

THE

Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

Booth's New Proclamation.

"GENERAL" BOOTH is at present at the Antipodes, recovering from an attack of dysentery, which we hope has not been corrected by cognac. For several years he has been like Satan, going to and fro in the world, and up and down in it. Some day or other, unless the Lord calls him "home" from foreign parts, he will return to England, which merits a place in history, and therefore a little of the great man's attention, as the country where the Salvation Army was originated. Meanwhile we wish him good-speed, and may the shadow of his eagle nose never grow less.

Our immediate concern is not with William Booth the traveller, but with William Booth the commander-in-chief of the Salvation Army, who received his "authorisation and commission direct from Jehovah." In his religio-military capacity the great Booth has issued a pamphlet marked "Private and Confidential" to his officers, and a copy of it has fallen into the hands of Mr. Walter C. Hart, who gives long and interesting extracts from it in the March number of the *Social Democrat*; principally, we presume, from the section on "The Army and Politics." Booth says the question is often asked, "What part ought Salvationists to take in politics? This is a difficult question, and Booth has not hitherto given it a definite reply. He has contented himself with saying, in his lordly way, "Do as I do." But something more seems needed, and the "General" condescends to provide it for the sake of "my people."

Booth tells his soldiers, first of all, not to "take part in any political system which proposes to overthrow or change the character of the Government" of any country where they may be at work. In England they must accept the Monarchy, in France the Republic, and in Russia the Czardom. Which is very sound instruction, considering that Booth strives to obtain a Government subsidy in every country where he carries his organisation. But the chief thing, after all, is this: his soldiers must have nothing to do with agitations in which Freethinkers take part. Booth doesn't mind taking Freethinkers' money—he took Lord Queensberry's—for any of his projects; but privately he regards them all as children of Satan, bound straight for Hell. Let us hear him:—

"Do not take part in any political system that is out of harmony with the first principles of your religious belief—God, Christ, Holiness, Heaven, and Hell.

"Could you belong to a party whose leaders were atheistic or immoral?"

"The Social-Democrats on the Continent are Atheists almost to a man, and Socialists everywhere lean in the same direction. Will you lend yourself to any action that will strengthen the Atheistic Party?"

This is plain speaking, and we have pleasure in reproducing it. William Booth is a shrewd man, though not in any wise a man of genius; it is gratifying, therefore, to see him obliged to recognise the grave danger that has arisen in the modern world from parties who "won't have any mention of God, or hear any arguments that are based on his authority."

Booth goes on to denounce the very first principles of Democracy:—

"You know that your own Government [meaning his government] is the very opposite of government by the people—that is, by the people at the base of the pyramid. You know that the introduction of democratic principles, talked so much about in our day, would destroy your Government in a week. You would not hear any propo-

sition for the adoption by the Army of such principles—no, not for a moment. How could you, then, have any sympathy with any system which advocates and maintains principles the very opposite of your own?"

We may pause to observe that it would not much matter if Booth's officers were ready to hear a new-model proposal for the Salvation Army. What they hear, or what they say, is of very little consequence. Whoever holds the property wields the power, and Booth holds *all* the property of the organisation. There is a deed of trust, we understand, but we also understand that it is virtually a deed of trust between William Booth and William Booth, and that William Booth is the only person who can call William Booth to account.

Booth goes out of his way, as it seems to us, to have a fling at Socialism. He represents it as saying that "All men are born equal," and his reply is that they are *not* born equal, races being inferior to races, and individuals to individuals. This is true enough, and we imagine that every Socialist knows it. The equality that Socialism advocates is not the equality that Booth denies. The argument, indeed, is a mere play upon words. What the Socialist wants at bottom, we take it, is equal opportunity for all, at the expense of none, in this world. What Booth allows is, that all men are "quite equal in their chance of going to heaven."

Salvationists, as Booth tells them, must have nothing to do with political and social schemes which aim at "bringing about the regeneration of the race without the active interference of God." The "co-operation of the spirit of God through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ" is absolutely necessary. If you don't admit this, Booth says, you are "denying the Lord that bought you." Then he proceeds to expound a curious mixture of truth and falsehood. No doubt a great deal of evil springs from individual faults and weaknesses. Under any system of society a fool will not be as prosperous as a sensible man, a hasty man will not be as fortunate as one gifted with self-control, an ill-tempered man will not be as happy as a good-tempered one, a sensualist will not be as successful as a man of disciplined character. It is a very cheap and easy philosophy which lays the blame of our own personal failings upon the shoulders of "society"—that is to say, of other people. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that millions often suffer from *no* fault of their own, but from social conditions over which they have no personal control; and here is the opportunity of statesmanship and wise legislation. Booth, however, sneers at the power of legislation to make men happy. Something might be done, of course, if "General" Booth were made autocratic ruler of the British Empire, or despotic governor of the universal world. But short of that there is very little hope. "Legislation as carried on now," Booth says, "is simply the expression of civilised, educated, white-washed sinful human nature, as to how it thinks it can be managed [shaky grammar, William!] the most to its own interests, without any regard to its Maker." Home Rule, for instance: what have Salvationists to do with it? It is simply "a quarrel between men who are attempting to settle their dispute without any reference to Jehovah, his laws, his people, or his Son."

There are three courses open to a Salvationist—theoretically. He may (1) take no part in politics, arguing that he is only "a pilgrim and a stranger in this world," that his "citizenship is in heaven," and that "the children of the Devil must look after themselves." He may (2) join hands with existing political parties, and be

dragged down to their corrupt level. He may (3) use legislative and political parties "to secure our salvation purposes." The first course, we imagine, is the one that Booth would like his soldiers to follow in a general way. The second course is anathema. The third course is the one he would like them to follow, on proper occasions, under special directions from himself. In other words, they should abandon all idea of attachment to, or interest in, any government but his, do exactly what he bids, and work solely for the Lord Jehovah under the guidance of the modern Moses who has his "authorisation and commission direct" from that celestial personage.

Booth is quite right in taking up this attitude and in giving this advice to his soldiers. The Salvation Army is a sheer autocracy, as every army must be. When it ceases to be so it will fall to pieces rapidly. On the other hand, it can never get beyond a certain stage of development. You never hear of anybody of much importance in the Salvation Army except Booth and his family. No doubt there are clever business men at headquarters, but their duties are mainly commercial, and they serve Booth's firm as they might serve any other. But no officer of mental distinction and force of character is known to the world. Men of that kind want to *count* for something, and nobody counts in the Salvation Army but William Booth, who is inspired by God, and William Booth's family, who are inspired by *him*.

We venture to say, too, that Booth's attitude and advice are truly Christian. Politically and socially he follows the lines of Paul and Jesus. "My kingdom is not of this world" is an expression that probably never came from the lips of the Nazarene, but it is characteristic of primitive, essential Christianity. True believers were to take no thought for the things of this world, but to study how to get to heaven and leave all the rest to God. According to tradition, at any rate, it was in the reign of Nero that Paul told his flock that all governments were ordained of God, that to obey them was a duty, and to resist them meant damnation. And it was his spirit that assisted the fall of the Roman Empire.

G. W. FOOTE.

Inevitability of Secularism.

TALKING some time ago with a gentleman over the future of Secularism, I was asked by him how old Secularism was. I replied that the answer to that question would entirely depend upon whether he referred to Secularism as an organisation or as a set of principles. If the former, it would be confined to our own century; but if his query had reference to the existence of a set of principles that are now recognised as Secularism, then its age would be synonymous with that of humanity. Go back as far as is possible, we can see two forces in active opposition: the one directing man's attention to some fancied world beyond the grave, bidding him kneel at the shrine of some fear-fashioned deity and prostitute his intelligence in the service of senseless superstition; the other seeking to direct human thought to the essential conditions of life, and to the development of knowledge as the sole means of their improvement. History shows these two forces in never-ending conflict—a conflict that can only be terminated by the complete exclusion of the supernatural from human affairs.

It is in the sense of Secularism representing the constant opposition of human knowledge to supernatural beliefs that we may speak of it being as old as history. For Secularism is not so much a series of propositions, or a code of rules, as it is a way of looking at the world, measuring the value of life in terms of present and future possibilities of human happiness, to be realised this side of the grave, and not in some problematical future existence. Nor does Secularism aim so much at creating new forces as it does at developing latent, and directing attention to neglected, ones. Just as the laws of heat, sound, and light were in existence long before their mode of operation was reduced to recognisable formulas; just as morality is implicit in action before it is explicit in ethical regulations, so the forces that make for progress have been

always with us, though dwarfed by supernatural pressure, and, when active, disguised by a supernatural covering. It is the primary object of Secularism to win recognition for the truth, that human life, considered with reference to this world alone, may contain a sufficient incentive to right action and an adequate reward for its realisation.

But, fortunately for our hopes for the future, history not only exhibits the natural and the supernatural in constant conflict; it also shows, if we compare periods of history, a gradual strengthening of the former and a weakening of the latter power. It is for this reason that I have entitled this article "The Inevitability of Secularism," because I believe that, despite certain backward movements here and there, there is yet a steady and progressive tendency towards the complete secularisation of life. Nor does this movement altogether depend upon our conscious co-operation; quite apart from that, in spite even of the opposition of many, this tendency will express and complete itself, although the process will proceed with greater quickness and ease when we are working with, instead of against, it.

The long historic struggle of the Christian Church to suppress, and later to control, positive knowledge was not stronger proof of the existence of this tendency than are present-day religious tactics evidence of its growth. In all religious organisations there is a growing desire to drop the supernatural and insist upon the ethical aspect of Christianity. The new Free Church Catechism authoritatively drops the Devil overboard, and, with the majority of preachers, Jehovah, the senior partner in the Christian Trinity, is kept carefully in the background, and chief emphasis laid on the *man* Jesus. And one may reasonably assume, on reviewing the various artifices by means of which the Churches strive to maintain their hold upon the public mind—Church clubs formed to catch boys, "Pleasant Sunday Afternoon" discussions to catch young men, maudlin and muddling sociological discourses taking the place of orthodox sermon, with Jesus Christ playing second fiddle to a tea-meeting or a lantern entertainment—one may well argue that all these are the despairing efforts of Christian organisations to overcome the growing dislike to supernatural beliefs. For, after all, the average clergyman is in pretty much the same position as a theatrical manager. The main question with both is, "What will draw a good house?" the only differences being that one calls the receipts "takings," the other "pew-rents"; one announces "Performance will start," the other "Service will commence"; but both of them cater to the public taste, and in the long run one may be certain that the clergy will not preach anything that has a tendency to weaken their position, or refrain from preaching anything that will strengthen it.

