

Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

VOL. XIX.—No. 11.

SUNDAY, MARCH 12, 1899.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

The "Freethinker" Question.

AN APPEAL TO THE PEOPLE OF WEST HAM.

THERE is a Frenchman named Dreyfus whose fate has aroused the compassion of the civilised world. He is imprisoned on an ocean rock called the Devil's Island. The only other inhabitants of the island are his gaolers. They do not speak to him except when necessary, nor is he allowed to speak to them otherwise. He was sentenced to this inhuman punishment by a court-martial, which really tried him behind his back. Scarcely anyone believes he was guilty. Apparently he was made a scapegoat in the interest of a gang of forgers and intriguers. They selected him because he was a Jew. The bigotry against Jews was then at its height in France. It was calculated that he would have no friends, and might be sacrificed without a protest. This calculation seemed perfectly accurate at the time, but it contained a flaw. There were some men in France who did not like to see an innocent man offered as a victim on the altar of religious fanaticism. Gradually they spoke out on the subject. Zola, Clémenceau, Jaurès, and others—nearly every one of them Freethinkers—at last raised the standard of revolt against an infamous injustice. Now the Dreyfus case, which was never, never to be reopened, is in the hands of the judges of the Court of Appeal; and it is pretty certain that the prisoner's innocence will be completely vindicated.

Dreyfus's real crime was being a Jew. But that, of course, was not in his indictment. As a member of a hated body, he could be lied against in any direction. Accordingly, having got him under lock and key as a traitor, his persecutors gave out that he was a spend-thrift and badly wanted money, that he drank heavily, that he neglected his wife and children and kept mistresses; in short, that he was a bad fellow, unworthy of the slightest consideration. All these villainous libels have been amply disproved. Dreyfus was abstemious and industrious, a model husband, a devoted father. His wife smiles scornfully at his traducers. She knew his character, and her heart has never swerved or faltered since he was snatched from her embraces. She cherishes and educates her children, and waits with sublime fortitude for her husband's return.

Well, you may say, what has all this to do with the *Freethinker* case in West Ham? Wait a minute, I reply, and you will see.

Let us go back to the beginning of this agitation in your midst. The *Freethinker* had been on your Library tables for years, and nobody seemed to be the worse for it. The death rate had not increased; there was no alarming development of vice and crime. But suddenly a little knot of bigots took it into their heads that West Ham was in terrible danger. They appealed, and appealed successfully, to the latent bigotry of their fellow citizens. Finally, they got the matter brought before the Town Council. Their attempt against the *Freethinker* was, however, defeated by the firm attitude of the majority of the Council, who declined to lend themselves to an act of persecution.

From that moment the bigots pursued a policy of defamation. Every conceivable insult was hurled at the Freethought party in general and at myself in particular. The object was to obscure the real question at issue, and to silence reason by arousing passion.

How could the Town Council or the electors be helped to a wise and just decision by being informed (for instance) that the editor of the *Freethinker* wore a

slouch hat, that he had not signed the pledge, that he did not take mustard with beef, that he haggled with his tailor, that he owed a bill to his washerwoman, or that he had spoken disrespectfully of his mother-in-law? Personalities would not have been raised if I had not been a Freethinker. That must be evident to all men of common sense and discernment. It is one of the most constant lessons of history that the bigot is generally a calumniator.

I cannot hold that the Town Council or the people of West Ham have any right to make an inquisition into my private affairs; and I may add that some of my slanderers, and some of the worst libellers of the Freethought party, would have reason to fear for themselves if I imitated their vulgar example. One minister of religion, unless I am wrongly informed, has been good enough, in the exuberance of his Christian charity, to announce that I have deserted my wife and am living with another woman. If this were true, it would have no sort of relation to the question of whether the *Freethinker* should be read in the West Ham Free Libraries. But it is not true. It is a malicious lie. The wife I am said to have deserted would like to see that reverend traducer, and I fancy he would remember the interview.

Other libels are of a somewhat more public character. It is said that I advocate Free Love. Where and when is not stated. As a matter of fact, I have written and spoken against Free Love, and the Free Lovers call me old-fashioned in consequence. I have said again and again that the sexual relationship of men and women, with the possibility of offspring, is not a private but a social matter, and should be surrounded with social sanctions. I have said again and again that marriage is a necessary and beneficent institution, and that the family is the unit of civilisation. I do not believe this on religious grounds, but on grounds of history and evolution. At the same time, I do not want the constable, the judge, and the gaoler to aid me in maintaining my opinions. Those who differ from me on any social question have the same right as I to be heard, if anyone will listen to them; and I will defend that right when it is attacked; for liberty of thought and freedom of the press are indispensable conditions of the discovery of truth, which in turn is the pre-requisite of all progress. In this spirit I joined the Free Press Defence Committee, when a book by Dr. Havelock Ellis, the famous criminologist, was being prosecuted. Those who parade this fact should be honest enough to state that the editor of *Reynolds's Newspaper* was a member of the same Committee. Other members of it were Mr. George Bernard Shaw, Mr. Herbert Burrows, Mr. Grant Allen, and Mrs. Mona Caird. And who but a rabid bigot would dream that such men and women were apostles of obscenity?

The word "indecent" has been bandied about. It is even said that the *Freethinker* is indecent. Now this is about the most elastic word in the English dictionary. It may mean anything, from eating with a knife, instead of a fork, up to something which is punishable by imprisonment. I had to complain of the free use of the words "indecent" and "indecent" when I was prosecuted for "blasphemy" in 1883. In my speech to the jury, in the Court of Queen's Bench, I warned them against being prejudiced by the introduction of this vague and odious word. Lord Chief Justice Coleridge, in summing up, dealt with the same point, and this is what he said:—

"Mr. Foote is anxious to have it impressed on you that he is not a licentious writer, and that this word does not fairly apply to his publications. You will have the

documents before you, and you must judge for yourselves. I should say that he is right. He may be blasphemous, but he certainly is not licentious, in the ordinary sense of the word; and you do not find him pandering to the bad passions of mankind."

Those who have not read the *Freethinker* are invited to listen to this responsible utterance of the Lord Chief Justice of England, rather than the irresponsible utterances of angry bigots and professional partisans. It is monstrously absurd to say that there are articles in my paper which are unfit for young people to read. Sexual questions are not treated in its columns. The "young people" are merely introduced into this discussion for the purpose of raising prejudice by suggesting falsehood. Moreover there are some pietists with jaundiced vision who see offensiveness everywhere. I gave my daughter the other day a copy of Charles Lamb's beautiful *Tales from Shakespeare*, and someone outside the family told her it was not a proper book for a young girl to read. And the curious thing is, that the fastidious pietists see nothing objectionable in the crude—even gross—language of some portions of the Bible. Everyone knows that the Bible contains passages which no minister could read out to a mixed congregation, unless he were prepared to see all the women leave the church, and to find all the men waiting for him outside. But there are no such passages in the *Freethinker*.

It has been repeatedly stated by more or less professional Christians in your local press, and it was reiterated by one of the speakers of the miscellaneous deputation which waited upon the Town Council, that the National Secular Society—of which I have the honor to be President, in succession to the late Charles Bradlaugh—is responsible for the teachings of a book called *The Elements of Social Science*. Now this is another impudent falsehood. That book was first published, I believe, some fifty years ago; the National Secular Society has been in existence for considerably more than half that period; and I want to know at what Annual Conference, or at what Executive meeting, during the whole of that time, this Society has assumed any kind of responsibility for that volume. During the eighteen years that I have conducted the *Freethinker*, I believe I have only referred to the book twice, and that in the ordinary way when a new edition was sent me for review. It is a long time since I turned over its pages, but, as far as I recollect, it covers a vast deal of ground. I daresay I should agree with many of the writer's opinions; from others I know that I strongly dissent. But I am not going to discuss his views at present. What I am concerned to say is that I am no more responsible for his book than I am for the Bible. Nor is the National Secular Society any more responsible for it than I am.

Allow me to remind you that the *Freethinker*, like every other journal, must stand or fall by its own contents. You are not called upon, merely as citizens in your civic capacity, to decide whether Secularism is true or false, or whether the *Freethinker* advocates sound or unsound principles. Such questions must be left to individual determination. Even the *Catholic Herald* condemns the censorship which is being set up by members of your Town Council, aided and abetted by a coalition of intolerant religionists outside. It points out that a variety of opinions are promulgated through the press, and a Free Library will necessarily contain publications that are offensive to this or that section of the community. If a censorship is to be maintained, where will it end? A Christian objects to the *Freethinker*—quite naturally, for it is meant in one sense to be objectionable to him. A Secularist may equally object to the *Christian Herald* or the *Methodist Times*. If you exclude one paper because it annoys some ratepayers, you must in common fairness exclude another paper because it annoys other ratepayers; and if this were carried out logically the Library tables would soon be in a state of desolation.

The Vicar of West Ham told the Town Council that the *Freethinker* contained "much that is deeply irreverent to our Lord." Such language is perhaps appropriate in a church; it is certainly out of place on a Town Council. What have the Councillors, as such, to do with "our Lord"? They represent citizens of all varieties of opinion—Secularists, Agnostics, Deists, and Jews, as well as Christians. Canon Pelly was really

delivering a trade harangue as a clerical protectionist. Nor was the Rev. J. H. French, representing the Nonconformists, any better. He quietly assumed that morality and purity depended upon Christianity, and then begged the Town Council to exclude the *Freethinker* as an enemy of morality and purity because it opposed Christianity. Father Osmund was just as bad on behalf of the Catholics. He declared that the *Freethinker* "robbed the young generation of belief in God and the hope of a future life." But what on earth has the West Ham Town Council to do with God and a future life? Father Osmund wants municipal assistance in maintaining the first principles of his religion. Surely this is an impudent request. All this priest is entitled to is freedom to teach his own faith. That I should be the last person in the world to deny him. But I claim the same right to teach Freethought. I do not seek to silence him; and why should he seek to silence me?

These gentlemen tell you that my paper lacerates their feelings. Well, it cannot do so unless they read it; and if they will read it, the fault is their own. They tell you that my paper is "offensive." Perhaps they will kindly tell me how it can be made inoffensive—to them. What they really object to is the very existence of a journal which appeals to common sense against their profitable mysteries. They are afraid to live and let live. They want to muzzle their opponents. You, however—at least I hope so—will instruct them that liberty is higher than any man's belief, and that even-handed justice must be dealt out to all convictions. You will teach them that Town Councils are not auxiliaries to churches and chapels, and that the most powerful sects must bow to the principle of religious equality.

Such was the position assumed by the majority of your Town Council on two occasions. The motion for putting the *Freethinker* behind the screen was twice defeated. It was then resolved to poll the borough on the whole question; but it was discovered that this was a very expensive, and perhaps illegal, way of advertising my paper; and in the chaos which ensued the majority fell into a trap, and accepted the very compromise which they had all along been resisting. I notice that "Proletaire" in the *Herald* calls it a "master-stroke." Will it appear so, however, on due reflection? It is always possible to avoid defeat by deserting one's principles, but it cannot be made heroic by saying that one "stooped to conquer." This compromise is, from every point of view, indefensible. It is not even rational. If the *Freethinker* corrupts on the table, it corrupts behind the screen; and if it is fit to read in one place, it is fit to read in another. I do not wonder, therefore, that an effort is contemplated to rescind that hasty resolution of February 28, and I hope it will succeed.

"Proletaire" complains that the National Secular Society, which has some of the most trained and effective speakers who ever mounted a platform, has rendered the Labor members no assistance in fighting the bigots. He forgets that assistance was not asked, and did not seem necessary. Moreover, the Society did not wish to obtrude itself and fan the fire of party passion. It was best that the question should be dealt with from the point of view of citizenship. For my part, I think the Labor members made a mistake in agreeing to receive religious deputations against a Freethought journal; and that blunder seems to me to have directly led to the wretched catastrophe.

Let me, finally, entreat you, people of West Ham, to take warning by the Dreyfus case. Think what a penalty France has paid, and is still paying, for yielding to the passion of religious bigotry. "Down with the Jews!" was an appeal to the slumbering fanaticism of the Middle Ages. "Down with the Freethinkers!" is a similar appeal to passions that must be extinguished if we are to have a real, durable, and dignified civilisation. None of us is infallible, and can never be sure of any opinions we hold unless we allow them to be tested in free and open debate. Let us practise intellectual hospitality. Let us give all ideas an equal chance. What is false will then die of itself; what is true will flourish, and conquer all minds by its own invincible power.

G. W. FOOTE.

Morals and Unbelief.

THE moral status of professed sceptics has always been a stumbling block in the way of Christian apologists, and a puzzle to the more simple, but probably more honest, class of believers. To see the unbeliever delighting in everything vicious is what most believers would expect to discover, and many of them pleased to find. It is when those who have openly rejected all belief in Christian doctrines are yet found, not merely doing their duty as individuals, but frequently indicating the road to a higher truth and purer ethic than are offered by the current religious creed, that the believer finds himself confronted by a state of things quite undreamed of in his philosophy.

