to them, and firmly believed. But he had to declare that all their previous calculations were wrong—absolutely, hopelessly wrong!

The brethren exchanged glances as who should say, What manner of man is this? In truth, a Daniel come to judgment.

Unflinchingly, Monkhouse continued with the devout acknowledgment in the words of Daniel: "I thank thee and praise thee, O God of my fathers, who hast given me wisdom and might, and hast made known unto me now what we desired of Thee." They were, he said, on the very verge of the final dissolution. The kingdom of God—the second coming of Christ—was close at hand. In their own day, this very year, that very night, he believed they were on the eve of a universal break-up of the existing state of things. Chaos was coming. The doom of the world was at hand. Something unspeakably dreadful was immediately

about to happen. Fire would fall from heaven, the earth's surface would crack and gape, oceans of blood—

Presiding Brother Jennifer, with a note recently placed in his hand, gently tugged the orator's sleeve, but without effect.

"Yes," shouted Monkhouse, now warmed up into a frenzy. "Prepare ye. Fire, I say, from heaven, the world in flames, nations swimming in oceans of blood—"

Presiding Brother Jennifer: "I am sorry to interrupt Brother Monkhouse, but his shop's on fire!"

The excited orator stared around for an instant in tragic amaze. Then he looked in Brother Jennifer's face and at the paper in his hand. Then, with a bound, he leaped from the platform, and in half-a-dozen strides was at the door. The brethren, equally startled, made way for him, and he was lost to view.

In a few moments, however, the door was burst open, and Monkhouse re-appeared. "Don't forget," he shrieked, "fire from heaven, the world in flames, nations swimming in oceans of blood!" With this he finally disappeared.

In truth, the little shop was on fire, and speedily burnt out. And the worst of it was, it was now uninsured. His family and some few belongings were saved. In a short time afterwards they managed to make up another home. Whereupon Monkhouse cooled down, cut his hair, and turned up his sleeves. The Danielites knew him no more. He had been purged by fire. FRANCIS NEALE.

BOOK CHAT.

THE attempts of the newspaper proprietors to introduce the deferred-payment system of bookselling is causing consternation among "the trade." Booksellers had long looked on the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* as an extinct volcano, and their surprise must have been genuine when they found that the *Times* disposed of some seven thousand sets, on the easy-payment system, in a very short time.

Take the example of Messrs. Harmsworth and the "Best Hundred Books." These, again, were regarded as being "worked out," and yet Messrs. Harmsworth bid fair to dispose of their two thousand sets. Competition may be expected, as Messrs. Pearson and Co. are announcing the same series of books at a much lower rate. This has caused some of the publishers to take action, and it is significant that Messrs. Macmillan, a firm of the first importance, offer a new edition of Green's *History of the English People* on the instalment principle.

The fact is, that these unlooked-for results were simply the result of bold and clever advertisement among newspaper and magazine readers, not by any means the usual *clientèle* of the booksellers. The irritation of "the trade" is easily understood. The *Times*, Messrs. Harmsworth, and others, are selling books on a large scale without the intervention of the booksellers. And, in addition, the newspaper proprietors are doing excellent business with books that "the trade" had given up as being almost useless from a commercial standpoint.

We do not hold a brief for either party, but we cannot help thinking that the easy-payment system of bookselling has come to stay. The results will be very far-reaching. What with the drapers' literature at fourpence-three-farthings per masterpiece, and the newspaper proprietors with their instalment system, the poor bookseller is like the man in the tale—between the Devil and the deep sea.

Messrs. Newnes are issuing sixpenny editions of Conan Doyle's *Adventures and Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*, *The Sign of the Four*, and Mrs. Humphry Ward's *Robert Elsmere*.

Mr. Bertram Dobell announces a new and cheaper edition of the Poems of James Thomson at three shillings and sixpence. The forthcoming volume will contain "The City of Dreadful Night" and a selection of the best of Thomson's poetry. This should bring Thomson's verse within reach of a very wide audience, and we wish the new venture every success.

Messrs. Macmillan have issued a really sumptuous illustrated edition of Fitzgerald's Version of *Omar Khayyam*. The designs, which occur on every page, are from the pencil of Mr. McDougall, and reflect great credit on the artist. This new book is published at twelve shillings and sixpence nett, and the issue is limited.

Edward Fitzgerald's great work has been before the world about forty years. Owing to the expensive editions, it is

not nearly so popular as it should be. We hope that Messrs. Macmillan will issue this magnificent poem at a popular price.

Edward Fitzgerald, one of the great poets of this century, was born in 1809, the same year as his friend Tennyson and the great naturalist, Charles Darwin. Curiously enough, his masterpiece was published in 1859, the year of the *Origin of Species*. He died in 1883, having lived for seventy-four years the life of a recluse in Suffolk on the North Sea coast. Like Shelley, he had a great fondness for the sea, and an affection for fishermen and sailors. Fitzgerald began studying Persian in 1853. He then began turning odd stanzas of *Omar Khayyam* into English, and afterwards arranged them in a sequence. The result is only a translation, some four hundred lines long, from a Persian poet who had remained in obscurity for some eight centuries. But Fitzgerald made Omar one of the great English poets, and evermore his version of the old heathen singer will rank with such a poem as Gray's "Elegy," to which it bears some distant resemblance.