Even the recent revival of the grosser elements of the Christian superstition may be taken as evidence of the growth of Secular principles. There are many who look upon this recrudescence of superstition as a sign of reaction, and from one point of view this may be so; but from another and wider outlook it is exactly the reverse. For these superstitious practices are not something newly imported into Christianity; they were there all the time, only they were held in check by the presence of a sufficient amount of intellectual ability. But Christianity could only enlist in its service the highest intellect so long as it could dominate national affairs. Two hundred years ago it was possible for men of ability to throw their influence on the side of Christianity for two reasons. First, because, Christianity being all-powerful, it was practically impossible for anyone to live with comfort and run counter to it; and, secondly, because positive knowledge had not yet grown exact enough or strong enough for its presence to act as a rebuke or such as championed the Christian faith. The result was that men of considerable attainment could still be enlisted on behalf of Christianity, and their support gave it a certain air of intellectual strength and distinction. But, as science grew strong enough to assert and maintain its independence, new avenues were opened to men of genius, with the result that each generation sees the intellectual status of Christianity touching a lower level. Thus it has happened that as science, literature, and sociology have opened fresh avenues of employment, the Churches have been deserted by the intellect of the nation, and the grosser elements allowed to express

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Thus, whether it is a pleasant or an unpleasant sight,
it is at least a fact that men outgrow their religious
beliefs. Quite apart from any active propaganda on
the part of Freethinkers, apart, also, from any desire of
people to give up believing in all that they have been
accustomed to believe in, many yet grow to look upon
religious ideas as unsound. The mere pressure of
civilisation brings about this result. Men cannot go on
believing the old formulas, although they may pretend
to believe them, and thus deceive themselves in trying
to deceive others. And so the question ultimately
reduces itself to this: Are we to close our eyes to this
process and allow the world to go blindly on, to awaken
one day to the realisation that it is without any real
guide? or are we to reckon and grapple with the
tendencies of the time, and aim at a new combination of
our knowledge and beliefs in the light of the life of
to-day? One of these results, it seems to me, must
happen. Even though it might be possible to continue
a little longer regulating life on the basis of religious
ideas, it is plainly impossible to keep on so regulating
it indefinitely. The world moved even while the great
Catholic Church declared it to be stationary, and the life
of man goes on developing, and his thoughts widening,
even while Ritualistic advocates and Evangelistic
preachers are crying peace where there is no peace,
and preaching stagnation in the name of progress. But
the inevitableness of Secularism, the fact that whether
an individual or a cluster of individuals, from motives
of prudence or profit, stand aside from the struggle; the
fact that Secularism will still continue to grow with "the
passing of the moons," by no means relieves each
individual man and woman of the obligation to do all
they can to hasten the process. It is profoundly true
that civilisation is as natural as savagery—is as much the
result of cosmical forces as the growth of a planet or the
unfolding of a flower; but it is also true that this process
of civilisation is either retarded or accelerated as each of
us seeks out and works in harmony with the tendencies
of the time that make for a higher life. It is in this
manner that we can show ourselves worthy children of
the past by becoming the profitable parents of the
future.

And those who stand aside or refuse to play the part
they might play in the developmental process thereby
help the forces of reaction in two ways. First they help
in the negative shape of refraining from offering the
opposition that might be offered to retrogressive
agencies, which are always keenly alive to take
advantage of our shortcomings. Secondly, they give
reaction a real help by throwing the conduct of
affairs into the hands of those least likely to manage
them for the public welfare. Those who know,
or believe they know, in which direction truth lies are,

by standing aside, simply leaving the field clear for those
whom they must believe to be less qualified to act as
leaders and teachers of the people. By such conduct
religion is given a free hand, its influence is intensified;
and, although such action may not destroy the ultimate
victory of Secular principles, it certainly defers their
triumph to a more remote period than would otherwise
be the case.

C. COHEN.

The Praise of Books.

HAPPY indeed, with the best of happiness, is the man
or woman who loves books truly. It is a passion this
love of books, whose calm joys are permitted alike to
young and old, wise and simple. It is the only love
that knows no decadence, whose arrows have no
poisoned barb, whose enjoyments are wholly profitable
and without satiety. He that loves a woman, if she
do not jilt him, will marry her to watch her beauty fade
and disappear. They that love children will presently
see them grow up, and perchance go to the bad utterly.
At the best, they will presently find their wings strong
enough and forthwith be fluttering off about their own
concerns, returning no more to the empty nest. He
who finds fierce delight in the chase and in horses and
dogs will presently be overtaken, ride he never so fast,
by lumbago and the stiffness and infirmity of age, and
he and his love must be bitterly parted. He whose
heart is in his belly shall do bravely for a space, but
presently the fiend dyspepsia hath him by the neck and
dooms him to pine for ever after an anchorite's diet.
Foulest of all, the lover of the bottle becomes a thing
of loathing—blotched, flaming-faced, gouty, foul of
breath, yellow-eyed, tremulous, utterly disgusting;
until presently a merciful dropsy supervenes, and there
is another beast less above the turf.

Let not the gatherer of pots and crocks, the hoarder
of strange, rust-eaten coins, the witless bringer-together
of postage stamps or crests, attempt to enter the lists
with the book-lover. It is true their pursuits are suit-
able to all times of life, and, most of all, the period of
second childhood. True, also, that they do not dis-
order the stomach or hot-nail the liver. But this is the
sum of their merit. They have no wisdom or culture
to impart, they have no refining and elevating influence
except to the imaginations of the Postlethwaite school,
who, striving to live up to a five-mark teapot, accom-
plish the difficult feat of increasing their natural froward
foolishness. If a man had all the postage stamps that
the world ever contained stuck in his albums, he would
not be one whit the wiser, nobler, or better for them;
he is no better off than one who, desiring the delights
of female society, should forthwith furnish himself with
a harem full of Egyptian she-mummies.

The lover of books is an inarticulate poet, and, like
the other, he is born, not made. From his earliest
years, did you but observe him, you would see that he
handled a book in a special manner—with somewhat of
the reverential air which is observed towards printed
matter by all full-grown bibliophiles and Chinamen.
The true flame is already lit in his breast. There it
shall burn brighter, brighter, and brighter still, up to
the last moment of his existence. It shall be the marvel
of boyhood, the ever-widening delight of youth, the
cherished object of manhood, the provider of sweet
memory, and occupation to age and the all-comforter
to the end. Blessed are they that have a library
whereof they have bought each book separately with
ill-spended money, for verily they have an exceeding
great reward.

"Let me see a man handle a book, and I can tell you
much about his character," said one acute observer of
the minutiae of conduct. Let me see a man's books,
said another and profounder, and I will tell you what
he is. In both sayings there is much sagacity and
truth. There are men whose handling of your books
makes you tremble. Look at that oaf whose paws
wrench the book open till the binding creaks, who licks
his finger that he may turn the pages better, and claps
the open book down cover upwards while he answers
your question, heedless as to a few pages bent under.
What pretension to the possession of an immortal soul
has he? How can you call him a friend? He is but

one of many types of the enemy. There is the oily, clammy-handed ruffian whose epidermic secretions, mingled with much casual dirt, are spread in curiously grained stains over the once spotless pages. He is of the breed who sweat over sensational novels from libraries, and provide that fine dingy glaze with which their dog's-eared pages are embellished. Then there is your Lady Slattern Lounger of the "most observing thumb," who "cherishes her nails for the convenience of making marginal notes." The people who use pencils to underline passages, or stick pins in the leaves, are variants of this type as well as those who press flowers in books—selecting, if possible, such as are fleshy, and liberally repay the accommodation with elegant stains. Some yahoos turn down corners to keep a place, and such are beyond hope of salvation; others call themselves human, and yet cut books with hair-pins and pen-holders, or only cut within half-an-inch of the back and leave the rest to tear. It is told of the great Professor Wilson that he would stalk into Blackwood's shop and, disdainful of suitable implements, timorously offered, rip open the leaves of uncut books with his great fingers. So great a man was he that there was never a slave of the great ebony who dared remonstrate. Somehow this horrible tale is never quite absent from my mind when Christopher North occupies it, and something of the aroma of the inimitable *noctes* vanished for ever when I first heard it. Yet, after all, there is some suggestion in the tale of the man—he criticised poets and bantered the Ettrick Shepherd much in the same style.

In condemning the marking of books, we must confine the censure to the marking of volumes not one's very own. It is one of the delights of the owner of a private library to scatter his thoughts and commentation on the margin of the books, to make them part and parcel of himself. The value is thus increased not only for himself, but for his successors. When I buy a second-hand book I desire to know about its former owners; just as a man who marries a widow will surely acquaint himself with the nature and characteristics of his predecessor. Precious, therefore, is every book-plate, signature, or marginal observation to the truly cultured book-lover. What deep mystic vistas of the thought or idle fancy will he not pluck from such things. Here is the book-plate of Mr. Coutts, the banker, who married Miss Mellon, pasted in a volume of plays in which she is cast—here a copy of the *Legend of Florence*, with a grateful presentation inscription to good old J. R. Planché; or perhaps it is a book that you bought at the auction of a dead friend's effects—hurriedly turned into cash by an unsentimental executor—the pencilled memoranda on whose pages bear evidence to his historical acumen. Presently one comes to a slip of paper marking a page, and after that there are no more pencillings. What would one not give to have Burns's copy of Ferguson's poems, Thackeray's much-thumbed *Tom Jones*, or Shakespeare's own copy of *Plutarch's Lives*? It is hard to say why, but any bibliophile will agree with me that a volume of old quarto plays which lies before me is more valuable because inside the cover an eighteenth-century owner has made a catalogue of plays in which occurs "*Macbeth, a Tragedy*; author unknown." The same gentleman was a strange fellow, evidently. His combined ignorance and learning were so stupendous that he must have been a commentator. His margins are full of the maddest hieroglyphics and notes in all imaginable languages—English, Greek, Latin, and Hebrew being the prevailing ones. Heaven, perhaps, knows what Hebrew author can have any bearing on a restoration play—possibly some piece of gratuitous filthiness may have suggested a parallel. This supposition, however, would involve a relevancy in the Hebrew notes, which is certainly not found in the languages I can spell out. For our unknown scribe—peace to his ashes!—is a true commentator.

I would fain here utter my gratitude also to a gentleman who once had a copy of Matthew Arnold's poems and a red pencil. I now own the volumes, and with them a good deal of the pencil. For the late owner admired Matthew hugely, and underscored, line by line, all the passages that tickled his fancy most, and they were many. He is not much of a marginal critic, his notes being mostly monosyllabic, as "fine!" "good!" "mark!" The preciousness of his style lies in the fact

that his rapture is invariably misapplied. His sublineations without exception are associated with the dullest and weakest passages, and, but for the occasional ejaculations, one would conclude that it was on this principle they had been selected.

One's own scribbings in one's own books are invaluable. By the aid of the marginal scorings each volume is indexed doubly, and with what pleasant pride you regard the occasional note which records your having detected an author tripping or stealing! How precious, too, your own interleaved copy of your own book (if you have written one), with the priceless additions and emendations which are to make the second edition perfect. What matter if there never be another edition? These are only a few of the many gentle delights dedicated to the owner of a library. For as he sits in the midst of it, though the room be humble, the appointments shabby, and the collection meagre, he is permeated by a quiet and enduring satisfaction which kings, or even the author of a successful comic opera or patent medicine, might envy. For the history of all that is tender and pleasant in his life is about him. There are his early school-books, and, if he were an industrious lad, his school prizes. By them is the shabby copy of the immortal *Pilgrim's Progress*, which was the one enthralling fiction permitted to his Calvin-overshadowed youth. There are the feeble goody-goodies which, resplendent in gaudy bindings, became his own on the birthdays of himself or Jesus Christ. Side by side stand silent records of the successive studies and pursuits of following years with gift-books which, if sometimes worthless or inappropriate, intrinsically are precious because of the loving inscriptions written therein by hands which are perhaps long since perished. Here is a shabby volume, the result of much wrestling of spirit as to whether a dinner should be eaten or a book-stall treasure bought; there the costlier result of later economy. Happy indeed is the miser whose treasures are piled on shelves. They shall be an enduring fountain of joy to him to the end. What matter if, thereafter, they are hurried off to the grimy clutches of a dingy dispenser of second-hand books? They have served his turn, and when they are scattered each volume shall be the bearer of new delights to coming generations of book-worms; for, though the treasurer of gold bequeaths a curse with his hoard, the accumulator of books, in dying, blesses those that come after.