In dealing with the morality of unbelievers Christians have had, and still have for that matter, three arguments. First it was said the unbeliever is always immoral, and professes unbelief as an excuse for his ill-living. It was never quite clear why a man who wished to do evil should adopt unbelief in order to carry out his intentions. Certainly there are more opportunities for one to do wrong as a supporter of Christianity than as its adversary. In the one case he may meet with secure condemnation, while an action that is due merely to the "weakness of human nature," when committed by a sincere believer in Jesus, is apt to become a certain sign of conscious depravity when perpetrated by a Freethinker. And it is simply idiotic to assume that a man calls himself an unbeliever to escape the restraints imposed upon him by Christianity. A man may pretend to believe, and his pretence may deceive others, but it is utterly impossible for a man to pretend to himself that Christianity is false, while at the same time cherishing a conviction that it is true. In this direction at least deception is an impossibility.

The second position taken up is that Freethinkers would be bad if only they carried out all their beliefs to their logical conclusions. This argument appears in its most plausible form in the writings of Mr. W. H. Mallock and Miss Francis Power Cobbe, the former of whom, in his book, *Is Life Worth Living?* and the latter in an essay on *A Faithless World*, draw up a lengthy list of the virtues that are doomed to disappearance once people surrender the belief in God and a future life. And even in the hands of two such able writers as these all their arguments amount to in the lump is that, because both of them regard the belief in God and a future life as the basis of morality, therefore all who are without such beliefs must be immoral, or would be immoral if they only viewed their position in the right light. But it is just this position, taken for granted by these and similar writers, that is contested by the unbeliever. He is firmly convinced that so long as we are members of a common society, sharing a common nature, and animated by fundamentally the same desires, the distinction between right and wrong, truth and falsehood, vice and virtue, can never be lost, however much we may see reason to revise our judgments concerning special instances. At any rate, none of our critics inform us just which one of our principles, carried to its logical conclusion, would produce these demoralising results, and meanwhile there is the comforting reflection that Freethinkers are the last ones to draw from their principles such conclusions as Christians deduce.

And this fact gives rise to the third position—namely, that if unbelievers are generally as good as believers, and sometimes even better, this must not be attributed to the influence of their intellectual convictions, but to the fact that they live in a Christian environment, which corrects certain evil tendencies that would otherwise manifest themselves. The latest expression of this view that has come under my notice is from the Rev. J. L. McGregor, of Wishaw, and formed the staple of his reply to a lecture of mine delivered in the same town. The local paper reports him as having said that whatever virtues sceptics possessed could not properly be regarded as the result of their beliefs. "George Eliot, Huxley, Darwin, and Morley were themselves saturated with Christian ancestry, and were themselves saturated with scripture teaching and the ethical principles of Christianity. No man in this country could put himself

outside the stream of Christian ideas and say what kind of life a full-blooded Atheism would produce."

I do not know that it would be necessary to notice the Rev. Mr. McGregor at all; but, as in this case he is only echoing an argument by men who deservedly rank high in the literary world, it may be necessary and not altogether unprofitable, to pay some little attention to it. The first thing that strikes one about this argument is that it has the unfortunate quality of proving too much. If present-day Freethinkers are the outcome of a Christian ancestry, Protestants were equally the outcome of a Catholic ancestry, as Christians generally were the outcome of pagan predecessors. Therefore one might with quite as much force say that whatever is good in Protestantism has been derived from a Catholic ancestry, which was in turn derived from a pagan ancestry; and, as the pagans themselves were not without ancestors, we are referred further back still for whatever goodness they manifested, and in the end we are left wondering how on earth there can be such a thing as progress at all. Obviously each generation must lift itself above its ancestors to some extent, or such a thing as improvement would be an utter impossibility. And when we bear in mind that the impeachment of Christianity by Morley, Mill, and George Eliot was made quite as much in the name of a purer ethic as upon purely intellectual grounds, the absurdity of the plea must become manifest to all but theological special pleaders. Mr. McGregor's plea is simply the stupid attempt of a clergyman to explain away a phenomenon the existence of which goes a long way towards abolishing the necessity of his existence.

It would be quite easy to rejoin, and far from difficult to justify, such a rejoinder that, far from the goodness of sceptics being the result of their Christian training and environment, the comparative purity of modern Christian teachings, and the much more liberal and civilised behavior of Christians, are due principally to the influence of the few that *have* succeeded in liberating themselves from "the stream of Christian ideas." And this is not only true of matters of conduct; it is equally true of intellectual subjects. During the whole course of the last five hundred years there is not a single intellectual achievement, not a single truth in science or philosophy, that has not had to struggle for existence against Christian feeling and Christian tradition. "The stream of Christian ideas" was with Ptolemy, and against Copernicus; it was for a flat earth, and against a round one; for whipping devils out of lunatics, and against viewing mania as the result of a purely nervous derangement; for miracles, and against uniformity; for creation, and against evolution. And there is no reason why one's examples should pause here. The list might be extended indefinitely. Mark! it is not a question of whether the Bible was understood rightly; it is a simple question of what was Christian feeling on the subject of progressive ideas, and to that there can be but one answer. Always and everywhere we find Christian opinion supporting a false view of the world against a true one, and visiting with all the penalties that religious malignity could devise, or Christian barbarity enforce, all who had managed to shake themselves free from the superstitions of the ages.

The verdict is quite as decisive if we turn to matters of Christian belief. Surely no one will pretend that it was the influence of a Christian ancestry and environment that has made Christians ashamed of their doctrine of eternal damnation. The literature of Christianity, prior to our own day, is filled with glowing accounts of the torments of hell that are the divine penalty of unbelief. The greatest names of the Christian world, Catholic and Protestant, dwell with competitive exultation upon the sufferings of the damned. The official creeds still retain it, *logical* Christianity demands it, and if there is to-day a growing sense of shame among Christians on account of its existence, it is not because they are the heirs of a Christian ancestry, but because even the churches are not unaffected by the growth of a more intelligent, a more humane, but a less Christian spirit.

Take, again, the case of religious persecution. If there is one point upon which the Bible, the New Testament, the Catholic Church, and all shades of Protestants have displayed a deplorable unanimity, it is upon the morality of persecution. It is about the

only subject on which Christians have agreed. None have denied the necessity of forcibly suppressing heresy, all have indulged in its exercise as opportunity offered, the only question at issue between the various sects being, in whose hands should rest the power to persecute. How is it, then, that this intolerant feeling has of recent years undergone such a marked diminution? Certainly not by appealing to Christian literature, or to Christian opinion. How far the common feeling of the Christian world is averse to an enlightened tolerance of conflicting opinions daily experience amply proves, while the bare list of the names of those that have stood forward as the champions of freedom is enough to show that it is only as people have been able to lift themselves clear of the "stream of Christian ideas" and prejudices that a more enlightened feeling has grown up, and modern believers have become ashamed of carrying on the policy of their predecessors. Not that the lesson has been thoroughly learned even to-day. Recent events show only too clearly that this is not the case. But, at least, persecution is no longer preached as a religious duty. To-day persecution is cloaked under a thousand hypocritical guises, prominent among which is a professed concern for public morals that is as morally insincere as it is intellectually detestable.

There is, of course, a sense in which the activity of the present is always more or less of an expression of the past. I have dealt with that matter at sufficient length in these columns to obviate the necessity of my dealing with that aspect of the case in the present instance. But, instead of the progressive ideas of one generation being the outcome of the influence of its predecessors, it is frequently this very influence that has to be fought against. The past is always more restrictive than imperative, and in religion, more so than in other matters, it is the influence of the past that has to be beaten down before improvement is possible. Every reformer in religious matters has always found an opposing force in "the stream of Christian ideas." Whatever influence Christian traditions have had has invariably been for evil rather than for good.

Mr. McGregor tells us that we have had no opportunity of judging what kind of society would be produced by a people who were all Atheists. Precisely so, and in this respect Christianity has an advantage over Atheism. But I imagine that this is an advantage that a great number of Christians would be quite willing to dispense with. Unfortunately for Mr. McGregor, the period during which we can study a society created and ruled over by a "full-blooded" Christianity, the seven hundred years following the accession of Constantine the Great, was exactly the period of civilised history when intellectual life was lowest, morality weakest, human life least secure, and the general outlook most hopeless. And it was not until the power of Christianity was broken by a succession of daring thinkers, who paid the penalty of their hardihood with their life's blood, that the world underwent any material improvement. We cannot point to any society that has been ruled by Secularistic ideas, but we can point to many that have reaped the benefit of their presence. We can show, moreover, how advanced ideas have always originated with the least, and been resisted by the most, Christian section of society; how freedom of thought and speech, increased purity of life, and truthfulness of speech have always been forced upon the Churches from without. And, finally, in the lives of Mill, Darwin, Bradlaugh, and Spencer we can point to men who, rejecting all Christian beliefs, have not only taught the religious world how to die, but, what is vastly more important, how to live.

C. COHEN.

The Progress of Science.

MR. GEORGE JACOB HOLYOAKE, who is one of the most discriminating Freethinkers of the present day, has very pertinently remarked: "All nature cries with one voice, 'Science is the Providence of man.' Help lies not in priests, nor in the prayer; it lies in no theories, it is written in no book, it is contained in no theological creed—it lies in science, art, courage, and industry." This rational view of Providence has been confirmed by the lessons of modern civilisation, for, while the old notions of a theological Providence prevailed, humanity

was devastated by calamities as appalling as they were fatal. The providence of science, however, appeared, and proved its ability to accomplish for man what all other "providential" theories had failed to secure. This is undoubtedly a scientific age; upon science and its judicious application we rely for the panacea of the physical defects to which we are exposed. It is therefore gratifying to us to know that during the present century the progress of science has been such as to throw into the shade all the preceding ages since man first appeared on the earth. And it is equally gratifying to recognise that this scientific advancement has been made, in spite of a persistent theological opposition, during the most rationalistic period of human history.

It is not that merely more discoveries have been made within the last few decades than during the same period in any earlier time; but what is really encouraging is that research has been carried further, and that the conquests over nature's forces have been greater during the present sceptical century than in all the previous centuries since human life began. And, as a consequence of this, such revolutions have occurred in thought and opinion as must appear startling to anyone who contemplates them seriously and calmly. It is not necessary here to refer at any length to the discovery of the power of steam, and its application to locomotion and the various branches of industry; or to the marvellous development of electricity, destined in the not very distant future to become an applied force the beneficial results of which cannot be foretold. Then we have the advance made in photography, the telephone, and numerous other things, which are all now regarded as ordinary events. This progress is so marked that it makes the world, when contrasted with its condition a hundred years ago, look as though some wizard's wand had been waved over it, whose magic touch had changed nature as rapidly and as effectually as a transformation scene takes place in a pantomime. But the point deserving of special attention here is the swift advancement of thought that has resulted from these discoveries in science, and the opening, by its aid, of the great arcana of nature.

The science of geology, at first sneered at and ridiculed by those who saw that its teachings were unmistakably opposed to the faiths that had so long been cherished as bound up with what was held to be infallible truth, and then opposed by all the violence that the most intolerant bigotry could display, soon came to be recognised as being based upon well-established facts, which no opposition could gainsay and no sophistry overturn. As a consequence of this, old opinions had to be cast to the winds, and the theories that had done duty so well in earlier and darker ages have been banished to the oblivion where lie buried so many errors of the past. Men who had a few years before contended, with a degree of dogmatism as positive and vehement as any to which the history of the most benighted ages had borne witness, that the earth could not be more than six or seven thousand years old, now came to recognise the fact that millions of ages ago it had been running its course as now. They also maintained that they had known this all along, and that there was nothing in it contrary to the early views held on these matters. So strange a being is man that no inconsistency was seen in this sudden change of front, and this complete desertion of their own camp for that of the enemy. Of course we make no complaint of this fact; we only chronicle it as a mark of progress—an indication of the signs of the times. The antiquity of man and many other kindred subjects have had the same fate as geology, and now evolution itself is seen to be quite in harmony with the teachings of records which had declared in unmistakable language—if language has any meaning—that all organic beings were the result of a special or supernatural creator.

All this proves that science is the king of thought, the moulder of opinion, and the guide of mankind. It does its work modestly, but very effectually. It moves without the sound of trumpets or the clamor of noisy controversy; but it moves all the same, and conquers every opponent. Denunciation is a weapon which it disowns; persecution it leaves to its antagonists, and bigotry it countenances not. Its history is not written in blood, and no tears of widows and orphans follow in

its train. It has proved itself to be the benefactor of man, the consoler of those who suffer, the alleviator of pain, the promoter of peace, and it will, if wisely used, do more than all else towards bringing about the true brotherhood of man.

