

# Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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## Hot Cross Bun Day.

On the back of a donkey there is something like a cross. Christian superstition says it was impressed upon the one that Jesus rode into Jerusalem. Since then it has been transferred to the whole species, and every ass is a proof of Christianity.

A similar proof is the cross upon the buns that are eaten on Good Friday. Christians fancy it has something to do with the crucifixion of their Savior. But in reality it has no such connection. Sacred cakes were eaten at the same time of the year by the ancients. Bryant says that "one species of sacred bread which used to be offered to the gods was of great antiquity, and called *Boun*." Hesychius, according to Brand, speaks of the *Boun*, and describes it as a kind of cake with a representation of two horns. Diogenes Laertius says it was made of fine flour and honey. It seems to have been known to the Egyptians. Jeremiah refers to the cakes offered by Jewish women to an Egyptian goddess. "We only retain the name and form of the *Boun*," says Hutchinson in his *History of Northumberland*; "the sacred uses are no more." The Romans prepared sweetbread for their feasts held at seedtime, when they invoked the gods for a prosperous year. It has been suggested by Sir Henry Ellis, Brand's editor, that the form of the cross on buns in England is a relic of Popery; people who could not sign their names made—as such people still make—the mark of a cross instead, and this mark may have been made by the common folk upon their Good Friday buns. But it is well known now that the cross is a pre-Christian sign. It was symbolic of fertility, and would naturally be used in the springtime.

Easter eggs, in the same way, have as much relation to the man in the moon as they have to Jesus Christ. Every animal springs from an ovum, and birds obviously so. Eggs were therefore used to symbolise generation and fecundity. Pliny, in his *Natural History*, alludes to the young people amongst the Romans painting eggs red, and playing with them. The Jews are thought to have borrowed the use of eggs at the Passover from the Egyptians. Afterwards the Christians made the egg a symbol of the resurrection—as it were, the life beyond life. The Paschal egg of the Jews, the Easter egg of the Christians, and the Spring egg of the Pagans, all mean the same thing at bottom. The dormant life of nature manifests itself at this season, as the time comes when the chick bursts through the shell.

What rational connection can there possibly be between buns and the Crucifixion? How can a couple of baker's dabs across a plat of sweet dough have anything to do with the death of Jesus Christ? How could the eating of these productions—mainly by children—suggest the Passion of the Son of God? The fact is that nearly all Christian observances are meaningless, or at least puzzling, until we go beyond Christianity, and question the older Paganism, for an explanation. The Christian Church adopted the Pagan rites, festivals, and celebrations, and associated them arbitrarily with episodes in the pretended history of its alleged Founder. The Crucifixion, for instance, was located on the Friday before the Passover in order that the whole drama of the death, burial, and resurrection of the Messiah might be transacted during that sacred period. There is not the slightest historical evidence that Jesus was executed on that particular Friday, and Jewish writers have pointed out that the

chronological, as well as the other, details of the story show considerable ignorance of the religious and political life of the people of Israel.

It is extraordinary that Christians do not ask themselves why the death-day of Jesus is always a Friday, and why that Friday shifts from year to year. Supposing an anniversary falls one year on a Friday, it would fall the next year on a Thursday. But that never happens in the case of the anniversary of the death of Jesus. It falls on the same day of the week every time. But if the day *never* varies, the week *always* varies. Now why is this? If Jesus really died on a particular afternoon in a specified year, his death-day ought to be celebrated with absolute precision. Of course the day of the week would vary from year to year, because of that odd day in the calendar; but the date—that is to say, the day of the month—would always be the same. If it was the thirty-first of March one year, it would be the thirty-first of March every other year. But the death-day of Jesus changes its date annually. And this very fact suggests that Christians are not celebrating an historical event, but are really celebrating a fictional occurrence.

Would it not be very strange if we had to make an elaborate calculation every year to decide when we ought to observe the birthday of Julius Cæsar or William Shakespeare? Would it not be stranger still if the calculation turned upon the phases of the moon and the position of the sun in the zodiac? But that is how the death-day of Jesus is determined annually. It cannot fall *before* the spring equinox, and it falls as soon *after* as the full moon allows. Clearly, therefore, the celebration points back to ancient sun and moon worship, both of which are artfully conciliated in this shifting chronology.

The very name of Good Friday is a proof that it has nothing whatever to do with the death of Jesus or anybody else. Christians say that Jesus was an innocent victim, that the Jews murdered him, and that his crucifixion was the most awful crime ever committed in this world. Yet they call the bogus anniversary of that event *Good Friday*. They ought to call it *Bad Friday* or *Black Friday*.

If the Christian God, or even a third part of him, really died on this day, Freethinkers might well call it *Good Friday*. But why should Christians do so?

Of course it may be replied that Jesus died to save us from hell and secure us a place in heaven—whether he has done so or not, for it has generally been taught that most human beings go to the Devil's house at the finish. But if this is a reason for calling the day *Good Friday*, the Christians should stop hating or despising the Jews, and love them with all their hearts. Judas Iscariot himself ought to be held in the highest affection; indeed, the most magnificent monument on earth ought to be erected to his memory; for it was he who pushed Jesus on to his crucifixion, and thus established the first emigration bureau for the New Jerusalem.

So much for the Christians. As for the Freethinkers, they may speak of Good Friday with a clear heart, and enjoy themselves upon it without misgiving. It is a part of the great Spring festival, when the year is really new-born, and the sun really begins to shine, and the perennial life of Mother Earth bursts forth with fresh magic, and the days lengthen, and the air grows sweet, and the promise of summer is everywhere, and all things seem to gladden and rejoice.