It is not needful that the book-lover should be a scholar or a wise man. On the other hand, the scholar and the wise man may lack his true wisdom; for a man may have books, and use them well too, and yet use them for service only. There are many such, and yet they are not of the true faith. Your literary man is but really a bibliophile. His books are his tools merely. The amateur worker in wood has the tenderer feeling towards his implements, though he makes little profitable use of them; and equally so the worthiest book-lover is oftenest on the amateur side of the hedge in literature. The necessities of trade, of production for daily bread, dull the finer feelings until the true touch is lost. There are, of course, exceptions, but the rule is that the busy maker of books comes to regard his shelf-furniture (with perhaps an exception for *one* shelf) much as the veriest Philistine, who looks blankly at the serried ranks around the book-collector's walls, and queries hopelessly: "Have you read all these?" Being answered, "No, nor ever shall," he turns away in amazement and disgust almost as great as that of his interlocutor.

Let it not be said that the love, the worship of books is an unworthy pursuit. For books are the noblest things in this world of ours. To write is the distinguishing stamp of man's superior greatness, and in books there are written the writer's best and choicest and most enduring thoughts. What are all forms of wisdom without their appropriate body? What are religions if not the outcome of bodies? Every creed that emerges from the savage level of dark fetish and idol worship does so by means of books.

The written word is the foundation—nay, the framework—of our great religions. Confucius, Buddha, Mahomet, and Christ are known to us only thus; but for the books they would have perished utterly from human knowledge long since. And surely he is no

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blind idolater who, sitting in his library, feels love and joy in the propinquity of the volumes which contain the undying wisdom of the great minds of all time. No wonder that the bookworm is taciturn and solitary. How can he converse and deal on equal terms with the commonplace people and things of everyday life, when he has but to retire and, shutting his door, be presently hobnobbing with Homer, Plato, Dante, Shakespeare, Fielding, Cervantes, Shelley, and a hundred more of the brightest and keenest spirits of humanity.

S. B.

The Christian Miracles.

(BY THE LATE J. M. WHEELER.)

THE results of modern inquiry into the date of the four canonical gospels are now fairly settled. The earliest date to which either of the three gospels can be assigned is the beginning of the second century; while as to John, the omission of all mention of that gospel by Papias and Justin Martyr warrants us in placing it in the latter half of the second century. The first testimony to the existence of four received gospels is found in a work ascribed to Irenæus, who is said to have been appointed Bishop of Lyons in Gaul, A.D. 174. The work, *Against Heresies*, in which the reference appears, must, however, be assigned to the following decade. The Gospel of John evidently arose between the age of Justin and of Irenæus. From its very nature it would be eagerly welcomed by zealous Catholics as an antidote to heretical Gnosticism as well as a theological biography fitted to attract Gentile thought. Irenæus being an orthodox Father—*i.e.*, one who admitted the supremacy of the Romish see, his appeal to the gospels has been considered as representative rather than individual. It should be borne in mind, however, that Irenæus was arguing against heretics who received other gospels. He mentions by name the Gospel of Truth received by the Valentinians, and the Gospel of Judas used by the Cainites. The Marcionites used the Gospel according to Marcion; and Gospels ascribed to Philip, James, Peter, and the twelve apostles, as well as the Gospel of the Hebrews and the Gospel of the Egyptians, were in existence in the second century.

We by no means expect that those who suppose that their livings depend on the traditional teaching will cease to pretend that their gospels have the weight of contemporary evidence and of undisputed authority. These gentry usually assume these points, and then ask sceptics what theory they frame of the miracles consistent with "the facts of scripture." The answer is, the scripture is untrustworthy. In no case does it represent the testimony of original eye-witnesses. The claims of John have already been briefly considered. The Gospel according to Matthew is evidently an original Greek document, and not a translation. The original Greek document, and all the early Fathers testify, written in Hebrew. Not one of the early Fathers mentions a translator, or suggests that Matthew wrote other than a gospel for the Hebrews, written in their own tongue. This Hebrew gospel differed from our Greek one. It consisted of *logia* or sayings. Epiphanius tells us the version used by the Ebionites omitted the story of the incarnation. How comes it, if Irenæus received exactly the same documents, that he seriously argues, upon the authority of John and all the elders in Asia, that Jesus lived to be upwards of fifty years of age?

But were the writers trustworthy? How did the writer of Matthew learn of the Incarnation? Did he hear it from Mary? And, if so, what credence is to be placed in her testimony, which she can hardly have communicated to her own family, since we read that "neither did his brethren believe in him"? Is it not plain that he is untrustworthy in relating this story which is unmentioned by Mark and John, and in declaring, as he alone does, that graves were opened and many bodies of the saints arose and came out of their resting-place after the resurrection, and went into the holy city, where they appeared unto many? This story of the resurrection is full of inherent improbabilities. Can it be credited that the Jews set a watch for fear that Jesus would rise, when even his disciples

did not expect the resurrection, but "all forsook him and fled"? Is it credible that the Roman guard, who had witnessed the stupendous miracle, took money to say that they had slept at their posts? Nor are the miracles by any means all of an exemplary character. Where was the beneficence in cursing a fig-tree so that it withered away? What purpose was served by sending devils into about two thousand pigs? What utility was there in providing from twelve to eighteen firkins of wine for guests, who had already "well drunk"? Moreover, Satan is credited with miracles. He takes Jesus to a high mountain whence all the kingdoms of the world can be seen, and then carries him to a pinnacle of the temple. Jesus himself prophesies that false Christs shall arise and show signs and wonders, to seduce, if possible, even the elect.

A peculiar feature of the Christian miracles which is constantly ignored by apologists is diabolism. The majority of the miracles ascribed to Jesus consist in the casting out of devils. When we read that "hath a devil" and "is mad" are used as synonymous, and find that the persons said to be "possessed" are also described as lunatic, or with the symptoms of epilepsy, or as suffering from dumbness, lameness, and blindness, how can we avoid the suggestion that the New Testament simply reflects the common savage superstition that certain diseases are the work of evil spirits, to be warded off by prayer or other charms of presumed magical efficacy? Four hundred years before the time of Christ, Hippocrates wrote a treatise with the express view of combatting the common superstition that epilepsy and madness were the work of demons. Yet Jesus, declared to be omniscient, never said one word to discourage the popular belief—a belief which led to the slaughter of thousands of innocent women as agents of witchcraft. On the contrary, he is represented as repeatedly speaking on the presumption that diabolical agency was the immediate cause of the infirmities. In the case of the boy described as lunatic, he says, in accordance with the ideas of the time, "this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." He rebukes the devils and makes their agency the subject of a didactic discourse, asking the Pharisees, "If I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out?"—a proof of the common practice of exorcism, and an admission that others performed similar miracles to his own. Josephus likewise alludes to the casting out of demons as performed by miraculous means. In the absence of anything like medical science, the arts of healing and of magic were supposed to be closely related.

Sufficient evidence is given in the New Testament itself of the superstition of the time. When Herod the Tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus, he said to his servants, "This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead," while the Jews said Jesus had a devil. "Sorcerers" are continually referred to. Elymas, the sorcerer, was termed a child of the Devil, and smitten with blindness by Paul. Simon Magus is declared to have bewitched the people of Samaria. Justin Martyr tells us this Simon was worshipped by nearly all the Samaritans as the supreme God. We read also in the Acts of the Apostles, that when the inhabitants of Melita saw Paul shake off a viper into the fire without taking harm, they thought he was a god.

Modern Christians feel themselves only called upon to believe the miraculous stories related in the books declared canonical by the councils of the Church. The early Christians were not so particular, and as readily believed that Jesus made sparrows out of clay, as related in the Gospel of St. Thomas, as that he cured a blind man by putting clay and spittle on his eyes, as related in the Gospel according to St. John, who, by the way, tells us that, if all the things which Jesus did were written, the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. Not one of the Apocryphal Gospels makes a stronger demand upon credulity than the legend of a birth from a virgin mother, or contains a more improbable story than that of the sun being darkened and the saints rising out of their graves at the resurrection. Miracles, however, are only seen in their true absurdity when they are related outside the books which we have been educated to believe divine. The wonders ascribed to Hindu, Mohammedan, Mormon, and spiritist thaumaturgists are properly considered to reflect only the credulity of their believers. The wonders

of spiritism, the pretended miracles at Lourdes and Knock, are attested by numerous respectable living witnesses. Do Protestants think of believing them? Certainly not. Yet they pretend to believe the reports of supernatural occurrences a long way off and a good while ago, in a dark and ignorant age, and amongst a semi-barbarous people. Truly miracles are like wine, and vastly improve by age.

Retrospective and Prospective.

Back in Time's eternal pages,
When the world-mist floated free,
Unknown forces, and unerring,
Fated life for you and me;
Slowly, subtly, surely, grandly,
Mounting alway up and on,
Every atom's tiniest movement
Was decreed in ages gone.

When this world took on opaqueness
And the heat had soared away,
Nascent, then, there lay the earnest
Of a nobler form than clay;
Lighting up the future pathway,
Broke an all resplendent dawn,
Glowing fragrant in the morning
When the ethnic man was born.

Urging forward through the brambles;
Sisyphean, rough, and wild;
Man by man was led a captive
To the human heart defiled—
Plunging down the ragged gorges,
Pressing up the rugged steeps,
Frozen stiff by Arctic winters,
Blackened where the Nilcland sleeps.

Serf and vellein! slave and bondman!
Hist'ry shows him crouching there,
With that yearning face transfigured,
In the Truth's supernal glare,
Oh, the shame! and oh, the horror!
Fifty billion hells in one!
Birthrights lost—and lost forever—
When the sodden life was done.

Aye! but soon a portent brighter,
Resting low athwart the skies,
Beckons all, new-thrilled and waiting,
Points to sweeter by-and-byes.
Brother clasps the hand of brother;
And I see them smile again,
Gathered on the sun-crowned summits
For the equal rights of man.

See the soft and mellow lustre
From a fast-dissolving bond,
Gently shining through the portals
Of a glory-day beyond;
Feel the fresh ambrosial zephyrs,
Know that Wrong is swept away;
See great Justice rise triumphant
O'er the shackles worn to-day.

Evermore the ceaseless surges
Moan in elemental strife,
Ever down the endless ages
Sift the trickling sands of life;
But the fair and fading twilight
Of our kindred human race
Warm shall spread, and amaranthine,
Through the mystic realms of space.

GEORGE ALLEN WHITE.

—Commonwealth (New York).

How to Help Us.

- (1) Get your newsagent to take a few copies of the *Freethinker* and try to sell them, guaranteeing to take the copies that remain unsold.
- (2) Take an extra copy (or more), and circulate it among your acquaintances.
- (3) Leave a copy of the *Freethinker* now and then in the train, the car, or the omnibus.
- (4) Display, or get displayed, one of our contents-sheets, which are of a convenient size for the purpose. Mr. Forder will send them on application.
- (5) Get your newsagent to exhibit the *Freethinker* in the window.

Acid Drops.

THE age of miracles is past, and the Pope can hardly live much longer, considering his great age and the operation he had to undergo recently. The *Chronicle* correspondent says he is not exactly ill, but his life is being slowly extinguished, like a lamp that is deprived of oil. We may look forward, therefore, to another of those religious comedies, the election of a new Pope.

Now that the wily old Pope sees a prospect of justice being done to Dreyfus he tries to cry off on behalf of the Catholic Church. "Let no one hope," he says, "to make an affair of religion of this party affair." Happily this bit of hedging is too late. The Catholic Church in France has done its dirty worst to prevent justice being done to a Jew, and the facts are too well known throughout the civilised world. Had the Pope spoken earlier, we might have believed in his honesty.