The progress that has been made in physical science in recent times has resulted, not only in the remodelling of opinion on the subjects that fall immediately within the province of the researches pursued in external nature, but it has completely revolutionised thought upon numerous subjects lying to some extent quite outside the pale of physical experiment and investigation. Newer and more correct views of the physiology of the brain have led to great and important changes in psychology. The motives from which actions spring, the nature of the human will, the mystery of mentality, the laws of thought, the phenomena of cognition, and, what is of greater importance, the scientific rule of right morals, have all had a flood of light thrown upon them by Evolution. Indeed, as Mr. Herbert Spencer has shown, this principle operates everywhere, and covers the entire range of human knowledge. Then, too, the discovery of the doctrine of the conservation of energy, and the bringing to light the fact that law operates everywhere, have thoroughly changed men's views regarding the miraculous, the display of alleged supernatural power, and even the conception of God. Theology is no longer defended on the old lines; and professed Christians themselves have felt compelled to relinquish all their old positions, and to sweep away the ancient landmarks of their faith, which was once deemed as stable and fixed as the granite peaks of the Andes.

Philosophy and science, if not one, are twin brothers, and to properly understand the one it is necessary to become a diligent student of the other. Just as the old forms of theology have been exploded, so have the musty systems of metaphysics, on which the ancients so prided themselves, been, we hope, for ever dissipated. For this progress we are indebted to science. Therefore, in the words of the poet, we say:—

Blessing on Science. When the earth grew old,
When faith grew dotting, and the reason cold,
'Twas she discovered that the world was young,
And taught a language to its lisping tongue;
'Twas she disclosed the future to our view,
And made old knowledge pale before the new.

CHARLES WATTS.

Moses Hoge's Bibles.

MEN become celebrated on very whimsical accounts. One of the Popes is well remembered because he was choked by a fly, though he never wished to earn a place in the roll of fame by so undignified a method. Stupid Eratostratus sought notoriety by burning the Temple of Ephesus. Simeon the Pillar Saint thought himself entitled to an immortal name because he sat on the top of a stone column for thirty-seven years.

Moses Hoge did none of these things. He was not choked by a fly; being a strict Presbyterian, his capacity for swallowing was perfect, and when he took in the story of the Six Days' Creation he was not likely to strain at a gnat. He set no Temple on fire; he put too high a value on priestly buildings. Nor did he settle on the capital of a pillar, for he was quite incapable of taking so elevated a view of men and things. What he did do in order to gain an everlasting record in the Book of Life (with a supplementary notice in the *Freethinker*) may be gathered from an obituary notice in a recent issue of the *Times*:—

"The death is announced, in his eightieth year, of the Rev. Moses D. Hoge, D.D., of Richmond, Virginia, U.S.A. The vehicle which he was driving was upset by an electric street-car, and the injuries he thereby sustained proved fatal. Dr. Hoge was the leading minister of the Southern Presbyterian Church, and a few years ago celebrated his jubilee as minister of his congregation in Richmond. He was a prominent figure during the War of Secession, and was in close touch with the leaders of the secession movement. As chaplain to the Confederate camp at Richmond he was so deeply impressed with the want of Bibles in the army that he ran the blockade and came to London, where he was introduced to the late Earl of Shaftesbury, the then president of the British

and Foreign Bible Society. Through his lordship's influence a grant of Bibles and portions of the Bible, numbering over 300,000 and costing £4,000, was obtained, and almost all were carried by blockade-runners safely to their destination."

Now this brief narrative kindles my imagination as follows:—

Dr. Hoge walks anxiously up and down behind the grim redoubts of Richmond. He soliloquises:—

"Negro-slavery is good, war is better, but the Bible is best. A man may be a slave-owner, and yet not have the root of the matter in him; if he could be persuaded to read the Bible, and study the curse which Noah laid upon Ham the African, he would seal the glorious practice of nigger-driving with the sacred confirmation of Holy Writ. A man may fight well under Jefferson Davis, but he will fight with ten-fold more pluck and stamina if he draws inspiration from the pages of Scripture. The Bible is the handbook of militarism, written and edited by the God of Battles. There is a soldier-like spirit in the Books of Joshua, and the Book of Kings is full of appropriate texts for an army chaplain. What a disadvantage the Confederate cause suffers in this dearth of Bibles! Thousands of the defenders of Richmond are deprived of the consolation of the story of the Destruction of Sennacherib. Many of them, perhaps, never knew the thrill of admiration which excites every right-minded Christian on perusing the history of Jael. Terrible reflection! that so many hundreds of poor creatures should be snatched from the imminent deadly breach into eternity without having ever adequately realised the tragic significance of the Ten-horned Beast, or the poetic charm of Jonah's contemplation (from the inside point of view) of the Great Fish's anatomy. How many myriads of Lincoln's rascals have Bibles enough and to spare, and the men of Richmond perish with hunger! This long-felt want must be supplied, and I will supply it."

Moses Hoge forthwith goes down to the sea in a ship. Across the Atlantic the chaplain fares in faith and hope. England has Bibles. It is well known that great numbers of the English people possess Bibles which they never read, and if, under pain of capital punishment, they were bidden to say whether Isaiah or Jeremiah came first in order, swarms of them would have to be hung. Here, then, Moses Hoge will find the stream of charity in copious flow; for people are always ready to give away what they do not want themselves. To the good Lord Shaftesbury the chaplain makes his pathetic application. Lord Shaftesbury, born before the days of Biblical criticism, completely misunderstands the Bible, and is therefore enthusiastic in admiration of its contents, and passionately desirous of spreading his own delusions. His lordship readily approves the idiotic proposal, and Dr. Hoge has the gratification of discovering that he is not alone in his folly. Then follow committees, sub-committees, motions, amendments, riders, and reports. How many Bibles shall be sent?

"Gentlemen," urges the apostolic Hoge, "your honourable Society—British in its piety, and Foreign to all rational modes of thought—never had a better opportunity of pleasing its subscribers, giving employment to printers and bookbinders, and of bringing the Bible to the knowledge of ignorant Christians. Every volume you dispatch to Richmond may mean one more Confederate added to the throng of the immortals. If, amid the gloom of defeat, our men are consoled by the enchanting narrative of the Ten Plagues of Egypt; if, in the hour of victory, they find a congenial theme in the episode of Samuel hewing Agag in pieces before the Lord; if wounded men lie in the hospital, and brighten the hours of convalescence by reading the apocalyptic chapters which describe the Seven Lost Woes and the Bottomless Pit, yours, gentlemen, will be the glory, and to you will be the reward."

The enthusiasm waxes.

"Mr. Chairman, I propose the gift of 10,000 copies of the Holy Scriptures to the Confederate army."

"Let us be more liberal—20,000!"

"Think of these poor souls dying on a Christian battle-field without a proper appreciation of the beauties of Habakkuk! I say 50,000!"

"Gentlemen, if the Song of Solomon is good for Great Britain, it is equally good for America—100,000!"

"Only 100,000! There are myriads more in the

Southern army, and ought we to let a single soldier be blown to pieces before he has read, marked, learned, and inwardly digested the adventures of the Gadarene pigs?"

"Or the history of Samson's hair!—200,000!"

"Or the stoppage of the solar system when Joshua issued an injunction?—300,000."

And so, thanks to the British and Foreign Bible Society, and to the simoleonity (if I may coin the word) of the British public, the books are duly packed in bales and cases on board a blockade-runner. Moses Hoge paces the deck as the vessel runs down the Channel, and cuts its perilous course towards Richmond. He proudly reflects on the fact that he carries a bigger cargo of unreason than any ship that ever crossed the main before. Not that (mark you) I believe the Bible to be a book of unreason, but because Moses Hoge's mode of regarding the Bible was utterly unscientific and puerile. What on earth was the good of presenting troops, engaged in war, with copies of fifty or sixty old Jewish and Christian pamphlets and tale-books? What the Confederates needed was not Hebrew literature, but a better cause to fight for. But I am digressing.

As the Bible-ship nears the coast of Virginia, Moses Hoge grows anxious. Cape Henry is passed, and he begins to breathe more freely, when, one fateful dawn, a Federal man-of-war appears within alarmingly easy range.

Full steam ahead! This is the most critical moment of Moses Hoge's life, and the salvation of the Confederates hangs in the balance. The brutal Federals are preparing to fire. If they miss, Moses Hoge may succeed in carrying to Richmond—to poor, unlearned, Christian Richmond—the books which will reveal to the Confederates how once an ass spoke to a man, and the mouth of a beast uttered wisdom to obstinate Balaam!

Boom! boom!

Missed; and missed again! On, champions of Leviticus, even if the boilers burst!

Moses Hoge's face lights up with sanguine expectation. Every volume on board is like a lark's egg; it contains a potential song; and, if all goes well, the song of Balaam's loyal companion will carol forth from each book and subdue the Confederate nature to thoughts sublime.

Boom!

Missed again! We are safe up the James River. Moses Hoge, thy work is accomplished! Rest now in thy glory, noble initiator!

And the Confederates shall hear the mellow bray.

F. J. GOULD.

Are the Filipinos Anxious for the Bible?

THE American Bible Society is our immediate authority, and "a Christian young man in the United States army at Manila" is its authority for the statement that the people of the Philippines "are anxious to receive the Bible"; and to show just how anxious they are he tells this little story:—"Some Bible distributors went up to the terminus of the railroad with about one thousand gospels, and after distributing about half of them from the car window on the way up, they attempted to pass the remainder out to people on the streets; but a crowd collected, and they were forced to go into a Chinese shop and bar the door and pass the books out through an iron-barred window."

All this is circulated with the idea of inducing people to give the Bible Society more money with which to pay high salaries to officers of the Society, and incidentally to print a few more of the books.

Just who these new American citizens are who are so ravenous for the gospel that they trample all over the distributors thereof, in their eagerness to get the new bread of life, is revealed very briefly and graphically by Senator Daniel, of Virginia, in a speech he made on February 3, when the peace treaty with Spain was under consideration in the Senate. Mr. Daniels obtained his information from the *Democratic Magazine* for January, in which was printed a compilation summarised from the books that have been recently written on the subject. After reading his description of the population of the islands, one can form a pretty good idea of the amount of truth there is in the statements sent out by the Bible Society as to the eagerness of the natives for copies of the Bible. For, in the first place, we must bear in mind that most of the population which ever heard of a book are

Catholics, and we all know how much the average Catholic cares for a Bible! Unless all the Catholic population has suddenly dropped Romanism and become believing Protestants, those of that creed should be deducted from the great crowd which besieged the Bible distributor so closely. And if there is anything in the descriptions of the remainder of the native population which leads one to think that the statements of the Bible Society are true, they must be possessed of the faith which would remove mountains. For this is the official description of our new Americans:—

Negritos (Aeta), aborigines; twenty-five thousand of them scattered through the archipelago, with no fixed occupation; in religion classed as pagan. They are dwarfish in stature (four feet eight inches average), with Negroid features, hair, and color; tattooed; go nearly naked, in roving bands, subsisting on honey, wild fruits, and roots. That they should be eager for the Bible is apparent.

The Tagals and Visayos number respectively three millions and two and a half millions, and they are Catholics. They are field hands, day laborers, servants, agriculturalists, and small traders. The Tagals are tall and well formed, with flat noses and round heads. By preference they inhabit the lowlands, living in pile dwellings, are musical, lazy, and superstitious. The Visayos are more of a negro cast, and are described as *very* lazy, vain, fond of fine clothes, cigarettes, and betel nuts. Sort of a cross between a monkey and a man.

The Moros, of whom there are three hundred thousand, are Mohammedans. They are tall and strong, rather savage. This class includes all the Malays not converted to Christianity, and are similar to Tagals, except as to their superstitions. Their partiality for the Bible is, of course, great, as is that of all Mohammedans.

The next lot is the best of the lot, and they are pagans. They are called Igorrotes (Igolotes). They mostly live in the Island of Luzon, in the mountainous districts, and are described as dirty and repulsive in appearance, but as being the most industrious and moral of the native tribes, and monogamists, which, being the case, it would seem to be bad policy to introduce the Old Testament to their notice as a guide in marital relations.

The scattered tribes—some two hundred—are of mixed religious faith, Pagan, Catholic, and Mohammedan. There are over thirty languages officially recognised, and sixty dialects have been counted. The American dialect is not among them.

There are some two hundred thousand Chinese in the islands, and they are put down as Buddhists, which is not a sect to call *very* loudly for the Bible. As for the Chinese-Mestizos, immoral mixtures of Chinese-Malays, there are some four hundred thousand, and, as might be expected, they are mixed in their religious notions, being divided in superstitious adherence between the Catholic and Buddhist faiths.