Persian scholars tell us that Fitzgerald dressed up Omar out of all recognition. We can well believe it. "A planet larger than the sun which cast it," said his friend Tennyson. The perennial charm of the poem is that it voices the scepticism at the bottom of all thoughtful men's minds, and makes magnificent music of it. Fitzgerald was a vegetarian, and he once nearly killed his friend Tennyson by persuading him, too, to turn vegetarian for some six weeks. Fitzgerald made translations from Jami and other Persian poets, and translated eight plays of Calderon, the Spanish dramatist. He was a delightful correspondent and his letters are charming and very piquant reading on account of their heterodoxy. Tennyson and Thackeray counted him among the dearest of their friends. In his version of Omar this shy dreamer of dreams dreamed one dream more lasting than we ourselves, or he, or the very Suffolk coast he lived on.

An amusing story is told of a certain University professor who was lecturing on Omar Khayyam. Most Persian poetry is full of allusions to wine, and Omar is no exception to the rule. The professor quoted those well-known lines commencing,

O Thou who did'st, with Pitfall and with Gin,  
Beset the road I was to wander in,

and then proceeded to inform his young friends in front that "Omar did not mean the liquor in this passage, but another word for a snare; not but what the old heathen's writings seem to be full of convivial feeling."

THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM.

AN astronomer, in the *Temple Magazine*, argues that we are justified in assuming that the Magi were old men, learned in knowledge of the skies, and skilled in reading the stars for the conclusions which astrology was supposed to teach; they would have been the first to notice any strange appearance in the heavens, but there is no evidence that the star was seen by any others. The evidence is quite the reverse. Herod's state of alarm on hearing of the apparition, and all Jerusalem with him, his calling together of the chief priests and scribes, and diligent inquiries of the wise men what time the star appeared, all show that the Star of Bethlehem was no ordinary phenomenon, but a miraculous light vouchsafed to the Magi only to guide their footsteps towards Palestine. An equal difficulty is found in the text expounding how the star "went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was." A celestial body would share in the diurnal rotation of the heavens with which the Magi must have been familiar, and, though it appeared to stand over Bethlehem at their arrival, would quickly move away. From all that has been said the conclusion is obvious: astronomy has no explanation to give of the Star of Bethlehem. It is impossible to fit any hypothesis to the conditions of St. Matthew's narrative, and we revert to the old belief that the apparition of the Magi at Christ's birth was a vision wholly miraculous.—*Birmingham Mail*.

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## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

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

### LONDON.

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "The Babe of Bethlehem: A Christmas Fairy Tale."  
BRADLAUGH CLUB AND INSTITUTE (36 Newington Green-road, Ball's Pond): 8.30, Animated Photographs.  
CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, C. Cohen.  
EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Bow Vestry Hall, Bow-road, E.): 7, J. Clark, M.A., "The Ethics of Evolution."  
SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Surrey Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road, S.E.): 11.15, Discussion; 7, J. M. Robertson, "The Ethical Dilemma of Theism."  
WEST LONDON SECULAR CLUB (15 Edgware-road): Every evening 7-10.50.  
WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall): 11, J. R. Macdonald, "Prayer."

### COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH (Bristol-street Board-school): H. P. Ward—11, "Thomas Paine and his *Age of Reason*"; 7, "Why Christianity Lasts."  
BRADFORD (Oddfellows' Hall, Thornton-road): 7, J. Hacking, "Land Colonies in Relation to Pauperism and the Unemployed."  
CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday-school; 7, W. M. Thompson, "An Every-day Man's Religion."  
GLASGOW (Lecture Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): 12, Discussion Class, business meeting; 6.30, A. G. Nostik, A lecture with lantern illustrations  
LEICESTER SECULAR HALL (Humberstone Gate): 6.30, H. Snell, "Brutus: Republican and Philosopher."  
LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, Mr. Hammond, "Theology's Last Ditch."  
MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 7, J. Harvey Simpson (Secretary of the Manchester Crematorium), "Cremation."  
SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): J. McCabe—3, "The High Church Movement"; 7, "My Reasons for Leaving Rome." Tea at 5.  
SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, Market-place): 7, Business meeting; 7.30, W. Cook, "Socrates."

### Lecturers' Engagements.

G. COHEN, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton—December 18, Camberwell. January 1 and 8, Athenæum Hall, Tottenham Court-road; 15, Camberwell; 22, Sheffield; 29, Bradford Labour Church, February 5, Glasgow.

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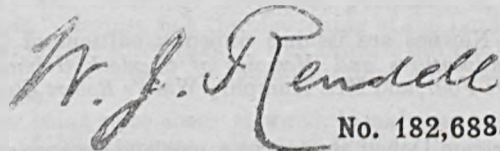
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