The pious fire-eaters of the Church-and-Army party in France, finding the Dreyfus affair to be bad business after all, are now looking farther afield, and meditating the possibility of fighting England. The *Revue des Deux Mondes*, which has a reputation for gravity, actually publishes a plan for invading perfidious Albion. It appears that an army of 170,000 could land here—that is, if we would only let them—and overrun the country, while the Irish could be armed with old Gras rifles to shoot down the hated Saxons. This enterprising army would cross from France to England in fifteen hundred steam pinnaces, which would cost a hundred and fifty million francs. All that is wanted is the pinnaces and the francs. *Voilà*. And it will be all over with John Bull.

We hope our "sweet enemy France," as gallant Sir Philip Sidney called her, will not let her head be turned with such nonsense. The majority of Englishmen, and Freethinkers particularly, want to be at peace with France; but if those 170,000 Frenchmen once got on board those 1,500 pinnaces, we should be compelled to sink the lot of them, unless they hurried home again—and that would be decidedly unpleasant.

"Providence" was not kind to Mr. W. T. Stead. He had bagged Mr. John Morley, the famous Freethinker, as the principal orator at the Queen's Hall "Peace Crusade" meeting, while a famous Christian was to occupy the chair. Mr. Morley, however, is unfortunately suffering from a bronchial attack, and could not keep his engagement. Mr. W. L. Courtney was engaged to fill the vacancy, but he is not Mr. Morley; we mean he is not a famous *Freethinker*.

Here is the *Westminster Gazette* at last admitting that, if the Czar's peace rescript was inspired by humanitarian motives, his political advisers were probably actuated by motives of interest. We have thought that all along, and have said so more than once. Russia wants to gain time. Ten years' peace would be an immense advantage to her imperial designs in Asia. Meanwhile the Russian autocracy shows how much it really hates war by persecuting myriads of its subjects who refuse to bear arms. "Don't let us fight," the Czar says to Europe. Then he turns round on a portion of his own subjects who are thoroughly sincere in their hatred of war, and exclaims: "You won't fight, you scoundrels, you won't fight, eh? Damn you, you *shall* fight or be lashed and imprisoned." And this is the Christian young man whom we are invited to cheer like mad.

Councillor John Ferguson introduced what is called "an element of discord" into the Glasgow peace meeting. He tried to move an amendment calling upon the Czar to cease his "alarming preparations for aggressive war," his "barbarous violation of the Finland Constitution," etc., as the best means of promoting his cause. Mr. Ferguson's amendment was ruled out of order, but he had a good many sympathisers in the meeting.

The *Edinburgh Evening News*, in a leaderette on Mr. Stead's meeting there, distrusts the zeal of the clergy in this Peace Crusade, and sarcastically remarks that "the appearance of the angelic choir at Bethlehem some nineteen hundred years ago is now judged by history as being a trifle premature."

Some time ago the newspapers told us that Cissy Loftus had declined to take her advertised turn in a New York hall because two other ladies took a previous turn in which they made a too lavish display of their figures. Now the newspapers report that this lady's husband, Mr. Justin Huntly McCarthy, has been lecturing on Omar Khayyam at the Lyceum Theatre to the "entire uppertendom" of New York City. Miss Isadora Duncan assisted by illustrating the great Persian poet in dancing. Some sensation occurred when she appeared partially undraped, and about forty society dames

got up and left the hall, but all the other matrons and maidens stopped and enthusiastically applauded the dancer.

New York "society" ladies might be much better employed than in watching sensuous dances. But what can you expect from idle rich people? Being well-fed, and perhaps well-liquored, and having nothing to do, they wax fat and kick. The same thing went on in all the great capitals of antiquity; and Christianity, with all its pretensions, has not been able to prevent it from going on in all the great capitals of modern "civilisation." No doubt those "society" women in New York are nearly all professed Christians; that is to say, the Christian religion is one of their many forms of excitement.

The General Committee of the Evangelical Free Churches of England and Wales has to consider the summoning of a Conference to discuss whether Nonconformist parents, all over the country, should withdraw their children from Church of England schools, and keep them away until the Government provides proper accommodation for them in Board schools. We don't suppose this will come to anything, but if it does we shall have an opportunity of driving home to Nonconformists the flagrant wrongfulness of their own dealing with the question of religious education. The very same Conscience Clause which they declare to be a sham when it is offered them as a safeguard against Church tyranny is just what they themselves offer all non-Christians as the most beautiful arrangement that is conceivable.

Professor Bruce, of the Free Church College, Glasgow, is one of the cleverest trimmers in the theological camp. A paper by him was read at the recent meeting of the National Council of the Evangelical Free Churches, in which he stated that pessimism was finding its way into our light literature, and that a certain novelist had indulged in "sneers at the President of the Immortals." This is, of course, an allusion to Mr. Thomas Hardy; though it is difficult to understand why Tess should be called "light literature" by the author of *Christian Apologetics*, which is a work of far more obvious fiction. Professor Bruce went on to say that "Atheism had for some time back been pretty much out of fashion." But this can hardly be true, for when was Atheism in fashion? Agnosticism, he said, had taken its place—which is another inaccuracy. According to Professor Bruce, Mr. Herbert Spencer accepts the first article of the Theistic creed, that God is, and refuses the second, that he is the rewarder of goodness. Well now, this is another inaccuracy. Professor Bruce is invited to tell us where and when Mr. Spencer has accepted the proposition that "God is." We know something of Mr. Spencer's writings, and we should very much like to have that particular passage pointed out to us, for it has utterly escaped our memory. We beg Professor Bruce to do this at once.

Dr. Bruce admitted that "there was evil enough sorely trying to faith in human history." We should think there was. And perhaps the most trying phenomenon to a fastidious intelligence is the controversial trickery of the professional champions of faith. It is so hard to think that God would allow such men, century after century, and millennium after millennium, to speak in his name.

We belong to the humanitarians, but we despise mere sentimentalism. If flogging, for instance, is a good thing for men (say) who ill-use women, why is it not a good thing too for women (say) who ill-use children? And if capital punishment is to be retained, we don't see why a murderess should not be hung, guillotined, or electrocuted as well as a murderer. We are not, therefore, specially disgusted at the electrocution of Mrs. Martha Place, at Sing Sing prison, New York, simply on the ground that she was a female. What particularly disgusts us is the religious hypocrisy attending the execution. The poor wretch sat in the death-chair with a prayer-book clutched in one hand, murmuring "God help me," and the chaplain was helping her along towards her approaching interview with the Lord. Now just look at it in the light of Christian doctrines. The wretched woman's immortal soul was being hurried to its final account whether ready or not, and the difference between heaven and hell for ever. What meant the difference between heaven and hell for ever. What appalling cheek or callousness on the part of Christian judges, juries, gaolers, and executioners to hasten any human being to such a dread alternative.

Farmer Samuel Bourne dropped dead suddenly in a Wesleyan chapel at Nantwich. Of course it means nothing, except perhaps heart-disease or apoplexy. But it would have meant a good deal more (to Christians) if such an incident had occurred at a Secularist meeting. Orthodox people would have shaken their heads, and muttered something about "the Lord's doings."

Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth. "General" Booth has had an attack of dysentery, and Mr. Price Hughes had inflammation of the right leg. Happily both are getting better, so the gaiety of nations will not be seriously eclipsed.

By the way, some Salvationists are likely to be visited by their "General's" complaint, for during Self-Denial Week some of them have been living on bread and water. But perhaps they make up for it afterwards.

"Self-Denial Week," as the followers of the non-military "General" Booth style it, has just passed. We have often wished that the Salvation musicians would deny themselves the pleasures of tormenting their neighbors, if only for one week in the year.

We have often said that Jesus Christ was really no exemplar to men in general, as he was not a husband and father, and had not to bear most of the burdens of citizenship. This has dawned upon Mr. G. R. Sims, or perhaps we should say he has just found the courage or the opportunity to say it. In last week's *Referee*, writing with reference to the trumpery American book, entitled *In His Steps; or, what Would Jesus Do?* the lively "Dagonet" says:—"Jesus was never faced with the difficulties of modern civilisation. He was never married, and consequently never had to consider the interests of his wife and children." Precisely so. We are glad to see the views of the *Freethinker* spreading, if slowly, to other journals.

Mr. Sims goes on pointing out that we could not possibly act as Jesus did, for he could work miracles, and indeed was God. That also has been frequently pointed out in the *Freethinker*. Finally, of course, Mr. Sims offers a pinch of consolation to the Christians he has laughed at. He tells them that if we "cannot to-day take the Savior as a model in all the transactions of life," we can all try to do as little harm and as much good as possible. Quite so. But all that was said long before Jesus Christ, and would still be said if he had never come at all.

We stated last week that the correspondence printed in the *West Ham Herald* between Mr. Charles Hughes and the Rev. G. Mackey was incomplete, the most important letter of all being purposely omitted. Our contemporary replies that it printed everything Mr. Mackey sent. We have no doubt of that. It was not our intention to throw any sort of discredit upon the *Herald*.

Mr. Justice Day, who is, we believe, a Roman Catholic, belongs to the severe school of jurists. Last November he took the South Wales Circuit, and dealt out very heavy sentences. He was particularly hard on "robbery with violence," and ordered "the cat" for every prisoner who was able to bear it. "What has been the result," the *Westminster Gazette* asks, "on the calendar? As far as can be judged, none whatever. The calendar for the present assizes is the largest for several years. There are over ninety prisoners to be tried—and, what is very significant, no less than eighteen of these are charged with 'robbery with violence.'" When will judges—aye, and legislators too—learn that even criminals cannot be improved by brutality? Never, we fear, while they are Roman Catholics.

Evangelist Moody, preaching to the inmates of the Colorado state prison, said: "We are naturally bad, the whole crowd of us." For once in his life, at any rate, Moody evidently found himself in thoroughly congenial society. "The first man born of woman," he continued, "was a murderer. Sin leaped into the world full-grown, and the whole race has been bad ever since." What a lovely philosophy! But it was disproved on the spot. Moody announced that he had a free pardon from the governor for one of them. It was for a woman, who naturally cried for joy; and most of the other prisoners wept sympathetically with her; which makes it quite clear that a liberal discount must be knocked off Moody's dismal estimate of human nature.

Willie Delacy was a fifteen-year-old altar boy at Holy Cross Church, Bellevue, Scranton, Pennsylvania. On Sunday morning, February 12, he suddenly sprang to his feet and rushed to the pulpit, shouting "Stop, I am the son of God." He was got away to the vestry, where it took six men to hold him. It is too late to play that little game with success. Willie Delacy might have caught on a couple of thousand years ago. Now he will be fixed up in an asylum.

"Ministers, Precentors, and Beadles in Both Worlds" was the title of a lecture delivered in the Mission Hall, Kilsyth, by the Rev. Thomas Somerville, of Blackfriars Church, Glasgow. Naturally, it attracted a large audience. However, the reverend gentleman was unable to tell them anything about church officials in the world to come. The two worlds were simply Great Britain and America; and, according to the report in the local *Chronicle*, the discourse consisted for the most part of rollicking stories, one of which was rather at the lecturer's own expense. He said that he called one day on a female parishioner at Kirkintilloch, and before he went she asked him to offer up a prayer. He did so, and when he opened his eyes the woman had gone. Presently she returned, and "I beg your pardon," she said,

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"but the Kirkintilloch Band was playing, and I just went out to see it." Next time, we presume, the man of God made his prayer shorter, or prayed with one eye open.

Mr. J. Shufflebotham, who represented labor and secular education on the Bolton School Board, has had to retire, and the local *Evening News* sincerely regrets "the termination for the time at any rate of a career of much public usefulness." Mr. Shufflebotham has not committed any great crime. He got into a quarrel on the Board with the Rev. T. A. Clarke, and the man of God found an opportunity of litigation, with the result that his enemy is driven into the Bankruptcy Court. It is always a ticklish business fighting these men of God, and Mr. Shufflebotham knows it now. They talk consumedly about mercy, forgiveness, and humility; but if you only tread on their toes, or accidentally let a draught fall on them, you soon find out the extent of their sincerity.