There are some ten thousand Spaniards in the islands, employed in the army, navy, and church; about fifty thousand Spanish-Mestizos, immoral mixture of Spanish father and Malay mothers; and about five thousand other nationalities—German, English, French, American, aside from our army recently sent there. These are, it is to be presumed, about as Bible-hungry over there as they would be at home.

If the Bible Society will say it appeals to the public because it desires to impose its men and book upon the inhabitants of the Philippine Islands, it will make a perfectly honest statement; but to say it appeals because the natives are anxious for the book is to tell a lie; and it is currently reported in church circles that liars have their part in the lake of fire and brimstone kept burning by the ministers to make the people shell out.

—*Truthseeker* (New York).

Blasphemers.

The hackneyed and lavished title of Blasphemer—which, with Radical, Liberal, Jacobin, Reformer, &c., are the changes which the hirelings are daily ringing in the ears of those who will listen—should be welcome to all who recollect on whom it was originally bestowed. Socrates and Jesus Christ were put to death publicly as *blasphemers*, and so have been and may be many who dare to oppose the most notorious abuses of the name of God and the mind of man. But persecution is not refutation, nor even triumphs: the "wretched infidel," as he is called, is probably happier in his prison than the proudest of his assailants.—*Byron, Prefatory Note to "Don Juan."*

It is ascertained beyond a doubt that the plague in India is spread mainly by religious pilgrims and rats. A bounty of half an anna each is now paid for slain rats, but nothing as yet for slain pilgrims. Sanitation in India moves slowly, impeded by the prejudice of the people.—*Ambrose Bierce.*

Will you not agree with me that there is one comprehensive Church, whose fellowship consists in the desire to purify and ennoble human life, and where the best members of all narrower Churches may call themselves brother and sister in spite of differences?—*George Eliot.*

Acid Drops.

The Ritualist party is in open mutiny. The Church Union, with Lord Halifax at its head, denies the right of Parliament to control the doctrine and discipline of the Church. Good! Excellent! Magnificent! The day of Disestablishment is all the nearer.

Archbishop Magee almost longed for Disestablishment to stop the monkey-tricks of the Ritualists. "It will very nearly drown us," he said, "but it will kill the fleas."

"Providence mustn't take Mr. Kipling just now," said a New York journal. Well, it hasn't; but it has taken his daughter Josephine, to whom he was deeply attached, and when he is strong enough to learn the news he may almost wish that he had died in her stead. Mrs. Kipling is a sorely tried woman in these terrible circumstances, and we do not envy the believers in "Providence" their task of reconciling the ways of God to his "children."

Walton Powell, the infidel-slayer, who perpetrated that infamous libel on the Hall of Science, for which his "pals" had to pay damages and costs, has done his term of imprisonment for criminally assaulting young girls at Bristol, and is now under fresh arrest for bigamy. A long report of the case appears in the Bath Herald. Eva Francis Brown, whom he married at Bath in 1882, telling her that his first wife was dead, alleges that she "suffered cruelties innumerable" at his hands during his fits of ill-temper and drunkenness. She was about to present a petition for divorce when she discovered the register of his first marriage to Mary Jane Howell at Newport, Monmouthshire, on October 25, 1876. It is alleged that Powell deserted his lawful wife a few months after he married her. According to other evidence tendered, he is a most romantic villain, having been up to all sorts of dodges and passing under all sorts of aliases. The magistrates refused bail, and said he would be remanded from week to week until his first wife was able to attend the court.

This fellow Powell's speciality as an anti-infidel agitator was denunciation of the "immorality of Secularism." He would pretend to read out dirty passages from Freethought works, and the Christian riff-raff who crowded around applauded him to the echo. Finally, he uttered that incredibly filthy libel on the Freethought party at the Hall of Science, which was probably a reminiscence of his own infamous career. We always warned our readers against attending his meetings or having anything to do with him, but our warning was not always heeded. Without mentioning his name, we alluded to him again and again as a born criminal. He belonged to a type which is common in the experience of criminologists. There is no mistaking it. Nature's brand was plain upon the brute, and those who did not see it must have had very poor eyes in their heads.

It is really curious what a number of Anti-Infidels have done time, and some more of them deserve it. Parodying a phrase of old Bishop South's, we might say that Anti-Infidelity usually finds a man a blackguard or leaves him so.

The Rev. George Mackey, and other West Ham slanderers of Freethought, ought to club together and publish a true Life of this Walton Powell. No doubt it would immensely help their crusade against the Freethinker. They might count upon our assistance if necessary.

The West Ham Herald prints a correspondence between Mr. Charles Hughes and the Rev. G. Mackey. Mr. Hughes writes us that the published correspondence is incomplete, the most important letter of all being purposely omitted.

William Maxwell McClintock, an actor, has been sent by the Westminster magistrate to an inebriates' home. During his attack of delirium tremens he jumped out of a window in a state of nudity to escape the evil spirits that were pursuing him. He won't see any more of them for twelve months.

With regard to marriage with a deceased wife's sister, the Bishop of Sodor and Man writes: "I must frankly avow that, so far as Biblical argument is concerned, I have always failed to convince myself that there is any scriptural prohibition of the marriages in question." We should think not, indeed. Jacob, whom God loved, married two sisters without waiting for a funeral.

A wave of bigotry seems flowing all over England. Chester is the place that is now visited. Mr. Percy Ward's lecture bills are objected to by an anonymous correspondent in the Chronicle. What is worse, the editor adds that "Chester stands to lose or gain in reputation as the citizens go to, or abstain from, Mr. Ward's lectures." It must be admitted, however, that the wording of this declaration is somewhat oracular, and may be read in at least two different ways. Perhaps, after all, the Chronicle editor is a sly humorist.

We very much regret to hear that the Chester N. S. S. Branch is in danger of losing its Sunday meeting-place through the efforts of the local bigots. What a tribe these Christites are! They want the world to themselves. We wish they would go home to heaven. If they must stop here, they might as well cultivate a little decency in the presence of others who think for themselves.

What the papers call a disgraceful scene took place at Gorleston in connection with a Kensit crusade meeting. The vicar occupied a front seat and helped on the row. There was a jolly free fight, and the Christians showed how they love each other.

An artist was engaged to furnish a memorial window in a Syracuse church. He put in one angel without wings, and the widower refused to pay the bill. The Supreme Court of New York will have to decide whether angels must have wings. The Dreyfus case is nothing to it.

"Providence" does not seem disposed to shift the plague from Bombay. This is what the Morning Post reports from Bombay city: "The mortality has been rising for some weeks past, and is now worse than at the time of any previous epidemic. The total number of deaths from all causes in the course of last week is 2,309, and of these 972 are officially returned as plague deaths. This calculation is absolutely unreliable, however, as no effective system of registration of the causes of death exists, and hundreds of plague cases are concealed. Reckoning the deaths from normal causes at 600, all those in excess of this number may be regarded as deaths from plague. The official death rate for the week is 139 per 1,000 a year. In the presence of this appalling mortality the natives are patiently resigned, appreciating the absence of stringent Government measures."

Notice the patient resignation of the natives. They don't mind dirt, disease, and death. They only object to a violation of their superstitious observances.

Why do people put their hand before their mouth when they yawn? They may think they do it from politeness, but the real origin of the custom was entirely different. The hand was meant to cover the chasm and prevent evil spirits from entering. The Vicomte de Poncens, in the Nineteenth Century, giving an account of his experiences in Abyssinia, says that when he was at court he saw the Negus yawn, and "all those around him spat vigorously to drive away the evil spirit that might have profited by that unguarded moment."

Professor Schell, Catholic professor at the University of Würzburg, is guilty of heresy, and his writings have been placed on the Index Expurgatorius. He is, however, the object of great ovations from the students, to whom he declares, "You will always find me ready to serve the truth." Some expect him to become a second Döllinger. He is not at all intimidated by the steps taken against him. Vatican thunder is not as destructive as it used to be.

Rev. Henry Meynell, formerly Prebendary of Lichfield Cathedral, was charged at Dawlish with committing an unnatural offence. The case was dismissed owing to the magistrates being divided in opinion.

The Edinburgh Evening News reports a comic incident at the morning service in a large and well-known local church. A baptismal ceremony was going on, and the minister put the regulation question to the father: "Do you undertake to bring up this child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord?" "Don't, father!" exclaimed a child's voice, upsetting the gravity of the congregation, and compelling the minister to shorten the service. The boy had been left in a pew by himself, and he resented the whole proceedings.

The Forest Gate Liberal Association refused to display a bill of our Stratford Town Hall meeting, although a Town Councillor was announced as chairman, and several other Councillors were in the list of speakers. A certain Councillor, who talked hypocritically about his "feelings" being hurt by the Freethinker, has displayed at the Association's premises a business announcement that he is agent for an insurance society. Not bad for a member of the "One Man One Job" party, seeing he is also a schoolmaster. It is to be hoped that this matter will be raised at the annual meeting in April.

Table Talk publishes a cartoon of a small boy plaguing three ladies and a curate. He learns that liars don't go to heaven, and that everybody lies more or less, and remarks: "Well, it must be lonesome up there with only God and George Washington."

General Shafter's address to a Presbyterian Club in Washington shows how profoundly he has studied the Old Testament. "My plan," he said, "would be to disarm the natives of the Philippine Islands, even if we have to kill half of them in doing it; then I would treat the rest of them with perfect justice." Probably he meant Presbyterian justice.

verage Catholic population has believing Protes- to closely. And remainder of the t the statements ossessed of the is is the official usand of them ed occupation; rfish in stature features, hair, ing bands, sub- at they should y three millions tholics. They ulturalists, and rmed, with flat habit the low- azy, and super- cast, and are hes, cigarettes, monkey and a l thousand, are rather savage. orted to Chris- to their super- urse, great, as y are pagans. stly live in the icts, and are , but as being ve tribes, and seem to be bad ir notice as a are of mixed edan. There ed, and sixty dialect is not hinese in the hich is not a the Chinese- ys, there are xpected, they ded in super- ldhist faiths. i the islands, fifty thousand h father and : nationalities om our army sumed, about home. ublic because nhabitants or honest state- s are anxious e reported in ce of fire and ce the people mer—which, c., are the n the ears of who recollect s and Jesus and so have ost notorious e "wretched prison than Vote to "Don e in India is A bounty of nothing as slowly, im- ierce. prehensive s purify and bers of all nd sister in

Preaching at Eccles, the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes said that "At the age of thirteen he had a personal interview with Jesus Christ." So says the local *Journal*. What we should like to have is Jesus Christ's account of that interview. We should also like to know at what age Mr. Hughes interviewed Ananias.

The *Catholic Herald* is wiser than some of its co-religious contemporaries. The following leaderette on the West Ham scandal is taken from its last week's issue: "We cannot think that the Catholic clergy and laity of West Ham have been well advised in raising an agitation on the question whether or not the *Freethinker* should be taken in at the West Ham Free Library. After the Town Council had decided to allow the paper to remain in the Library, the best policy, in our opinion, would have been to say no more about it. The *Freethinker* is, no doubt, offensive to Christians; its moral, no less than its religious, doctrines are most objectionable to the great majority of the people of this country, and it is not a desirable paper for young people to read. But is it, on that account, wise to give it a gratuitous advertisement? Had it been left to repose undisturbed on the tables of the West Ham Library, very few people would have known anything about it, and probably nobody would have read it, except the few Secularists for whose benefit, we suppose, it is taken in. As it is, the attention of all the inhabitants of the borough has been called to it. This, we think, is a pity. And it must be remembered that in the case of a library supported out of the rates there must be a great deal of give and take. In such a library there must be many papers and books offensive to this or that section of the community, and the particular section of the community must abstain from reading them. For good or ill—and we believe it is on the whole for good—we have the freedom of the press in this country, and that involves non-interference with many publications that are calculated to do harm, especially to young people. We very much doubt whether, even in such an extreme case as that of the *Freethinker*, it is the wiser course to attempt a censorship; and we are of opinion that the agitation in West Ham is likely to do more harm than good."

Compared with some of the Protestant critics, this *Catholic Herald* writer is remarkably moderate. He does indeed say that the *Freethinker* is not a desirable paper for young people to read, but this may only mean that it is an anti-Christian journal. He refrains from using the reckless epithets which so many Protestant bigots have hurled at it, especially down at West Ham.

Rev. T. H. Buckworth, of Barnwell, belongs to the school of muscular Christianity. He has been fined £3 and costs for assaulting Mr. Robert J. Ogilvie, a local grocer. He denied the assault on oath, but the Bench evidently thought he was lying. He admitted writing a letter threatening a thrashing.

St. James's Church school, Northampton, where the local Nonconformists have been obliged to send their children, in spite of all their protests to the Education Department, is severely denounced in the *Daily News*. It appears that the secular instruction given there is barely above the minimum, and that the number of teachers is actually below the minimum required by the Code. Last year the controlling clergyman received no less than £1,636 from the Government, of which only £300 was dependent on efficiency. The Nonconformists demand a Board school, but the vicar is first in the field, and he keeps enlarging his Church school in order to prevent a new one from being built in the district.

Madame Sarah Grand—why not Mrs. ?—has confided to a representative of the new *West End* that she used to be something of a materialist, but all that is altered now. She talks, à la Mrs. Besant, about Jesus and Buddha, and seems on the way to developing into a full-blown Theosophist. What a pity it is that so many literary women begin as Freethinkers and degenerate into superstitionists! Is it a characteristic of the sex, or is it the result of a certain mental and social atmosphere?

Another lady writer, this time a poetess, has apparently gone the same way. Mrs. Nesbit (Mrs. Hubert Bland) used to write "advanced" verses. Then she took to writing about soldiers and sailors and fighting, and quite recently she asked through the press why prayers were not offered up in our churches and chapels for the recovery of Mr. Rudyard Kipling.

Prayers were offered up for Mr. Kipling's recovery, and some American women went quite hysterical over the matter. But the Christian Scientists who volunteered their assistance were treated as lunatics. Trust in the Lord Jesus is all very well as long as it does not take a practical shape. Good doctors and nurses must be engaged anyhow, and the Lord Jesus must act as a makeweight.

To return to Madame Grand. This lady seems to regard Jesus as a sort of Mahatma, who had command over

"psychic force," and thus performed wonderful works which are falsely called miracles. Compared with what can be done by this psychic force—which we suspect to be another name for our old friend Imagination—steam, telegraph, and telephone are "mere toys of the human intellect." Yes, but they are very *useful* toys, which is a great deal more than can be said of this fantastic psychic force. Madame Grand says it can "remove ponderable bodies," and that is what Jesus meant when he talked of removing mountains. Well, why not put it to the test? Let a grain of sand be placed where it cannot be blown away, and let Madame Grand, and, if she pleases, twenty other ladies who believe the same thing, stand a hundred feet off and exert all their "psychic force," and see whether it will shift.

Madame Grand has come to believe in soul and immortality upon "psychic force" grounds. All this means, at bottom, that she has fallen a victim to the superstitious instinct, which is stronger in women even than in men—as priests know in all countries.

Professor Orr, D.D., has been addressing a men's meeting in Albert Hall, Edinburgh. This "men only" dodge is becoming quite hackneyed. Why are not women included? Have they no immortal souls to be saved? And if not, why are they not plainly told so? Is it through fear of emptying the churches and chapels on Sundays? Of course there is another possible explanation. The words "men only" are rather suggestive, and those who attend may expect to hear something "spicier" than they would in a mixed assembly. We quite believe they don't, but the bait serves to catch the fish all the same.

Professor Orr answered a number of written questions on religious difficulties. His way of answering them was what may be called judicious. He classified them, and dealt with them under general heads. By this means he avoided answering any one of them in the distinctive form in which it was put. His general policy did credit to his Scotch caution. Instead of supporting his own affirmations, he threw the burden of disproving them upon the sceptics. If there isn't a God, he said, you must explain the universe without him; just as if the sceptic were called upon to execute such a large order. If Jesus was not God, he said, you must explain Christianity yourself. Thus he went along like the clown in a pantomime putting the red-hot poker into the hands of a poor pantaloon. His concluding piece of advice was quite in keeping with all this intellectual charlatanry. He recommended all his hearers to keep Sunday free from all secular occupations and amusements, and devote themselves to what would bring them nearer to God; that is to say, they should go to the kirk, and help along the business in which Professor Orr and his ordained brethren are engaged. It always comes to that at the finish.

Ingersoll has been "challenged" some hundreds of times, perhaps thousands; and if he undertook to debate with all his challengers he would want an extension of time on this planet, probably as long as that which is alleged to have been granted to Methusaleh. Besides, as the New York *Truth-seeker* says, if the Colonel "stopped to lift into eminence on the toe of his boot every dog that barked at him, he would never get anywhere."

The Wesleyan Methodists are running a Twentieth Century Fund, by which they hope to raise a million guineas for Church purposes. We note in the *Methodist Recorder* a sermon on this inspiring theme by the Rev Dinsdale T. Young, who is quite ecstatic in praise of "this unique and sacred movement." He is so ecstatic, indeed, that he gives a new reading of the old text, "The Lord loveth a cheerful giver." Mr. Young renders it, "God loveth an *hilarious giver*"—which conjures up visions of boys who have put buttons and cough drops into the collection-box.

Mr. Young urges everybody to subscribe to this fund and get his or her name on "the Historic Roll," which he evidently thinks they will keep a copy of in heaven. Nonconformists rail at Catholics, but they practise the same tricks when raising the wind.

Even the children are pressed to get their names on that Historic Roll. A special column is devoted to them in the *Methodist Recorder*. Mention is made of a farmer's boy who said he would take treacle on his bread instead of butter, in order to help his mother to save her guinea. When told that this wouldn't make enough difference, he said: "Well, then, mamma, I will take nothing but dry toast, and save the butter and the treacle." How pretty! Fancy depleting the stomachs and injuring the health of growing boys and girls, so that grown-up laborers in the Lord's vineyard may have full larders! For it is amongst the men of God that most of the money will be divided.

Another page of the *Methodist Recorder* gives a photographic picture of the great Century Fund committee. We can't waste time in counting them, but at a rough guess they must number nearly two hundred. They all look well-fed, and many of them quite plump. Why, oh why, then, do they connive at sneaking little boys' butter and treacle?

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, March 12, Camberwell Secular Hall, 16 New Church-Road: 7:30, "Souls, Spirits, and Ghosts."

To Correspondents.

DURING Mr. Charles Watts's absence from England his address will be, c/o *Truthseeker* office, 28 Lafayette-place, New York City, U.S.A.

FREETHINKER "DEFENCE FUND (WEST HAM).—We have received:—J. F. Jordan, 2s. 6d.; Beelzebub, 2s. 6d.; A.W., 6d.; Mrs. and Mr. James Neate, 10s.; W. Robinson, 2s. 6d.; Mr. Deakin, 10s.; S. Leeson, 10s.; S. R. Battershell, 2s. 6d.; Chatham Secular Society, £1 1s.; W. S. M., 3s.; T. H. Duke, 1s.; J. and A. F. Bullock, 2s.; Hull Branch, £1; Glasgow Branch, 10s.; Thomas Robertson, 5s.; M. Loafer, 5s.; Y.X.Y., 10s.; J. Bradshaw, 2s.; J. G. B., 2s.; J. G., 2s. 6d.; F. and E. Goodwin, 2s.; Anti-Bigot, £1 10s.; Friend, 1s.; J. Martin, 4s.; Richard Johnson, £1; W. H. Barker, 2s. 6d.; Pattie Dye, 1s.; James Crabtree, £1; W. Metcalfe, 2s. 6d.; E. Lawson, £1; Edward Selfe, 2s. 6d.; A. S. Vickers, 1s. 6d.; W. Borrie, 2s. 6d.; E. Lewis, 5s.; G. Langridge, 6s.; William Smith, 2s. 6d.; W. H. Harrap, 5s.; Larner Sugden, 10s.; R. Owen, 1s.; J. H. Bain, 1s.; Richard Green, 10s.; Ex-Ritualist, 2s. 6d.; J. C., 3s.; H. A. Cumber, 2s. 6d.; C. Blyton, 2s.; A. E. Elderkin, 2s. 6d.; Freedom of Speech, £2; James Toope, 5s.; W. Waymark, 2s.; F. Simons, 2s. 6d.; S. Hartmann, £1 1s. *Per R. Forder*:—A. Lewis, 2s. 6d.; R. E. D., 3s. 4d.; A. Bartholomew, 5s.; H. G., 2s. 6d.; G. Calcutt, 1s.

W. D. ROLLEY.—No use asking such blackguards to apologise, and to prosecute them would be a waste of time and money. They would be sure to find some bigoted friends on a jury in Christian England.

L. SMALL writes:—"As seekers for truth we are glad to have our errors exposed, and light flashed into the dark recesses of our minds. We therefore owe a debt of gratitude to W. W. Strickland, B.A., Trin. Col., Cam. But the brilliance of his luminiferous letter has dazzled our eyes, or does he consider a gas is not a fluid? and does he call pewter an amalgam? Is he not 'truly funny,' and should he not take the advice so generously tendered to the *Freethinker* and look to his own science? Any amalgamated society of artisans would help him."

NEW YORK "TRUTHSEEKER."—Please note that our address is 28 Stonecutter-street, London, E.C., and direct accordingly.

OUR AMERICAN EXCHANGES.—Kindly note our intimation to the *Truthseeker*. Some of you keep a very old address of ours on your books. The result is frequent delay and occasional miscarriage. Please rectify at once.

C. HUGHES.—Thanks. See paragraph.

ZENO.—Nothing of the sort. What displeased the Lord was Solomon's taking *foreign* wives, who turned his heart towards their gods. The size of his harem was no offence.

G. E. C. NAEWIGER.—We thank the newly-revived Hull Branch for its prompt and practical sympathy. Will write you on the other matter.

T. ROBERTSON.—Many thanks. The fight is a long way off Glasgow, but it is your fight too, as you see.

M. LOAFER.—Thanks for your efforts on our behalf at West Ham. See "Sugar Plums."

W. COX.—Pleased to hear Mr. Cohen had good audiences on Sunday at Liverpool.

J. BRADSHAW.—Your letter is excellent, but there were enough in type on the same subject already.

S. HARTMANN, N. S. S. Treasurer, sends us a cheque for the West Ham fight, and says that, in his opinion, those who do not help us are traitors to the Freethought cause.

A. F. WALBANK.—We do not know of any such definite passage in the Bible. Paul says that if an angel preached to the Christians any other Gospel than they had received they were not to believe him. Is that what you have in mind?

G. DAWSON BAKER.—You will have a letter shortly, when we get a little leisure for decent correspondence.

RICHARD GREEN.—Pleased to have your warm approval of our action in the West Ham matter.

EX-RITUALIST thinks the course of recent events ought to convince Freethinkers of the necessity of a powerful organisation for their common protection, and hopes the present emergency will result in a considerable increase of the membership of the Secular Society, Limited.

H. A. CUMBER.—We read your letter with pleasure. Thanks.

W. S. CLOGG.—Miss Vance will give you something to do. Thanks.

JAMES CRABTREE.—Thanks. It will be all right, we have no doubt; if not, we will let you know. Mr. Foote is taking as much care as possible of his health.

W. METCALFE.—Yes, the occasion is, as you say, one of the greatest importance.

E. LAWSON.—Thanks for subscription and good wishes for our success.

EDWARD SELF.—A good idea. We are obliged.

A. S. VICKERS.—Sorry we are too busy to hunt up the reference for you. The book was not reviewed, we think; only mentioned in a paragraph.

ABRACADABRA.—Received. In our next.

WILLIAM SMITH.—We had already thought of a proposal on the lines of your suggestion. Thanks for your encouraging letter.

MISS VANCE asks us to announce that the following will supply the *Freethinker* in the West Ham district to those who may find a difficulty in obtaining it:—E. Leggett, 23 Eve-road, West Ham; E. Pankhurst, 51 Stock-street, Plaistow. She also mentions the names of Messrs. Fulcher, Parker, Smith, Gallery, Sharkes, Highe, and Pankhurst as having been very helpful in the local arrangements on behalf of this journal.

J. FISH.—See "Acid Drops." Let us have any further information.

J. R. WHITTELL.—We do not know of any such volume. The facts are scattered over the pages of many books. A chapter upon the subject will be included in the second volume of *Crimes of Christianity*, which we hope to see through the press this summer.

RICHARD JOHNSON, subscribing himself, hopes all who can help financially in the West Ham fight will do so at once.

J. MARTIN.—You will see that the bigots have scored a temporary gain, but they may soon lose it.

PATTIE DYE.—Glad to have your interesting letter. Miss Vance will send you more of the Peculiar People pamphlet if you apply to her direct. You have done well in distributing 330 copies so judiciously.

G. CALCUTT.—Mr. Forder has shown us your letter. Thanks for your good wishes.

A. B. MOSS.—Sorry to hear that your Vestry duties keep you from the West Ham meeting.

W. B. THOMPSON sends a subscription to the West Ham fund on behalf of the Chatham Secular Society, and says: "The committee desire me also to send you their warmest approval of the methods you are adopting in fighting the bigots. We do hope that every Branch and every Freethinker will realise that the battle is for the liberty of all Freethinkers in the country, and provide you with the necessary sinews of war."

J. KERR.—Thanks for the extract. See paragraph.

J. F. JORDAN.—You will have seen the announcement of the West Ham meeting in last week's *Freethinker*.

JAMES NEATE.—Mrs. Neate is quite right. It is pleasant to see husband and wife co-operating in Freethought matters. See acknowledgment. We have not heard of any other Branch than yours intending to run a lecture station in Victoria Park. Surely there is some mistake.