The Paris correspondent of the *Daily News* gives an interesting account of the jury that acquitted M. Gohier: "I have been to see M. Ledru, the foreman of the jury that acquitted M. Gohier. He says that the Dreyfus question was, by common consent of the jurors, kept out of the Gohier matter, but there were three who had strong opinions on the divinity that doth hedge the army. They thought the heaviest punishment too light for M. Gohier. There were four who were strongly of opinion that a man has a right to say what he thinks, and to ferret out and ventilate an abuse. They knew what life in a barrack was. When they went home at the end of the first day, they all read M. Gohier's book. The four came back, saying: 'We find no fault with it; it is perfectly true.' The waverers were won over in the jury-room."

"Sacrilege at a Roman Catholic Cathedral" was the headline of a newspaper paragraph which recorded the fact that thieves had broken into the Roman Catholic gospel-shop at Clifton. Stealing from laymen is only theft, but stealing from the Church—that is, from the priests—is sacrilege. That is a much darker crime, and the man who commits it is sure of hell unless he repents and makes full restitution. Moreover, the priests have industriously circulated the notion that property taken from the Church will carry a curse even to its most innocent possessor. Students will remember old Sir Henry Spelman's *History and Fate of Sacrilege*, in which this notion was worked out historically. It is an amusing book in its way. Many persons who profited by the spoliation of the Church in the fifteenth century in England, or their families afterwards, suffered some misfortune or other. This was quite natural, for most families suffer misfortunes, whether they are good, bad, or indifferent. But the worthy Spelman chronicled his select instances, and treated every one of them as a divine judgment. Had he lived in a later age, he would have seen some well-known aristocratic families flourishing amazingly on inherited spoils of Holy Mother Church.

"I prayed for her good and hard las' night, but it ain't helped her any." So says Tiny Clum, the blacksmith's little girl, in Mr. H. A. Vachell's *Procession of Life*, an excellent story of California. Many grown-up people have prayed good and hard, like Tiny Clum, with just the same result.

"Providence" continues to be very active in the matter of storms, and all the world is receiving its attentions. Eighty-three vessels were wrecked the other day in one hurricane off Queensland.

Mr. Dooley, in the humorous American book which is causing a sensation over here, points out that the Americans and the Spaniards, in the late war, called each other murderous, irreligious thieves, and asked the Lord to wipe each other off the face of the earth. But, although the Spaniards prayed hard, the Americans prayed harder, having some of the most modern praying machines in the world, in the shape of effective ironclads.

Father Kelly, in this book, declares that if he went into battle he would go with a prayer-book in one hand and a sword in the other; and if the work called for two hands, it would not be the sword he would drop. "Don't you believe in prayer?" says Hogan. "I do," he says, "but a healthy person ought to be ashamed to ask for help in a fight."

The Bishop of Stepney, speaking at a West-end drawing-room meeting on behalf of the London Diocesan Police-court Mission, drew attention to some remarkable aspects of Christian civilisation in London, such as seventeen people living and sleeping in one room, drink, betting, and gambling. Then, by some obscure mental process, he began talking about Secularism. "It was sad," he said, "to see boys applauding the blasphemies of Secular lecturers in Victoria Park"; but he added that "he was glad that during the past ten years such men had had a very warm time of it." By a "warm time," we presume, the Bishop alludes to the pious attempts at breaking up the Secularist meetings. But these pious attempts have not succeeded, and the "blasphemies"—that

is, the common-sense criticisms of Christianity and the Bible—still continue.

Parson Blandford, vicar of Lutton, undertook to conduct two funerals for Parson Bennett, vicar of Long Sutton. One was that of a seven months' old child who had not been baptised. This was clearly not its own fault, but the man of God refused to bury it for all that. The coffin was placed in the grave, and the sexton began shovelling in the earth, when the poor distressed father begged to have something said, if it was only the Lord's Prayer. But the man of God was obdurate, and finally the sexton removed the coffin from the grave and placed it in the belfry, where it might have remained till now if Parson Bennett had not returned home and conducted the burial service himself. We read that the affair has caused quite a sensation in the locality. It will probably help on the cause of Disestablishment.

Parson Pierrepont Edwards, vicar of West Mersea, Essex, recently known at Southwark as "the fighting parson," has been given a month by the magistrates in which to pay his poor rates. "Oh," he said, "I hope to be a millionaire by then." Did he mean in heaven?

"Providence" does not protect children even in church. During a Mass procession in the Catholic church at Hometon, on Sunday morning, a girl about twelve years of age got her long tulle veil set on fire, and was in danger of a terrible death. Happily a nun had the presence of mind to snatch off the burning veil, instead of praying to the Lord, and a catastrophe was averted.

The *Home Magazine* is one of the Newnes publications, and is about on a level, intellectually, with *Tongues of Fire* or the *Christian Herald*. Last week's issue contained a story headed "An Atheist's Son." This is how it opens: "The converted son of an atheist (small a, please) was discovered by his father upon his knees. With an oath the father ordered him to rise, and bade him choose between his home and his new-found religion." New-found religion, for Atheism, is distinctly good. For the rest, we suppose the writer went upon his own experience. Christians do sometimes quarrel with those about them who dare to think independently, and the writer supposed (in his ignorance) that Atheists do the same. Perhaps it is unnecessary to add that the young man converts the governor upon the spot by the simple device of praying for him. The mother had to take a dose of the same medicine, but it isn't said whether she was converted or not.

Another piece of the same calibre in the *Home Magazine* is "Talks with Sceptics," by Henry Thorne, who has apparently seen "forty years of Christian service." We don't know what brains he started with; at present they seem to have the organic consistency of a rice pudding. "I will do my best," he says, and no doubt he has done it. Poor man! Let us hope he will not go to heaven *via* a home for imbeciles.

Another Freethinker has been converted (on paper) by Pastor T. D. Lawton, of Brightwell, Wallingford. It happened "some years ago," and the man was "a professed Freethinker." Where and when are not stated—as usual. Suffice it to say he is now "a standard-bearer for the Lord." The price of the story is a halfpenny, or 3s. 6d. per hundred. We give the author a free advertisement. Perhaps he would like to convert some more professed Freethinkers. We could send him, if he will pay carriage, some tough samples.

The New York *Truthseeker* keeps a friendly eye on the achievements of American men of God. We see from the last number to hand that Professor G. H. Stephens, of Lafayette College theologian, who set fire to Pardee Hall, has to do nine years' imprisonment. The Rev. W. N. Coffee, of Des Moines, is in gaol for robbing an old lady, and three girls he was engaged to are disconsolate. The Rev. Joseph K. Dixon, of Boston, is accused by his wife of statutory offences. The Rev. L. D. Bliss, of Great Barrington, is defendant in a five-thousand dollar suit for slander. But enough. These will do as samples.

The Bishop of Dover has just confirmed between 160 and 170 candidates at St. John's Church, Margate. The candidates from the Deaf and Dumb Asylum were not quite ready. They will be taken later on. Meanwhile it would be just as well if the Bishop of Dover would demonstrate that he is possessed of the Holy Ghost by giving them hearing and speech. Most of them would probably prefer it to confirmation.

While life is governed by the laws of habit and the empire literature bows only to its own dictates. Knowing this single restraint, it is otherwise untrammelled as freedom itself; and he who would throw a needless chain upon it might as well attempt to stem the torrent or fetter the whirlwind.—Charles Wibley.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, March 26, Birmingham (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broad-street): 11, "The Dreyfus Affair, and the Catholic Conspiracy Against the French Republic"; 3, "Plain Truths for Bible Worshippers"; 7, "The Resurrection Story; or, The Great Easter Fairy Tale."

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.

READERS of the Freethinker will be very sorry to hear that Mr. Charles Watts has been seriously ill in America, having been confined to his bed for a fortnight with influenza, and being still weak and depressed, though out of danger. In view, however, of the dangers of a relapse, we have advised him to return home, and let America work out its own salvation for the present. Our friend and colleague has plenty of "go" left in him, but he is no longer young, and cannot take the same liberties with himself that he did fifteen years ago.—Another invalid is Mr. Francis Neale. He is down with the influenza in London, and is very seriously ill. All our readers will hope for his early recovery.—Mr. Foote has to keep working in spite of a nasty cold, which he is gradually subduing.

C. BAKER.—Thanks for your efforts to vindicate this journal against its calumniators.

W. C. SAVILLE.—Pleased to hear from you again, and to know that you are still firm "in the faith."

J. KENNEDY.—We appreciate your letter, and reciprocate your good wishes.

G. W. B.—It isn't a question of wishes, but a question of evidence. Man's yearnings will hardly create what does not exist—will they?

C. HUGHES.—Thanks for your hint as to the Reference Library. It is not so certain, though, that Alderman Fulcher will be defeated.—Mr. Foote has long intended to pen his recollections of "B.V.," but duties multiply and leisure becomes scarcer. Still, he will make an effort as soon as possible.

"FREETHINKER" DEFENCE FUND (WEST HAM).—J. Kennedy, £1; Mrs. Daniel Baker, £1 1s.; J. G. Dobson, 2s.; S. Burgon, 2s. 6d.; J. H. Hallows, 2s. 6d.; Dundee Branch, 10s.; A. G. Lye, 1s.; T. Bradshaw, 2s. Per Miss Vance:—J. W. G., 5s.; W. Stewart, 1s. Per R. Forder:—R. Gibbon, 3s.; E. Snelling, 2s. 6d.

ALICE M. BAKER.—Kindly convey our best regards to Mrs. Baker. We are glad to have a place in her thoughts.

W. DALRYMPLE.—We must agree to differ, and you must not expect that our saying a word for the Peculiar People brings us any the nearer to Christianity.

S. BURGON.—Thanks for your welcome letter. A lady correspondent is a welcome relief. Pleased to know you appreciate Lamb's Tales from Shakespeare. He has a sure place among the immortals. By the way, that volume is partly the work of his sister Mary.

T. J. THURLOW.—Both inserted. It is good of you to take so much trouble.

G. W. (Gateshead).—It is quite true that Pasteur, twenty years ago, gave his name as a vice-president of the British Secular Union. What the Saturday Review said on October 3, 1895, is not very important. What Pasteur himself said is the great thing. We always understood that he was a Theist, but not a Christian. To say he was a devout Catholic seems quite absurd.—We are glad to have your high opinion of the Freethinker.

T. WILMOT.—See paragraph. Mr. Foote will write you shortly about another date.

W. COX.—Pleased to hear the Liverpool Branch is doing well in spite of the bigots.

T. BRADSHAW.—Certainly it is a good plan to give away the Freethinker after reading it, unless the subscriber wants to keep it, in which case he might sometimes give away another copy. N. S. S. TREASURER'S SCHEME.—Miss Vance acknowledges:—W. Stewart, 5s.

R. M. B.—It occurs in Origen's reply to Celsus, where quotations are given as well as answers. See also Froude's essay on Celsus in Short Studies; likewise the Jewish Life of Christ, by Wheeler and Foote. Celsus's writings were burnt under the early Christian emperors; all that remains of them is what is quoted in Origen's reply—which, of course, was not burnt.

JAMES FORRESTER (Dundee).—We thank the Dundee friends for their contribution towards the expenses of the West Ham fight, and for the pleasant words accompanying it.