W. ROBINSON.—Thanks. Mr. Forder has sent you the *Book of God*.

MARGARET E. DEAKIN.—We are obliged for your good wishes as well as subscription. You will see the affair has taken a fresh turn.

S. LEESON.—Mr. Foote is in good condition again, and he is never likely to be backward when fighting is on.

RECEIVED.—Edinburgh Evening News—Blue Grass Blade—New York Truthseeker—Chester Courant—Ethical World—Star—Isle of Man Times—Boston Investigator—West Ham Herald—Book Trade Gazette—Public Opinion—Bath Herald—Zoophilist—Freidenker—Lucifer—Progressive Thinker—Sydney Bulletin—Eccles Journal—Freethought Ideal—Der Arme Teufel—El Libre Pensamiento—Western Evening Herald—People's Newspaper—Torch of Reason—English Mechanic—Stratford Express—Forest Gate Weekly News—Liberator—Crescent.

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

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

IT being contrary to Post-Office regulations to announce on the wrapper when the subscription expires, subscribers will receive the number in a colored wrapper when their subscription is due.

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.

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

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.

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.

MR. FOOTE had a good audience at the Athenæum Hall on Sunday evening. This evening (March 12) he lectures at the Camberwell Secular Hall on "Souls, Spirits, and Ghosts." There will doubtless be a crowded attendance.

The Athenæum Hall platform will be occupied this evening (March 12) by Mr. Chilperic Edwards, who will lecture on "The Book of Daniel." This gentleman is a master of Biblical criticism, and has also a pretty humor of his own. He should be welcomed by a large audience.

We have not heard from our wandering friend and colleague, Mr. Charles Watts, for several weeks. We presume he is doing time on the Yankee railroads. According to a note in the New York *Truthseeker*, he is advertised

to debate for four nights at Cincinnati with Mr. Isaac Selby. The dates are March 6 to 10, so we suppose Mr. Watts is at it while we are writing. The *Truthseeker* does not envy Mr. Selby the "contract he has undertaken." Few people would.

Before this week's *Freethinker* is in the readers' hands the public meeting will have been held in the Stratford Town Hall to protest against the attempted exclusion of this journal from the West Ham Free Libraries. Some of the local bigots have been threatening to create a disturbance, and even boasting that they would break up the meeting; and they seem to have promises of support in this holy direction from the Christian Evidence vermin all over the metropolis. But ample precautions have been taken against these exponents of Christian charity.

Unfortunately, the West Ham affair has taken a new and awkward turn. At a Town Council meeting on February 28 the question of the *Freethinker* poll came up, and doubts were expressed as to its legality. It was also stated that the poll would cost several hundred pounds, and this was thought too large a sum to spend on advertising this journal. A perfect hubbub then ensued, in which the Mayor played his part on behalf of the bigots very dexterously. The standing orders were suspended, and an agreement was come to that the *Freethinker* should still be taken in the Libraries, but be kept in reserve, and given out to those who asked for it. The Labor members must have lost their heads for the moment to vote for this resolution. It was the very resolution that was first proposed by the bigots, and which was handsomely defeated. To vote for it at the finish was to throw up the sponge, and confess that all the efforts of the Progressives had been a sheer waste of time.

Fortunately, some of the Labor members see this, and one Councillor has promised to move that the February 28 resolution be rescinded. This would open the question again, and afford an opportunity of its being settled rationally. It is to be hoped that the Progressives will revert to their old position, and maintain absolute justice between the rival parties of religious and irreligious opinion.

The new turn of affairs naturally delayed the issue of Mr. Foote's manifesto. What he had written in view of the poll was inappropriate to the altered situation. Accordingly, he had to wait until Sunday night, when Miss Vance brought him the latest news from West Ham. The manifesto was then written and put into the printer's hands immediately. It makes an eight-page tract, and is well got up. Twenty thousand at least will be required, and perhaps a good many more. The manifesto is being well distributed in the borough. Some of the friends in certain districts are delivering it in envelopes from house to house.

Most of the readers of the *Freethinker* would like to see the manifesto, so we print it in full for their benefit. It will be found on another page.

The struggle in West Ham is apparently far from ended. It may rage all the more fiercely after the motion to rescind the resolution of February 28. More public meetings may be necessary, and even another manifesto. We appeal, therefore, to Freethinkers to continue supplying us with the sinews of war. Anything we have left over could be devoted to subsequent Freethought propaganda in the borough.

Freethinkers should as a mere matter of duty support us generously in such a fight. Some of them, perhaps, imagine that our task is an easy one, take it all round. They do not know how difficult it is to maintain a thoroughly "advanced" journal. Let them consider how few have been able to keep a Freethought paper going for any length of time, and then recollect that we have kept this one going for eighteen years. Look at the *Clarion*, which is the most successful of Socialist journals. Mr. Blatchford, its editor, says he has lost twelve hundred pounds in seven years, that he cannot get advertisements owing to prejudice, and that unless his readers assist the *Clarion* will have to cease publication. We note, too, that the Spiritualist *Two Worlds* makes almost as painful a confession.

The *Freethought Ideal*, one of our American exchanges, is published at Ottawa, Kansas, and edited by two ladies, Etta Semple and Laura Knox. It is a live sheet, and we wish it all success. It is grand to see women helping to break down superstition.

A namesake of ours, *El Libre Pensamiento*, reaches us from Lima. It is the organ of the Freethought League of Peru, and is issued weekly. This is the third year of its existence.

Our valued exchange, the *Torch of Reason*, published at Silverton, Oregon, is doing an excellent work, but it occasionally goes beyond the limits of Freethought. In the last number before us we note a quotation, apparently with approval, that "A tobacco smoker cannot be expected to do much thinking." Really this is great nonsense. Smoking

may make a man lazy, but how does it stop thinking? Hobbes did as much hard thinking as anybody, and he was a terrible smoker. Newton was a great smoker. Carlyle puffed and puffed, and he put a tremendous lot of work into all those books of his. Tennyson smoked as much as Carlyle. Darwin smoked, Tyndall smoked, Huxley smoked, Clifford smoked. Try again, dear *Torch of Reason*; or rather, don't try again, but leave that sort of nonsense to the Salvation Army. If you must oppose smoking, as you have a right to, do it on rational grounds.

A Secular meeting will be held at the Grove, behind Stratford Church, this morning (March 12) at 11.30. The East London Branch intended holding lectures there on Sunday evenings in May, but owing to the *Freethinker* trouble the lectures have been arranged for Sunday mornings in March and April.

The annual General Meeting of the Finsbury Branch was held at the Athenæum Hall on Sunday evening last, when a very satisfactory balance-sheet was presented. Mr. Bater and Mr. H. Brown were re-elected as president and secretary. It was decided to give a Concert and Dance on Good Friday, the Concert arrangements being kindly undertaken by Miss Vance, which the Branch considers a sufficient guarantee. The tickets are now on sale (price one shilling), and may be obtained from Miss Vance at the Society's offices, or at the Athenæum on Sunday evenings.

The National Secular Society's Annual Conference will be held on Whit-Sunday at Birmingham. The local Branch has secured the Town Hall for the evening public meeting.

The *Star* continues its valiant crusade against low-flash oils that are responsible—or rather the greedy capitalists who put them on the market are responsible—for the deaths of hundreds of poor people, and the destruction of much valuable property. Any really civilised Government would deal with this matter at once. It is a mere question of social safety. May the *Star* fight on until it wins a great victory by compelling decent legislation on this matter.

National Secular Society.

REPORT of Executive Meeting, held at the Society's offices, on Friday, March 3 (the President, Mr. G. W. Foote, in the chair).

There were present:—Messrs. E. Bater, H. Brown, T. Gorniot, W. Heaford, S. Hartmann, R. Forder, W. Loafer, J. Neate, V. Roger, F. Schaller, A. B. Moss, T. Wilmot, and the Secretary.

Minutes of previous meeting read and confirmed; cash statement received and adopted.

Twenty-six applications for membership were received and accepted—twenty from Birmingham, and six from London Branches.

The Birmingham Branch, having secured the Town Hall for Whit-Sunday, invited the Conference, and it was formally moved "That the Conference for 1899 be held in Birmingham," a general vote being unnecessary in this instance.

The recent attack upon the *Freethinker* by the Committee of the Free Library in West Ham was referred to, and those present volunteered to act as stewards at the public meeting to be held at Stratford Town Hall on Wednesday, March 8.

On the motion of Mr. Loafer, seconded by Mr. Neate, a sub-committee, consisting of Messrs. Schaller, Wilmot, and Loafer, was elected to consider the advisability of running a summer excursion, in which all the London Branches could join, and to report at next meeting.

The question of open-air demonstrations was then discussed, and it was resolved that a series of such demonstrations should be held during the summer months. The Finance Committee were requested to consider the matter, and to draw up a report for next meeting.

EDITH M. VANCE, *Secretary*.

N.B.—London Branch secretaries, who contemplate arranging summer excursions, are requested to kindly communicate with the General Secretary (Miss Vance) at an early date.

The Real Religion.

I am really a great admirer of tangible religion, and am breeding one of my daughters a Catholic, that she may have her hands full. It is by far the most elegant worship, hardly excepting the Greek mythology. What with incense, pictures, statues, altars, shrines, relics, and the real presence, confession, absolution—there is something sensible to grasp at. Besides, it leaves no possibility of doubt; for those who swallow their Deity, really and truly, in transubstantiation can hardly find anything else otherwise than easy of digestion.—*Byron*
Letter to Moore.

Charles Blount.

(By THE LATE J. M. WHEELER.)

IN any estimate of the lives and work of the early English Freethinkers, it is necessary to remember the atmosphere of opinion by which they were surrounded, and the penalties which they incurred by the publication of their opinions. Down to 1678 any person convicted of heresy was liable at law to be burned by force of the writ *de hæretico comburendo*, which was granted out of chancery upon certificate of such conviction by the ecclesiastical courts. Matthew Hamont, John Lewis, Bartholomew Legate, Edward Wightman, and others, were so burnt for anti-Trinitarian heresies. The principles of toleration were held but by few, and, despite Milton's noble plea for the liberty of unlicensed printing, every publication had to pass a censorship which scotched where it could not kill, and emasculated where it did not suppress. If only for his share in the service of ridding England of this incubus, the name of Charles Blount is entitled to remembrance.

A younger son of an illustrious family, Charles Blount was born at the seat of his grandfather, Sir Thomas Pope Blount, at Upper Holloway, April 27, 1654. His father, Sir Henry Blount, the traveller, whose *Voyage to the Levant* [1634-36] ran through several editions, and who enjoyed high distinction both under Charles I. and the Commonwealth, was a man of keen observation and somewhat sceptical turn of mind. Charles Blount inherited the same disposition and a strong propensity to learning, which was fostered by his father, who took upon himself the direction of his studies. At the age of eighteen his father had him married to Eleanora, daughter of Sir Thomas Tyrrel, of Shotover, Oxon, and gave him a handsome settlement.

His first work, published soon after his marriage, was a vindication of Dryden's *Conquest of Granada* against the aspersions of a Mr. Leigh. In a translation of *Lucian*, in which Blount had a hand, which was not published until the year 1711, Dryden, in his *Life of Lucian*, returned the compliment, speaking highly of Blount's wit and abilities. In 1679 he sent abroad his *Anima Mundi; or, an Historical Narration of the Opinions of the Ancients concerning Man's Soul after this Life, According to Unenlightened Nature*, by Charles Blount, Gent. His father, who probably inspired his son's heretical opinions, is said to have had some share in this early essay on comparative religion. The *Anima Mundi*, it appears, has long been handed about in manuscript, with several passages in it much stronger than in the work as licensed by Sir Roger L'Estrange. His mutilation, however, did not suffice, and the work was condemned by Dr. Compton, Bishop of London, and publicly burnt.

At his father's request Charles Blount sent a copy of the *Anima Mundi* to Hobbes, with a letter, dated 1678, in which he praises Hobbes's *Treatise on Heresy*, which he had seen in manuscript, and which Hobbes had written in view of a prosecution of his own works. Soon after Hobbes's death (December 4, 1679) Blount published *The Last Sayings of Dying Legacy of Mr. Thomas Hobbes, of Malmsbury*, being aphorisms, mostly from *The Leviathan*, beginning with the sayings: "Fear of power invisible, feigned by the mind, or imagined from tales publicly allowed, is religious; not allowed, is superstitious." "To say that God hath spoken to a man in a dream is no more than to say he dreamt that God spake to him."

The Licensing Act of 1662 concerning the press, which had been directed against the works of Hobbes and the Deists, and also intended at the same time as a safeguard against sedition, was to expire in 1679. In that year Blount published a notable pamphlet, which is reprinted in the sixth volume of the *Harleian Miscellany*. It is entitled *A Just Vindication of Learning; or, An Humble Address to the High Court of Parliament, in Behalf of the Liberty of the Press, by Philopatris*. Macaulay sneers at its "garbled extracts from the Areopagitica of Milton," and brands Blount as an unscrupulous plagiarist. The truth is, that in 1679 it could only have injured any cause to have used the name of the Republican poet in its defence. Even that noble treatise, the *Areopagitica*, which in Milton's own words may be called "the precious life-blood of a master-spirit,

embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life," lay neglected, and was not only, as Macaulay says, "at the mercy of every pilferer," but was best utilised by "garbled extracts" given anonymously. Blount was not an original writer. His works show indebtedness to Herbert, Hobbes, Montaigne, Taylor, Brunet, and others; but he had a vivid mind, industry, a wide range of knowledge, and some skill and enthusiasm in putting it to use in the service of Freethought. The *Just Vindication* was well received, and had its due effect. The pernicious Licensing Act was not renewed until 1685, when James II. came to the throne. It was then put in force again for seven years; but Blount, as we shall see, did not cease to attack the despotism which he was destined to overthrow. Shortly after publishing the *Just Vindication* he, under the signature of Junius Brutus, published "An Appeal from the Country to the City," which the *Biographia Britannica* describes as "the strongest invective against Popery and Papists that was published even in that age."

(To be concluded.)

Mary Wollstonecraft.

SOME ignorant bigots at West Ham, who know no more of history and literature than they have gathered from various budgets of libellous scraps about "infidels," are warning the public against the "awful" principles of Freethought, and pointing to Mary Wollstonecraft as an illustration of how women become wicked when they forsake Christianity. Most of these ignorant bigots probably believe that she died a few years ago, or perhaps is still living. She was born in 1759, and her death occurred in 1797. That is more than a century ago, and there is certainly a great staleness about this "terrible example." Mary Wollstonecraft was very far from being a wicked person. Southey, the Poet Laureate, who knew her well, and was himself a devout Christian, called her "that sainted woman." Mrs. Fawcett, who has edited a reprint of her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, describes her as "the essentially womanly woman, with the motherly and wifely instincts strong within her." Mrs. Fawcett also remarks that "her memory has been thoroughly vindicated from the contumely that was at one time heaped upon it." Mary Wollstonecraft, when young, innocent, and confiding, trusted to the honor of a man who abandoned her; and it is a frightful sarcasm on the delicacy of the male sex that creatures calling themselves men are still found stoning her memory for that act of faithful affection towards one of their species. Disdaining life in such circumstances, she tried to drown herself, but was rescued. Thenceforth she devoted herself to literary occupations. Finally she married *William Godwin*, the author of *Political Justice*, and died in giving birth to a daughter, who was destined to become the wife of Shelley. She was beautiful, good, and pure. Unfortunate she was, as over-trustful souls are apt to be; but she was incapable of doing harm knowingly to man, woman, or child. Her writings do credit to her heart and head. She was a hundred years in advance of her age on most questions; and that fact alone accounts for the vilification of her name to-day by vulgar fanatics who are a hundred years behind their age.

Leicester Secular Hall.

LAST Sunday evening an animated meeting of Leicester Secularists celebrated the eighteenth anniversary of the opening of the hall. Mr. Sydney Gimson, who presided, traced the course of the Society from the time of the two chief founders of the hall—Mr. Josiah Gimson and Mr. Michael Wright—to its present flourishing condition, when, free from debt, it is taking up a larger educational work. Mr. George Jacob Holyoake made a vigorous and interesting speech, in which he insisted upon the duty of Secularism to criticise the mean and degraded conceptions of the popular theology, and he took occasion to attack a book written by the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes (with whom, however, he was personally on friendly terms)—viz., *The Philanthropy of God*. Philanthropy was not a term applicable to the ruler of the world, who should be responsible for the indigence of the poor. It was a revolting idea of God which represented him as holding all things in the hollow of his hand, and yet made him the author of sudden death (as in the cases of Bishop Wilberforce, Archbishop Benson, and Dr. Berry), and thought of him as acquiescing in the slaughter of Christian martyrs and of Armenians. He summed up the Secular gospel by quoting the lines:—

Whate'er may seem unsafe,
Two things stand like a stone
Fairness to another's face,
Sincerity in your own.

Mr. F. J. Gould dwelt on the need of a double work—criticism on the one side, and construction and education on the other. "Every plank in the floor of this building," he said, "rests on great needs and capacities of human nature—the need of freedom, the need of knowledge, the need of a religion that is complete in the human heart and leaves no place for the gods; the capacity for progress, the capacity for learning new truth, the capacity for fellowship without priestism, and love without creed."

Mr. Joseph McCabe affirmed that social progress was an object more natural to Secularism than to the Churches, and he said Secularism agreed with Terence—"I am a man, and nothing of human interest is foreign to me."

The Society held its anniversary supper on Monday evening.

The Modern Drama.

Shakespeare.

Calderon. Corneille. Molière. Mozart.

THEE, oh source of light and beauty, Thee, oh Soul of Souls supreme,
Thee, Humanity, who breathedst in these souls the wondrous dream,

Thee we see in those who saw Thee, Thee we praise in those who praised

All the kingdoms of thy greatness, and thy life above them raised.

Thou art Love, and only love can lift thus high the mounting mind.

Thou art Love, and by thy love thy sons of light to Thee canst bind.

Forth Thou led'st these sovereign spirits, high Thou bad'st them soar and see

Man's broad stage of strife heroic, subject to Love's majesty—
All its joy and all its sorrow, all the glory, all the gloom,
Faith's high calm, and doubt's dread conflict, dreams of gladness, fears of doom.

Thou art Light, and by thy light thy universal world was seen;

Thou art Light, and in thy light the soul moves glad through thy demesne.

Into these high souls Thou camest, and they knew thy power and spake,

Moulding all thy life to music, which thy spirit did awake.

Clear they painted all thy regions, bold they moved through tracts of time,

And Love's leagued and banded spirits showed as one vast soul sublime.

Thou art Might, and by thy might man rises strong, and rules his life;

Thou art Might, and in thy might he gains this beauty from the strife.

—MALCOLM QUIN, "Hymns of Worship."

Book Chat.

A POSTCARD we have received from the publishers of the *Truthseeker* (New York) contains the following: "By order of Mr. D. O. Blodgett we send you copy of our new *Age of Reason*. If any duty, advise us, and we will square same." The "duty" referred to is customs' duty. But there is nothing of that sort in England. We leave it to the more enlightened Republicans of America. They are a great people, with a wonderful future, we believe; but it is about time they dropped the practice of levying duty on books coming into their country. Books should come and go free everywhere; and if the American revenue suffered, an extra duty might be laid upon English lords, who snap up Yankee heiresses, and upon English parsons, who rake in Yankee dollars.

We thank Mr. Blodgett for his present. We met him at Grand Rapids, when we were there with Mr. Watts. He paid out of his own pocket for all the expenses of our lectures in the Opera House. He is a generous Freethought stalwart, and we are glad to know that he now gets the *Freethinker* every week and enjoys reading it. Some day or other we hope to meet him again. Meanwhile we wish him many years of happiness, prosperity, and usefulness.

This edition of the *Age of Reason* is a very handsome book. It is well-printed and well-bound, with gilt edges, and a nice design on the front cover. The reprint of Part I. is from the first Paris edition, a copy of which was some time ago discovered by Mr. G. E. Macdonald. It varies somewhat from the English edition of Daniel Isaac Eaton, and is, of course, of higher authority. Mr. Macdonald, we suspect, is responsible for the excellent Preface to this new edition. This is followed by a useful chronology of Paine's career.

The frontispiece is a fine engraving from the portrait which Mr. Conway claims to be by Romney. There are twelve other illustrations, one of which is an engraving of the Laurens portrait, and another Paine as a member of the French Assembly. Altogether this is a book that Freethinkers will value. It is far and away the finest edition yet produced of Paine's heretical masterpiece. We hope the sale will reward the publishers' enterprise.

The *Adult* for March opens with a long criticism by Mr. Seymour of the Maybrick case, in the form of a Letter to the Home Secretary. Dr. Park writes on "The Sexuality of Matter." Sophie Lepper, in "Food and Sex," advises getting rid of sexuality altogether, at least on its physical side. Mr. Quilliam, of Liverpool, the Mohammedan, writes on "Polygamy from a Muslim Standpoint," pointing out in this installment that polygamy is favored in the Bible.

Everybody is glad that Mr. Rudyard Kipling has passed through the valley of the shadow of death, and is now on the upward road to full recovery. He is a forceful and original writer, but it is nonsense to talk of him (as Joaquin Miller has been doing) as a possible Shakespeare. This sort of flattery smacks of the sick chamber and its high-strained sympathy.

The *Sunday Special* alluded to Kipling's "City of Dreadful Night." That was one of his blasphemies. He had no business to take the title of James Thomson's masterpiece, which only wants age to be a classic, and put it to another and vastly inferior use. One wonders whether he fancied Thomson was too obscure for the appropriation to be detected. He could hardly have imagined that he was conferring a distinction by borrowing from a poet of Thomson's calibre.

By the way, the real "City of Dreadful Night"—Thomson's, to wit—is now accessible to the ordinary run of book-buyers. As we stated recently, Mr. Bertram Dobell, of 77 Charing Cross-road, London, W.C., has just published a handsome little volume of selections from Thomson, beginning with "The City." It also includes his principal narrative poem, "Weddah and Om-El-Bonain," which combines the free movement of Byron with the rich color of Keats. We hope this volume will have a really good sale. It is worth a hundred, a thousand, of some current volumes of verse which are pressed into vogue by the gentle art of log-rolling.

Correspondence.

MR. COHEN'S FINAL.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I must prolong the discussion between Dr. Keeling and myself to the extent of a correction. My opponent is pained that I should have compared "the profound knowledge relative to living and non-living matter of Professor Beale with such as the man in the street may be supposed to have." If Dr. Keeling consults my article again, he will see that I did not compare Professor Beale's "knowledge" of living and non-living matter to the man in the street, but his *opinion* that the difference between "every form of living matter and every form of non-living matter is absolute." On that subject, I repeat, Professor Beale can be no more certain than the most ignorant. It is a statement that simply expresses the absence of knowledge, not its possession.

Personally, I have as much respect for Professor Beale as a biologist as Dr. Keeling has, and my criticism was not directed against him in that capacity. What I questioned was the correctness of the Professor's conclusions, not the biological facts upon which those conclusions were based.

My other critic calls for a word of reply, if only on account of his "cockiness" of tone. Anyone who read my article with attention could not fail to see that my main point was that seeking for the properties of a chemical compound in its factors was waste of time. As I said, "The appearance and behavior of a chemical compound is essential to the combination of its factors, not to their qualities added together." It was in support of this position that I gave the illustration selected by my critic. On consideration the selection might have been more happily chosen, although there is some difference between qualities manifested by water under *normal* conditions and those manifested by its factors under *abnormal* conditions. I do not imagine that a teacher of chemistry would allow his students to affirm that wetness was a property of all the elements, or of nearly all the elements, in the same sense that he may affirm wetness to be a quality of water. At any rate, I think it would puzzle even a "B.A., Trin. Col., Cam.," to show that my contention as laid down in the above sentence is an unsound one.

As to the second point, I did not "point that mind is due to, or the product of, an amalgamation," as though I had indubitable evidence of the fact, with qualitative and quantitative knowledge of the factors. What I did say was that "if the

Materialist was correct in saying that life was due to a combination of forces that are to be found working in nature under other forms, then it is absurd to take a man to pieces and ask in which of the elements life resides. The reply would be in none (singly), but is due to the amalgamation of all." I am afraid Mr. Strickland must be new to such discussions, or he would not discover that the hypothesis of life, being due to a synthesis of natural forces, was "truly funny." All things considered, I do not think there is any serious need for the *Freethinker* to "look to its science," although there is pressing need of looking to the opinions of those whose minds, fresh from the study of scientific text-books, may not yet have acquired the capacity for sound thinking or philosophical investigation.

C. COHEN.

A HALF-RATIONALIST.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—The penultimate and ultimate paragraphs in Dr. Keeling's "Rejoinder" afford food for reflection, inasmuch that their contents exemplify to an extraordinary degree the mischief-working character of a policy commonly pursued by quasi-Rationalists. Here is a man, in many respects of undoubted excellence—unfortunately, nevertheless, representative of a type—admittedly pandering to a palpably gross superstition, because he has succeeded in discovering among its opulent votaries a few benevolently inclined.

By a parity of reasoning, all the myriad "madnesses" which have, and are, haunting the noddles of mankind were and are (to personify them for the nonce) equally warranted in claiming perpetuation; for, sooth to say, there never flourished a superstition yet, howsoever crass, powerful enough to suppress utterly the humanitarian promptings in all of its devotees. If, then, the England of our day is displaying greater enthusiasm for relieving poor, down-trodden, suffering humanity, is that any justification for precipitously giving a certificate of character to a superstitious system that happens contemporaneously therewith to be ostensibly predominant, and thereby implying that they stand in the relation of cause and effect?