E. REDWOOD.—See paragraph, &c. Kindly convey our sincere sympathy to Mrs. Barter and the family.

W. D.—In our next, probably.

RECEIVED.—West Ham Herald—Crescent—Freidenker—Boston Investigator—Ethical World—Secular Thought—Bath Herald—Bolton Evening News—Torch of Reason—Independent Pulpit—Der Arme Teufel—Two Worlds—Kilsyth Chronicle—Liberator—Public Opinion—New Century—Sydney Bulletin—New York Truthseeker—Free Society—People's Newspaper—Isle of Man Times—Freedom—Liverpool Mercury—Margate and Ramsgate Gazette—El Libre Pensamiento—Progressive Thinker—Yorkshire Weekly Post—Manchester Guardian—Edinburgh Evening News.

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's lectures at Birmingham to-day (March 26) will be delivered in the Prince of Wales Assembly Room, Broad-street. The subjects are seasonable, and there will doubtless be crowded meetings. Local Freethinkers should advertise the lectures well amongst their Christian friends, and try to bring some of them along. There is nothing to pay, the admission being free, and Christians like cheap salvation.

In spite of a bad cold, and the unpropitious weather for such a complaint, Mr. Foote fulfilled his engagement at New Brompton on Sunday, lecturing morning and evening in the Secular Hall. There was a good audience on the first occasion, and on the second the place was crowded. Both lectures were very much applauded. Discussion was earnestly invited by the chairman, but none was forthcoming. One or two Christian controversialists who were present will probably prefer to answer Mr. Foote in his absence.

The New Brompton Secular Hall has been improved, and its seating accommodation enlarged, since Mr. Foote's previous visit. Most of the work was done by members who toiled *con amore* after their daily labor. The cost of materials, and other expenditure, amounting to about £60, has been also met by the members, who are nearly all working-men. The Committee are making a big propagandist effort this winter, and so far the success has been gratifying. On the whole, the Chatham and New Brompton Society might serve as a pattern for many other districts.

Mr. Thompson, who is now secretary to the Chatham Branch, has for six years been a member of the Gillingham School Board. His seat is a pretty sure one, but he can never get anything carried, and a minority of one person gets somewhat monotonous, particularly when the majority conspire to evade answering him on the Board. Our view, however, is that Mr. Thompson's presence there is a good thing from the educational and propagandist point of view; and for this reason, at any rate, we hope he will continue to sit.

Mr. Joseph McCabe lectured at the Athenæum Hall on Sunday evening, his subject being "The High Church Movement." The lecture was very interesting and instructive, and was highly appreciated. There were two opponents—one an Agnostic, the other a well-known Christian Evidence screamer, who was judiciously sat upon by both chairman and lecturer. This evening (March 26) Mr. W. Heaford occupies the Athenæum Hall platform. His subject will be "Hymns That Don't Help Us."

The secretary of the Camberwell Branch reports that Mr. Elderkin's lecture on Sunday evening was a decided success, and says that other Branches should engage him for their platforms.

Mr. Sale, of Birmingham, gave two good lectures on Sunday in the Alexandra Hall, Liverpool. Mr. J. M. Robertson lectures there to-day (March 26). Admission is now by ticket.

Plymouth, Devonport, and Stonehouse Freethinkers are invited to attend a meeting at the Democratic Club, Whim-pole-street, on Sunday, April 9, at 8 p.m.

The Finsbury Branch holds a concert at the Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road, on Good Friday evening. Tickets can be obtained from Miss Vance, or at the Athenæum Hall on Sunday evening. They are only one shilling each, and the profit will go towards defraying the cost of the open-air lecture-work on Clerkenwell Green. Mr. Foote has promised to drop in and give a poetical or dramatic reading,

and will probably stop an hour or so to have a chat with friends who may be present.

A man calling himself Dr. Frederick Bell, and styling himself "the Prince of Orators," turned up at Boston and lectured at the Park Theatre in answer to Ingersoll's lecture on the Devil. It was no answer to Ingersoll at all, but that way of advertising shows how popular the Colonel is. Several adventurers seem to be making a living by following up his track and "answering" him.

Colonel Ingersoll has been lecturing nearly every night in March. There is a great run on his two new lectures, "Superstition" and "The Devil."

At the West Ham Town Council meeting on Tuesday, March 14, the Town Clerk mentioned that he had received two letters in reference to the *Freethinker* controversy. One was from the Catholic Electoral Association, complimenting the Council on the action it had taken; the other was from a Mr. Swain, asking the Council not to waste any more valuable time in discussing the question. Alderman Athey, who made such a humorous speech at Mr. Foote's meeting, was quite equal to this occasion. "They have had their fun," he said, "and we'll have ours."

"Proletaire," who does the Socialist and Labor column in the *West Ham Herald*, has become a little more genial since the big Stratford Town Hall gathering. "G. W. Foote's meeting," he allows, "was an enormous success." "Proletaire" rejoices that Alderman Fulcher's rescinding motion is to be moved individually, and not in the name of the Labor group. This will leave every member of the West Ham Town Council free to vote according to his personal conviction on the *Freethinker* question. "Now at last," "Proletaire" says, "we shall get the opportunity of a straight, free vote on the matter. I earnestly trust every man who values his own opinion, and the freedom of that opinion, will vote for the paper being placed back on the table again."

The National Secular Society's Annual Conference will be held (as usual) on Whit-Sunday, this time at Birmingham. The great Town Hall has been secured for the evening public meeting, and a large, handsome committee-room for the two business sessions in the morning and afternoon. Naturally the Birmingham Branch is delighted. It has had a stiff fight of late against calumny and persecution, and the Conference will be some compensation.

Considering what has happened at Birmingham, Freethinkers all over the country should try to make this Conference a great success in point of numbers and representative character. Branches of the N. S. S. should lose no time in electing their delegates and deciding what they wish to have placed upon the Conference agenda.

The Man of Straw.

FROM COLONEL INGERSOLL'S LECTURE ON "THE DEVIL."
SOME of the preachers who have answered me say that I am fighting a man of straw.

I am fighting the supernatural, the dogma of inspiration, the belief in devils, the atonement, salvation by faith, the forgiveness of sins, and the savagery of eternal pain. I am fighting the absurd, the monstrous, the cruel.

The ministers pretend that they have advanced, that they do not believe the things that I attack. In this they are not honest.

Who is the "man of straw"?

The man of straw is their master. In every orthodox pulpit stands this man of straw, stands beside the preacher, stands with a club called a "creed" in his upraised hand. The shadow of this club falls athwart the open Bible, falls upon the preacher's brain, darkens the light of his reason, and compels him to betray himself.

The man of straw rules every sectarian school and college, every orthodox church. He is the censor who passes on every sermon. Now and then some minister puts a little sense in his discourse, tries to take a forward step. Down comes the club, and the man of straw demands an explanation, a retraction. If the minister takes it back—good. If he does not, he is brought to book.

The man of straw put the plaster of silence on the lips of Professor Briggs, and he was forced to leave the Church or remain dumb.

The man of straw closed the mouth of Professor Smith, and he has not opened it since.

The man of straw would not allow the Presbyterian creed to be changed.

The man of straw took Father McGlynn by the collar, forced him to his knees, made him take back his words, and ask forgiveness for having been abused.

The man of straw pitched Professor Swing out of the pulpit, and drove the Rev. Mr. Thomas from the Methodist church.

Let me tell the orthodox ministers that they are trying to cover their retreat.

You have given up the geology and astronomy of the Bible; you have admitted that its history is untrue. You are retreating still. You are giving up the dogma of inspiration; you have your doubts about the flood and Babel; you have given up the witches and wizards; you are beginning to throw away the miraculous; you have killed the little devils, and in a little while you will murder the Devil himself.

In a few years you will take the Bible for what it is worth. The good and true will be treasured in the heart; the foolish, the infamous, will be thrown away.

The man of straw will then be dead.

Of course, the real old petrified, orthodox Christian will cling to the Devil. He expects to have all of his sins charged to the Devil, and at the same time he will be credited with all the virtues of Christ. Upon this showing on the books, upon this balance, he will be entitled to his halo and harp. What a glorious, what an equitable transaction! The sorcerer Superstition changes debt to credit. He waves his wand, and he who deserves the tortures of hell receives an eternal reward.

But if a man lacks faith the scheme is exactly reversed. While in one case a soul is rewarded for the virtues of another, in the other case a soul is damned for the sins of another. This is justice when it blossoms in mercy.

Beyond this idiocy cannot go.

Obituary.

BURIED as a Secularist at Abney Park cemetery, Mrs. Kelsey, the beloved wife of Mr. Kelsey, of South Hackney, aged 50, on Thursday, March 16. The lady fell a victim to paralysis, a malady which, in her case, entailed many months of helplessness, as well as acute bodily suffering, all of which she bore with the most admirable fortitude, proving that the principles she held by in health enabled her to pass bravely through her protracted and painful illness.—T. J. THURLOW.

DIED at his residence, Dalston, London, at the advanced age of eighty-seven, on Thursday, March 9, the veteran Freethinker and temperance reformer, Mr. Dell, after a brief but very painful illness, during which the brave old man bore himself with exemplary fortitude. At his funeral at Manor Park on Thursday, March 16, it fell to my lot to say a few parting words over his remains. On the last occasion of his speaking to me Mr. Dell requested me to beg the publicity of the *Freethinker* for the expression of his most profound gratitude to the National Secular Society, to Mrs. Besant, and to the Bethnal Green Branch of the N. S. S. for their great benevolence to him during his declining years.—T. J. THURLOW.

WE regret to have to record the death of Henry James Barter, of Plymouth; a thoroughly honest and capable man, and an ardent Freethinker. He was universally respected. The Unitarian minister read an impressive burial service at the grave. The Masonic burial service was also read. Secularists and Freemasons were well represented at the funeral.

Holy Thoughts in Church!

They say *she* lispeth when she sings,
So might the "angels" do;
She is an angel without wings,
And *fly* to a thing or two.

They call her a maid of low degree,
But she's divinely tall;
They call her very fair to see,
Yes, fair and dark withal.

They say her eyes are black as night,
Yet do the bright stars shine
With less of brilliancy and light,
Less murderously divine.

W. C. SAVILLE.

John E. Remsburg,

PRESIDENT, AMERICAN SECULAR UNION.

JOHN E. REMSBURG was born near Fremont, Ohio, January 7, 1848. He is of German-English descent. His paternal ancestors came from Germany and settled in Maryland about 1760; his maternal ancestors came from England and settled in New England about 1640.

His father was not a Church member, and, while a nominal believer in Christianity, was a man of broad and liberal views. His mother was a Methodist, but took little interest in religion during the later years of her life.

When John was six years old his father became totally blind. For years the mother supported the family with her needle. John received a good English education in the public schools. At the age of sixteen he entered the army, serving at Washington and Nashville till the close of the war. On his return from the army he engaged in teaching for a time. Afterwards he attended Ft. Edwards (N. Y.) Collegiate Institute for a year, pursuing his studies after leaving this institution.

In 1868 he went to Kansas, where he has since resided. For twelve years he was engaged in educational work, serving as Superintendent of Public Instruction for four years in his county, Atchison. While performing the duties of this office an incident occurred that determined his future career. He had rejected Christianity as untenable, but took little interest in religious matters. While visiting a school one day, he saw on the teacher's table a copy of Paine's *Age of Reason*—a book not often found in the schoolroom. Up to this time he entertained the popular opinion of Paine. He believed that, while he had aided in achieving American independence, he was yet a very bad man. He perused the book carefully, and became very much interested in it. It was a revelation to him. Paine's religious opinions, as there stated, he fully agreed with. Preceding the work was a sketch of Paine's life, very different from everything he had heard regarding him. Before he laid down the book he became convinced that Thomas Paine was one of the most worthy and one of the worst abused of men. He became interested in the man. He searched libraries; he read everything pertaining to him. The result was *The Life and Vindication of Paine*, his first book, published in 1880. In the preparation of this work he had the hearty support of Elizur Wright, Parker Pillsbury, George W. Julian, Charles Bradlaugh, and others.

About the same time Mr. Remsburg delivered his first Freethought address. It was warmly received, and Governor Robinson of Kansas, Judge Krekel of Missouri, and others who heard him, urged him to go on the rostrum.

At our invitation, in 1883, he attended the great Rochester Freethinkers' Convention, and there delivered his lecture on "False Claims." His success there as a lecturer was assured. One of the Liberal papers said: "The publication of his great lecture, 'False Claims,' marks an era in the progress of Liberalism. It is the most powerful document in the English language." His lecture on "Thomas Paine" Horace Seaver pronounced one of the best and most brilliant orations "he had ever listened to." Of his lecture on "Bible Morals" Helen H. Gardener says: "'Bible Morals' is the most conclusive argument in the fewest words that I ever listened to."

Mr. Remsburg makes no forensic display on the platform, and few gestures; but he commands the closest attention from his audience by his lucid presentation of his subject, and his able, comprehensive, and unanswerable arguments. Still, he often makes a telling point that brings forth thundering applause; but the greater portion of his speeches are direct appeals to the reason of his hearers. We well remember the closing words of a lecture he delivered at one of the New York Freethought conventions. His subject was "Bible Temperance." After a thorough digest of all the Bible had to say on the subject of intemperance and the liquor question, he closed his address with this emphatic affirmation: "I have carefully searched the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, and find therein but one instance of a man calling for water, and he was in hell." The house came down as it had not before during the convention.

Mr. Remsburg has lectured in fifty States, Territories, and provinces, and in twelve hundred cities and towns, including every large city in the United States and Canada. In the performance of this work he has travelled over three hundred thousand miles, a distance sixty thousand miles greater than from the earth to the moon. This has not all been in parlor cars and steamboat cabins. He has travelled thousands of miles by team, and hundreds of miles on horseback or on foot. If the mud or the snow-drifts were too deep to get through with a team, he went on foot. He has ridden seventy-five miles in an open wagon over the prairies of Western Kansas, with the mercury 20 degrees below zero. He has lectured at night, and then driven forty miles through the rain to catch a morning train.

He has had dozens of adventures similar to the following, which we take from his lecture notes published many years ago: "I spoke at Sturgis, in Southern Michigan, Tuesday night. I was billed for Coloma, in Western Michigan, the following night. In the morning I went to Kalamazoo,

where I expected to reach Coloma by way of the South Haven road. Owing to snow blockades, the road was out of coal, and no trains were running. I boarded a Michigan Central train and came through to Niles, intending to take the Benton Harbor road. Trains on this road were snow-bound, and I was baffled again. One more chance remained, and that was to reach New Buffalo before the Chicago and West Michigan train went north. So I took the Central again. Unfortunately, it was a through express, behind time, and dashed through New Buffalo at the rate of forty miles an hour. Michigan City, Ind., was the first stop. On, on, we sped, and the prison city was in sight. At the bridge east of town all trains slowed up. Looking out of the window I saw an eastern-bound train approaching. I changed from the one moving train to the other. It was the Chicago and West Michigan, and I was safe. Coloma was reached at noon."

He seldom misses his appointments, no matter how far apart. He has lectured at Council Bluffs, on the western borders of Iowa, one night, and at Ft. Wayne, in the eastern part of Indiana, on the following night. In December, 1891, he delivered four addresses, at the regular meetings of four different societies, in four different States, in twenty-four hours. He did not fill these appointments in their order, but went from the first State to the third, returned to the second, and went from that to the fourth. On Sunday morning, July 19, 1896, he left Iowa, went to Minnesota, delivered three lectures in that State, and returned to Kansas, reaching Atchison in time for dinner Monday.

He has held upwards of twenty debates. He has written several books, among which are the following:—*Life of Paine*, *Abraham Lincoln: Was He a Christian?* *The Fathers of Our Republic*, *The Image Breaker*, *Bible Morals*, and *Sabbath Breaking*. His lectures have been translated into various European and Asiatic languages, and have a large circulation in Europe, Asia, and Australia. The *Calcutta Gazette* says: "His lectures have an immense circulation in India."

Mr. Remsburg is now President of the American Secular Union and Freethought Federation. He has faith in the society, and believes that it is capable of accomplishing great good. He believes in confining the work of the society to the purposes which it was organized to promote—the secularisation of our National and State Governments, and the affirmation and negations of Freethought that relate to orthodox Christianity. He says that Freethinkers are practically agreed on these questions, and that to take up questions on which they are not agreed is to divide the society into factions, array them against each other, and destroy its usefulness.

As an evidence of Mr. Remsburg's conservative view on this subject, we remember he was one of the delegates, at the Chicago Liberal League Congress, in 1882, who stood with Colonel Ingersoll against the entire repeal of the laws enacted to prevent the circulation of obscene literature through the mails. He then thought they should be amended so that they could not be used against Freethought literature. That is what he desired should be done.

Mr. Remsburg has been a life-long student of history. He is passionately fond of the drama, music, arts, and literature. He loves fruits and flowers. He planted an orchard when he was ten years old, and ever since has devoted a considerable portion of his time to horticultural pursuits.

In 1870 he married Miss Nora M. Eiler, the daughter of a Kansas pioneer. She is a Freethinker, and has done much to make his life a happy one. They have six children, five sons and a daughter. Two of them, George and Charles, are newspaper men. Another, John, has made music his profession.

Colonel Ingersoll pays the subject of this sketch this tribute: "Mr. Remsburg has done splendid work all over this country. He is an absolutely fearless man, and tells really and truly what his mind produces." There is no man in the Liberal lecture field for whom Colonel Ingersoll has more respect and admiration than he has for John E. Remsburg.

We have known Mr. Remsburg quite intimately for the last twenty-five years, and we have greatly admired him as a lecturer and author and worker in the Freethought cause; but these are not the only qualifications that have made his influence felt for good wherever he has been. He has a personal character that is without reproach. No one can point to an immoral act, or any disreputable conduct, in his long public life. Where he is best known he is most respected. In his own town his life has been such that it commands the respect, if not the admiration, of his orthodox neighbors. Such a man's silence is more potent for good than the most eloquent words from one whose daily life is unworthy the principles he advocates. It would be well for the Liberal cause, which is the cause of Humanity, if it had many more champions whose ability and personal worth were equal to those of our highly esteemed friend, John E. Remsburg. May their number increase.

—*Freethought Magazine.*

A negro revivalist was asked how he got on with his meetings. "First-rate," said he; "I made seventy converts the first night."

The Parson and the Shepherd.

(*Pathetic Ballad.*)

"O MERRY, merry shepherd boy,
Why dost thou gaily toot
Those glad, exalting strains of joy
On yonder two-bob flute?"

"We dwellers in the godless town
Are sullen, sad, and mute.
What moves ye, honest country clown,
To blow the festive flute?"

"Whence come this glad content and joy?
What is their secret root?
O tell me, jolly shepherd boy,
And cease to blow the flute."

"I gets my grub and lodgings free,
I've got a Sunday suit;
A bob a week (enough for me),
My Bible, and my flute."

"Aha! thou dost, bucolic boy,
The infidel refute;
From Bible sources wells this joy
Expressed upon the flute."

"You read the Book! O, great amaze!
And ponder it, to boot;
In these degenerate, godless days,
O tootler on the flute!"

"I cannot read. From school they did
Me prematurely shoot
To mind them sheep—when quite a kid
I taught myself the flute."

"More wondrous still! O God, how few
So thirst for Bible fruit!
No doubt kind strangers read to you
In intervals of flute?"

"Should strangers venture through the gate,
Our boss (he's just a brute)
Would lock them up (he's magistrate)
And break my blessed flute."

"And yet the Holy Book, my boy,
Consoles beyond compute!
How doth it fill your soul with joy,
And animate your flute?"

"This field is damp. I cannot stand
All day, and so (I'm cute)
I sit upon the Bible, and
I play upon the flute."

EX-RITUALIST.

Marriage and Monogamy.

THAT any one should have ventured to propound the doctrine that human happiness is to be secured by levity and inconsistency in love is a fact which nothing but the utter deficiency of social and moral principles can explain. Love cannot be deep unless it remains constant to a fixed object. The very possibility of change is a temptation to it. So differently constituted as man and woman are, is their short life too much for perfect knowledge and love of one another? Yet the versatility to which most human affection is liable makes the intervention of society necessary. Without some check upon indecision and caprice, life might degenerate into a miserable series of experiments, each ending in failure and degradation. Sexual love may become a powerful engine for good; but only on the condition of placing it under rigorous and permanent discipline. Those who doubt the necessity for this have only to cast a glance beyond Western Europe at the countries where no such discipline has been established. It has been said that the adoption or rejection of monogamy is a simple question of climate. But for this hypothesis there is no ground whatever. It is as contrary to common observation as to philosophic theory. Marriage, like every other human institution, has always been improving. Beginning in all countries with unrestricted polygamy, it tends in all to the purest monogamy.

—Auguste Comte.

Many mothers are either compelled to stay away from church or take their babies with them. A poor woman took her little one in her arms to hear a London preacher. The loud voice from the pulpit awoke the child and made it cry, and its mother got up and was leaving, when the preacher stopped her by saying: "My good woman, don't you go away; the baby doesn't disturb me." "It isn't for that, sir, I leave," she replied; "it's you disturbs the baby."

Dod Grile's Religion.

THESE are the things in which we believe:—A trinity—three gods united by a rope at the waist; that being about the only sort of *Tria Juncta in Uno* that our humble intelligence can accurately comprehend. This triple deity is flesh and blood, for spirit, if it is anything, is breath, and in this case the question, Whose breath? would be utterly unanswerable. The remission of sins—that is, after they have been painfully expiated in the person of the sinner, otherwise we should have to relinquish a belief in justice. There is a heaven, the same as described by St. John. This is wholly uninhabited, except by the angels who were born there; for only a limited number of human beings have been good enough to go there, and these do not wish to spend an eternity of useless indolence. There is a hell; but its climate has undergone such a change in the last one hundred years that it may be called salubrious. In fact, it has been so modified in every respect that it is difficult to say what it is. These are the four cardinal points in our theology.

Au reste, we believe the doctrine of election, without understanding it, and revere the doctrine of redemption without believing it. We believe the world was created out of nothing, but don't know how the nothing was held together, and don't think it could be done again. We believe in baptism, for we have seen it done. We believe in divine mercy, without wishing to take any of it. We think the patriarchs were an honest and worthy lot, who have been shamefully misrepresented. We admire the wisdom of Solomon, and wish he had chosen to display it; and are amazed at the miracles of the prophets, so little inferior to those of our own prestidigitateurs, and in some respects superior to the corresponding ones of their heathen predecessors and contemporaries.

Of the four evangelists we have most confidence in John, because the gospel bearing his name was written some hundreds of years after the others, and contains some facts not previously attainable. And, finally, we believe that Jesus was the son of David, because two of the evangelists trace the descent of his adopted father direct from that person. From this brief and imperfect statement of our theological position, our biographer will have no difficulty in classing us. A man who believes in everything that anybody else does can be only a Pagan.

Christian Improvement.