In all verity, one would have expected a gentleman of the Doctor's status to have seriously addressed himself to the task of ascertaining the real cause, or causes, which is, or are, bringing about these happy changes in the relationships of men, and not to cavalierly cast his influence on the side—by the way, which has its social rewards—of a system which has, and it is historically demonstrable, in the heydays of its malignant power, flooded the fields of Europe with human blood and human gore; variegating the horrible monotony of the gruesome, sanguinary vision only by interspersions of piles of ignited faggots, capped by brave men who scorned truckling, and preferred death in its most hideous form.

The Doctor may here, not improbably, interpose by remarking that his serious studies have been, and are being, prosecuted in other directions, thereby exempting him from undue critical severity of treatment relative to his testimonial to Christianity, to which I reply, busy man though he be, that there is really no extenuation whatever for his gratuitous parting of Christianity, forasmuch that the very numbers of this journal containing matter personally interesting to him did also contain records of events sufficiently warnful of the real nature of the system he has explicitly commended.

Let me come to particulars. The number preceding the one containing his "Rejoinder" had also a graphic account of a tramping train of Church of England divines, Nonconformist parsons, Roman Catholic priests, and—mention it not in Gath, nor publish it in Beersheba—a deputation of log-headed laymen, all boldly marched, without blush or shame, before the West Ham Council (holy Moses, what a spectacle!) to pray it to exclude from its libraries—irony of fate—the very paper which justly, and, what is more, welcomingly, admitted his criticisms. Again, the Doctor must likewise have read of how the Birmingham Secularists have been drummed out of one of the Board schools like a pack of thieves. Neither could he also have failed to notice, still in the same numbers, how the Liverpool Secularists are being harassed and worried by the powers that be—and illegally at that—in their attempts to secure a hall wherein to hold their meetings. And this state of things has been going on for some time now, and that without a single voice being raised from within the entire Christian camp in denunciation of such a monstrously high-handed procedure, but, contrariwise, viewed rather by the brave soldiers of the Cross with ill-concealed smug satisfaction. Finally, the Doctor must surely also know that the editor of this journal was, some years ago, lovingly sent, by an eminently Christian judge (for he believed in a Devil), to herd with felons—presumably as a preparatory training previous to his becoming a qualified Christian—for a whole round year for the awful crime of rationally criticising the Christian's fetish book; and, astounding to relate, the aggregate strength of the humanity of England's Christians was not effectual enough to demand, not the abolition, but even the reduction by one hour, of that flagitious sentence. And this is, forsooth, the system of which he writes that "it will be a bad day for sociology [!] when its present Christian element is eliminated."

Of the Doctor's Theism I make no comment further than by observing that the man who has distinguishably worked for a protracted period in a noble calling against the ravages of disease, and has failed to realise that, if he must needs posit a God as the former of Nature, it must be such an one—of such gigantic proportions—as would dwindle to invisibility all the monsters (and they have been multitudinous) which have ever terribly afflicted the entire human race, though they be conglomerated into one solid mass—is simply past praying for.

J. ROBERTS.

"A MATTER OF SCIENCE."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Mr. Strickland is mistaken as to the "scientific blunder" of a "serious" kind. When Mr. Cohen speaks of wetness as a property of water not possessed by the oxygen and hydrogen of which the water is composed, he of course means that this is the state of things *under ordinary conditions*. Anyone who thinks it worth while to find fault with statements which omit necessary but perfectly well-understood conditions can cull from the brief compass of Mr. Strickland's own letter more than one statement which is not true, unless various words or conditions are inserted by the intelligence and candor of the reader. I will quote three such passages, and will add in brackets some (not all) of the words or conditions which are needed to make them accurate. "Water is a fluid at the [ordinary] temperature of the air." "Raise the temperature of the water [sufficiently and keep the pressure sufficiently low], and it becomes a gas." "Lower the temperature of the gas [sufficiently], and it becomes a solid."

Mr. Strickland, contradicting Mr. Cohen, says: "It is not true that the wetness of the resulting water is due to its combination, but to the accident that water is fluid at the temperature of the air." This method of arguing, or rather asserting, would abolish the idea of causation altogether. It alleges that a phenomenon does not result from preceding conditions, but is an "accident." But wetness or fluidity (under ordinary conditions) *invariably follows* the union of oxygen and hydrogen in certain proportions. Mr. Cohen, therefore, has every right to speak of this wetness as being due to the combination which it invariably follows. That we do not know the whole chain of causation or explanation that connects the two known stages of a sequence is no reason for assuming that the one is not a consequence of the other, but only an "accident," or irrelevant circumstance. In the instance before us the connecting link may be that the compound molecules develop greater powers of mutual cohesion or attraction, and hence fly away less readily into the gaseous state.

As to "mind" (Mr. Cohen wrote "life") being due to the "amalgamation" of certain elements, the statement is not so "truly funny" to an ordinary reader as it may perhaps be to a mind absorbed in the technicalities of scientific terminology. "Amalgamation" is not the right word, indeed, being too suggestive of blending into a homogeneous mass; but Mr. Cohen had already used the correct word, "combination," more than once, and on repeating the idea he substituted the kindred word, "amalgamation," for a change. "Amalgam," of course, means a compound of quicksilver and some other metal. Mr. Strickland himself, by implication, extends the idea of amalgamation to "pewter," a metallic mixture which contains no quicksilver. Ordinary usage extends the meaning still further to combinations of companies, interests, etc. While Mr. Cohen would have done better to repeat the word "combination" (or to employ some such word as "union"), rather than use a less accurate expression by way of change, the defect of language is not a very serious one, and is not in the least calculated to mislead any one, so far as I can see.

W. P. BALL.

What is Death?

Philaster.—Oh, but thou dost not know what 'tis to die.
Bellarion.—Yes, I do know, my lord:
 'Tis less than to be born; a lasting sleep;
 A quiet resting from all jealousy,
 A thing we all pursue; I know, besides,
 It is but giving over of a game that must be lost.

—Beaumont and Fletcher.

A clergyman in Scotland a hundred years ago, who took the only newspaper that came to the village, used to draw from it freely in his sermons. One Sunday he told his congregation how Buonaparte had just lost a great battle. The report proved false, however, and when he next mounted the pulpit he had to say: "Brethren, what I said to you on the last Sabbath was a' lees."

At the time of the disruption in Scotland the church collections fell off in a strange and alarming way. "Wad ye believe it?" said an elder, who held the plate at the door of St. Andrew's Church, Edinburgh, seated for two thousand people. "On the Sunday after the Disruption I only got five bawbees. Standin' in the draught for twenty minutes, too! If I had only kent, I wad rather hae put in the collection mysel' an' covered up the plate."

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, Chilperic Edwards, "The Book of Daniel."

BRADLAUGH CLUB AND INSTITUTE (36 Newington Green-road, Ball's Pond): 8.30, J. W. White's Dramatic Co., in "Not Such a Fool as he Looks."

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 16 New Church-road): Every Saturday, at 7.30, Debating Class and Social Club. Sunday, at 7, G. W. Foote, "Souls, Spirits, and Ghosts."

EAST LONDON BRANCH (Swaby's Coffee House, 103 Mile End-road, E.): 8, J. F. Haines, "The Citification Bill." With diagrams.

EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Bow Vestry Hall, Bow-road, E.): 7, G. H. Ferris, "Internationalism: An Ethical Postulate."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Surrey Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road, S.E.): 11.15, Discussion; 7, Dr. Washington Sullivan, "The Ethical Interpretation of Sin."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall): 11, Stanton Coit, "The Personality of God."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, A lecture.

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

COUNTRY.

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday-school; 7, W. Sanders (Ethical Propagandist Committee), "John Ruskin as a Social Reformer."

DERBY BRANCH (Central Hotel, Market-place): 7, W. H. Fletcher, "Apathy."

GLASGOW (Lecture Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): 12, Discussion Class—Mr. Barker; 6.30, J. Watson, "To John-o'-Groats with Wheel and Camera" With lantern illustrations.

GREAT YARMOUTH FREETHINKERS' ASSOCIATION (Freethinkers' Hall, bottom of Broad-row). Thursdays, at 8.30, Elocution Class. Sunday, at 7, Mr. Smith, "What is Agnosticism?"

HULL (Friendly Societies' Hall, No. 2 Room): Mr. Gibson, "Evolution of Society."

LEICESTER SECULAR CLUB (Humberstone-gate): Dr. T. R. Allinson—11, "Food and Feeding"; 6.30, "Health: How to Get and Keep."

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): C. Cohen. For subjects see *Liverpool Post and Echo*.

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): J. M. Robertson—11, "Liberalism and Leadership"; 3, "What to Read"; 7, "The Reform of Christianity." Tea at 5.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): W. Heaford—11, "Ideals: Christian and Secular"; 3, "Religion Rejected; and Why?" 7, "Reconstruction of Christianity." Tea at 5.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, Market-place): 7.30, A Reading.

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—March 12, Liverpool; 18, 19, and 20, Stanley; 26, Sheffield.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon-road, S.E.—March 12, m., Newington Reform Club. April 23, e., Edmonton. May 7, a., Victoria Park; 14, a. and e., Brockwell Park; 21, a., Victoria Park.

H. PERCY WARD, 5 Alexandra-road, Edgbaston, Birmingham.—March 12, Chester; 26, Birmingham. April 16, Glasgow.

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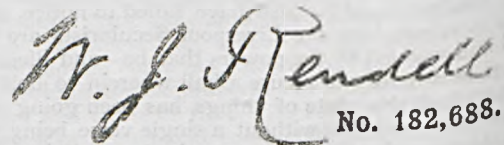
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Mr. Cohen and Dr. Keeling.

The book "QUÆRO," which has given rise to the recent discussion in the *Freethinker* between the above gentlemen, can be obtained, until the end of March, by written application, containing sixpence for postage (the only charge), to the Manager, Messrs. Taylor and Francis, Red Lion-court, Fleet-street, London, E.C.

The time has been prolonged because, owing to the book having run out of print, there has been some delay in supplying copies.

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WINTER SALE.

<p>Lot 1. 1 Suit Length. 1 Dress Length. 1 Gent's Umbrella. 1 Lady's Umbrella. 1 Pair Curtains. 1 Fur Necktie. All for 21s., carr. paid.</p>	<p>Lot 2. 1 Gent's Scarboro' Mackintosh. Worth 35s. 1 Lady's Paddock Mackintosh. Worth 21s. State Lengths. All for 21s.</p>	<p>Lot 3. 3 Pairs of Trousers. Made to Measure. Worth 12s. 6d. per pair. All for 21s., carr. paid.</p>	<p>Lot 4. 2 Very fine Dress Lengths in Serge, Cashmere, Alpaca, Fancy Figure Scotch Tweeds, or Habit Cloth; any color; all for 21s., carr. paid.</p>
<p>Lot 5. 40 yds. of Remnants; suitable for children's dresses; all for 21s., carr. paid.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">READ THIS.</p> <p>T stands for Try and for Free Clothing Tea : Shall we send you a free sample lot? Recollect, when you've found it the best that could be, That you had it from J. W. Gott. It is sold at two shillings and fourpence a pound. If twenty-five pounds you will use, Gott will give you in clothing, well fitting and sound, A Costume or Suit as you choose.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Agents Wanted Everywhere.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>SEND AT ONCE FOR CONDITIONS & TERMS.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">NEW SUMMER GOODS.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Patterns now ready, and will be sent to any address on receipt of Post Card.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">½lb. testing sample of Free Clothing Tea enclosed in each Winter Sale Parcel.</p>		<p>Lot 9. A Parcel of Boots or Shoes; worth 30s.; any size or style; all for 21s., carr. paid.</p>
<p>Lot 6. 1 Very Fine Worsted or West of England Suit Length; for 21s., carr. paid.</p>			<p>Lot 10. 11 yds. Finest Velveteen, with lining to match, for a Dress; for 21s., carr. paid.</p>
<p>Lot 7. Blankets. Sheets. Quilt. Rugs. Mats. Curtains. All for 21s., carr. paid.</p>			<p>Lot 11. 1 Pair Pure Wool Blankets. 1 Pair Large Bedsheets. 1 Beautiful Quilt. 1 White or Colored Tablecloth. 1lb. Free Clothing Tea. All for 21s., carr. paid.</p>
<p>Lot 8. 1 Man's Overcoat. 1 Small Boy's Overcoat. For 21s., carr. paid.</p>			<p>Lot 12. 1 Ready-made Suit, worth 35s.; give chest and inside leg measures; for 21s., carr. paid.</p>

J. W. GOTT, 2 & 4, Union Street, Bradford.