To call the taming of an animal the "improving" of it sounds almost like a joke to our ears. Anybody who knows what goes on in menageries will be doubtful about the "improving" of animals there. They are weakened, they are made less mischievous, they become *sick* by the depressing emotion of fear, by pain, wounds, and hunger.—It is precisely the same with tamed man whom the priest has "improved." In the early Middle Ages, where in fact the Church was a menagerie more than anything else, the finest specimens of the "blond beast" were everywhere pursued—the distinguished Germanics, for example, were "improved." Afterwards, however, how did such a Germanic look when "improved," when seduced into the monastery? Like a caricature of man, like an abortion: he had become a "sinner," he stuck fast in the cage, he had got shut up in the midst of nothing but frightful notions.....And now he lay there, sick, miserable, ill-disposed towards himself; full of hatred against the vital instincts, full of suspicion with regard to everything still strong and happy. In short, a Christian.....Physiologically explained: in combat with the animal, the only means for making it weak can be to sicken it. The Church understood this: it *ruined* man, it weakened him,—but it claimed to have "improved" him.—*Nietzsche*.

Nature's Freethinker.

For what has he whose will sees clear
To do with doubt and faith and fear,
Swift hopes and slow despondencies?
His heart is equal with the sea's
And with the sea-wind's, and his ear
Is level to the speech of these,
And his soul communes and takes cheer
With the actual earth's equalities,
Air, light, and night, hills, winds, and streams,
And seeks not strength from strengthless dreams.

His soul is even with the sun
Whose spirit and whose eye are one,
Who seeks not stars by day, nor light
And heavy heat of day by night.
Him can no God cast down, whom none
Can lift in hope beyond the height
Of fate and nature and things done
By the calm rule of might and right
That bids men be and bear and do,
And die beneath blind skies or blue.

—A. C. SWINBURNE, *Songs Before Sunrise*, "Prelude."

Book Chat.

PROBABLY the most important thing the British and Foreign Bible Society ever did was to employ as agent for a few years a certain George Borrow. This vagabond of genius has been dead nearly twenty years, and now Professor Knapp, Ph.D., LL.D., late of Yale and Chicago Universities, has just published *The Life, Writings, and Correspondence of George Borrow* (John Murray). It is a biography on the grand scale, so far as production is concerned—genealogical records, portrait, maps, pictures, bibliography, etc., and must have cost the author an immense amount of labor. Unfortunately, these two volumes are simply overloaded with material. The Professor tells us his aim has been to present the facts of Borrow's life in a continuous narrative. Just so. But Professor Knapp, Ph.D., LL.D., has not sifted the corn from the chaff; the important details are smothered with endless irrelevant matter. Stupid reviews of Borrow's works are reprinted; page after page is filled with extracts from Borrow's note-books. The correspondence is printed whether it be highly characteristic or of no moment whatever. The narrative is not even continuous in any real sense; it is disjointed, and harassing to the reader. The Professor's style is absolutely painful. It reminds us of the undergraduate who explained those superb lines in Shakespeare's tragedy, "Put out the light and then—put out the light!" by remarking that "Othello says this, dallying with the extinguisher." Such comment as Professor Knapp permits himself is generally childish. Furthermore, the Professor's English is very bad for a Ph.D. and LL.D. The only possible use of these ponderous volumes will be to the future biographer of Borrow. He will find all the necessary material to his hand. But the present attempt is a crowning example of how not to do it.

George Borrow was what Dr. Johnson calls "a good water." He was educated at Norwich Grammar School, where he had James Martineau for a schoolfellow. After a runaway escapade, it was on Martineau's back that the author of *The Bible in Spain* was horsed for a flogging. For that guiltless flogging the name of Martineau stank in the nostrils of George Borrow ever after.

Our readers who have been under the impression that the *University Magazine* was dead will now find that it has only been sleeping. We are informed that it will in future appear in volume form every half-year, and that volume xi. will appear in a few days. The list of contributors to the forthcoming volume is an unusually good one, and among the contents we notice what promises to be an interesting article on "Three Anarchists of American Literature—Whitman, Emerson, and Thoreau."

We alluded last week to Dr. Stubbs's absurd claim, in his book on *Charles Kingsley and the Christian Social Movement*, that the Christian Socialists started the co-operative movement. It is amusing to find two well-known co-operative periodicals, the *Co-operative News* and *Labor Co-Partnership*, reviewing the book in eulogistic terms. It would probably be expecting too much from the reviewers in question if we suggested that in future they should read the books they review.

Blasphemy is becoming fashionable. Authors find that it pays to spice book titles with the name of our Heavenly Father. Here is a list which we think of at the moment:—*God is Love, The Wheel of God, God's Fool, God's Outcast, God Forsaken, In the Image of God, If I Were God, God's Will, In God's Way, God and the Ant, God's Gentlemen, The Mills of God, God's Foundling*. This is very like advertisement by blasphemy.

The sixpenny edition of Tennyson's poems, just issued by Messrs. Macmillan, is selling by the ten thousand. As this is the first occasion Tennyson's writings have been accessible to the average man and woman, this is not to be wondered at.

Writing of Tennyson suggests one interesting inquiry—whether, after all, opinions are not of great importance in poetry. It is considered literary to say they are of no importance at all; that imagination and style are everything. And Dante is quoted, generally by those who do not read him, as proof. Close readers of Dante know that he crystallised opinions in personages whom he makes alive. It is these persons he condemns to perdition. Tennyson latterly used his superb gift of language to slander generally such as disturb the fabric of a society that had been comfortable to him and his fortunate brethren. He slanders so obviously that he becomes contradiction. Thereupon the opinion, not the poetry, becomes uppermost in the minds of his readers. And the class poet. One set, a small intellectual *elite*, a narrow, safe, comfortable *coterie*—outside these he is fiercely scornful. Mr. H. S. Salt argues that the Laureate was a poor thinker, with a magnificent command of language.

Geoffrey Mortimer is not a popular novelist by any means. There are writers with names, which that recluse genius has never heard of probably, whose stories are read by thousands, while his own are quietly read by as many hundreds. Such a novel as *Like Stars That Fall* (B. Dobell; 6s.) would have achieved a reputation for any other author. We strongly recommend our readers, who care for real literature, to purchase a copy.

Attention has once more been directed to Mr. Gladstone's *Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture* on account of the new edition just published at sixpence by Messrs. Newnes. As this cheap reprint is sure to have a very large sale, and will, of course, reach a much wider audience than formerly, we shall probably find Mr. Gladstone's so-called arguments retailed *ad nauseam* by professional and amateur defenders of Christism. All this will make Mr. Foote's rejoinder, *The Grand Old Book: A Reply to the Grand Old Man*, very topical. Our friends might do worse than see that the little volume is placed on the bookstalls at our meetings.

Correspondence.

A MATTER OF SCIENCE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—My correction of Mr. Cohen's scientific mistake was so obvious that I am surprised that he or Mr. Ball should attempt to reaffirm it. Dr. Keeling, being a practical man of science, also pointed it out, and good-naturedly treated it as a trap to catch an opponent. Mr. Cohen objects to my "cockiness" of tone. This seems personal. Perhaps, though, it is some metaphysical term. If the plain facts of science have nettled Mr. Cohen, I am extremely sorry for it; but it is not my fault.

Mr. Cohen ends his letter with the innuendo that the facts I stated are "the opinion of a mind fresh from the study of scientific text-books." This is also a mistake. The only scientific text-books I have by me are Issel's *Naturalista Viaggiatore* and Geikie's *First Notions of Geology* (Stoppain's translation). Mr. Cohen's blunder probably struck me from the habit of mind induced by my having had several years' training in the physical and chemical laboratories of Cambridge and Edinburgh. Mr. Cohen is justified in twitting me with being incompetent to discuss metaphysical questions; indeed, most of his and Dr. Keeling's articles read to me like sheer nonsense; but that has not much to do with the matter, for, mindful of my Voltairean temperament, and the warning proverb, "*Sutor ne crepitet ultra*," I limited myself to pointing out misstatements as to certain known scientific facts. Let me briefly recapitulate:—

- 1. Hydrogen, under certain circumstances, is a fluid and wets (Mr. Cohen says no).
2. Oxygen, under certain circumstances, is a fluid and wets (Mr. Cohen says no).
3. Water, composed of oxygen and hydrogen, under certain circumstances, is a solid or a gas, and does not wet.
4. All, or nearly all, the elements are capable of existing as fluids, and many of them then wet.
5. An immense number of other compound bodies, besides water, can exist as fluids, and many of them then wet.
If, then, the wetness of water (when wet) is due to its composition, the wetness of various other compound bodies (when wet) is due to their composition, and the wetness of hydrogen and oxygen (the elements which make up water), and of many other elements, is due to their non-compound nature—i.e., to their being atomic bodies.

But I need not say that there is not a shadow of a proof that the wetness we feel on touching many bodies, when they are in a fluid state, is due to the combination of their molecules, and it cannot be so when they are not compound, but atomic bodies.

Mr. Cohen's slight acquaintance with the common facts of science is shown by his assertion that "wetness is not a property of oxygen or hydrogen," and he cannot wriggle out of it. I therefore repeat, Let both him and the excellent *Freethinker* look to their science.

W. W. STRICKLAND, B.A., Trin. Col., Cam.

[The "excellent *Freethinker*," by the way, is not a personality. It is a journal containing many persons' writings. So far as its editor is concerned, there is no doubt room for great improvement; but, as a matter of fact, he always writes on subjects with which he is acquainted, and has never pretended to be an accomplished astronomer, physicist, chemist, or biologist. Still, he has his own opinion of this particular controversy; only he prefers to let his correspondents fight it out, and hopes they won't get too angry.—EDITOR.]

The Christian God was executed one Friday afternoon. Christians call it Good Friday. So should we if the story were true.

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, W. Heaford, "Hymns that *Don't* Help Us."

BATTERSEA BRANCH: Meetings every Monday at 8.30, at 8 Atherton-street, Battersea.

BRADLAUGH CLUB AND INSTITUTE (36 Newington Green-road, Ball's Pond): 8.30, W. Water's Combination in "A Wild Irishman" and "Little Faults."

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 16 New Church-road): Every Saturday, at 7, Debating Class and Social Club. Sunday, at 7.30, Miss Zona Vallance, "The Substitution of Moral Instruction in Board Schools in Place of the Present Religious Teaching."

EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Bow Vestry Hall, Bow-road, E.): 7, H. Snell, "The Novels of Zola—Paris."

PECKHAM SOCIAL CLUB (Rye Lane): Wednesday, March 9, at 8, C. F. Neve, "Is there a God?"

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Surrey Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road, S.E.): 11.15, Discussion on "Socialism"; 7, Stanton Coit, "The Danger of Enthusiasm."

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

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, A lecture.

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

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms): G. W. Foote—11, "The Dreyfus Affair, and the Catholic Conspiracy Against the French Republic"; 3, "Plain Truths for Bible Worshippers"; 7, "The Resurrection Story; or, The Great Easter Fairy Tale."

GLASGOW (Lecture Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): 12, Discussion Class—A. M'Gregor; 6.30, J. Blair-Smith, "The New Imperialism."

GREAT YARMOUTH FREETHINKERS' ASSOCIATION (Freethinkers' Hall, bottom of Broad-row). Thursdays, at 8.30, Elocution Class. Sunday, at 7, H. Drane, "What Must I Do to be Saved?"

HULL (Friendly Societies' Hall, No. 2 Room): C. Hilditch, "Freethought and Standard Literature."

LEICESTER SECULAR CLUB (Humberstone-gate): 6.30, Sunday School Entertainment.

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): J. M. Robertson—3, "The New Intolerance: Scientific and Anti-Scientific"; 7, "Christianity and Character."

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 7, C. Pegg, Lantern Exhibition, illustrating American Freethought.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE (Mr. Foreman's, 1 Grainger-street): 3, Members' Monthly Meeting.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): C. Cohen—11, "Darwin, Darwinism, and Christianity"; 3, "The Absurdity of Christianity"; 7, "The Benefits of Unbelief." Tea at 5.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, Market-place): 7, Business Meeting.

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—March 26, Sheffield.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon-road, S.E.—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.—April 16, Glasgow.

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