G. W. FOOTE.

## Journalism and Jesus.

THE other day a London evening paper published a sensational account of a desperate affray between American and Canadian miners, which, it was hinted, might lead to serious international complications. Whereupon another daily paper telegraphed to "our correspondent" requesting information upon the matter, and received the reply that, as no one there knew anything of the matter, it might be dismissed as a pure fabrication. The whole affair, its announcement and exposure, lasted scarcely three days. It was an illustration of the modern taste for verification, and of the modern methods of exposing error.

Now, imagine that the world was some eighteen centuries and a half younger, while still retaining all its present-day machinery for the transmission of intelligence. Imagine, further, that something like the following had appeared in one of our dailies: "We are informed, on reliable authority, that Palestine has lately been the scene of a remarkable series of events. A young Jewish peasant, by name Joshua, some time ago forsook his occupation of carpentering, and travelled the country on a religious crusade. He gathered round him a number of men and women belonging to the lower classes, and is said to have been the possessor of miraculous powers of no mean order. Some, by merely touching his clothes, were healed of their disorders; blind men saw, and cripples walked at his command; he had the power of walking on the sea, and calling the dead to life; and, when finally executed for an offence, the precise nature of which it is difficult to gather, his death marked the advent of three days' complete darkness, and was the signal for many of the dead to rise from their graves and parade the streets of Jerusalem."

I omit the sensational headlines that would have preceded such an announcement, but it is hardly open to doubt that, had such a report appeared, the *Daily Chronicle*, flushed with its successful exposure of De Rougemont, would have been down upon the unfortunate paper with something like this: "One of our contemporaries, with a credulity as much to be deplored as denounced in these days of enlightenment, contained, in its issue of the other evening, a sensational account of an alleged series of miracles performed in Palestine by a young carpenter. We have communicated with our special correspondent at Jerusalem, who assures us that the whole narrative is a hoax of the flimsiest character. Our correspondent further points out that it is incredible that such things should have occurred without exciting the attention of people of all classes, whereas all the prominent writers that have been consulted are not only unaware of the occurrence of any such wonders, but are even ignorant of the very existence of the individual of whom they are related. Failing thus to find any contemporary corroboration of the story, we may safely dismiss it as a pure fabrication, with the parting reflection that its publication reflects small credit upon either the intelligence of those who gave it publicity, or upon those who swallowed it so eagerly."

I do not think that the above is at all an exaggerated account of what would have happened had the stories contained in the New Testament been published to-day for the first time. A generation which refused to swallow the comparatively reasonable "flap-doodles" of Madame Blavatsky would hardly have spent much time discussing such subjects as the casting out of devils, raising of the dead, virgin births, or kindred wonders.

All things considered, if Jesus had been born 1,900 years later, or if we, with our civilisation, had lived 1,900 years earlier, the chances of Christianity being preached, or, if preached, gaining acceptance, would have been remarkably small. A great man's eminence is as much due to the time at which he happens to be born as to the talents of which he is the fortunate possessor, and it is certainly as true that whether a given system shall live or die is determined more by the period during which it is promulgated than it is by the special teaching it contains. There is, therefore, an unconscious sarcasm in the expression so often met with, that "Christianity came when the world was ripe for its establishment." Exactly so, for this is only another way of voicing the obvious truth that given a different environment to that which then existed, and Christianity

could not have gained acceptance. Each age has its characteristic religious ideas, just as it has its characteristic social institutions; and, although a religion once initiated may perpetuate itself by a series of modifications, it is impossible for one to originate amid such conditions as now exist in all civilised countries. When credulity is widespread and a knowledge of natural processes non-existent or extremely limited in character, it is easy for stories of the miraculous to gain acceptance; but suppose such stories as, say, the miracles attributed to Jesus to be broached to-day, what would be the result? If they were not immediately swept on one side as too inherently absurd to deserve serious consideration, steps would at once be taken to form a committee of competent witnesses, who would investigate in the most careful manner what amount of truth such statements contained. And even then nothing short of having all the miracles re-performed *under test conditions* would satisfy a committee that had been appointed to report upon the matter. It is only because these stories have been with us from our birth, because we have grown up with them, with parents and teachers dinning their veracity and solemnity into our ears, that we fail to recognise their ridiculous character. Brought before a civilised community for the first time, such legends would meet with nothing but derision and instant rejection.

Truth to tell, it is not without significance that all the religions of the world are old religions, or a dressing up of old ones. New religions do not make their appearance to-day, for the simple reason that the age for their production has passed by. Former generations viewed religious ecstasies as glimpses of the Divine vouchsafed to man; we regard them as pathological cases coming properly under the supervision of the medical practitioner. There can be no question, indeed, that in all ages morbid physical and mental conditions have played a large and a creative part in the production of religious beliefs. Emmanuel Deutsch notes that "There is a peculiar something supposed to inhere in epilepsy. The Greeks called it a sacred disease. Bacchantic and Corybantic furor were god-inspired stages. The Pythia uttered her oracles under the most distressing signs. Symptoms of convulsion were even needed as a sign of the Divine." There is no question that Mahomet suffered from epileptic seizures; St. Paul's vision was a clear case of sunstroke; Emmanuel Swedenborg, founder of the Church of the New Jerusalem, was subject to seizures which are declared by Dr. Maudsley to have been epileptic;\* Ann Lee, the founder of the Shakers, is also said to have been epileptic; while the Lives of the Saints furnish abundant evidence in the same direction. Dr. Howden, Superintendent of the Montrose Royal Lunatic Asylum, in an article on "The Religious Sentiment in Epileptics," published in the *Journal of Mental Science*, January, 1873, remarks that in epilepsy there is often an exaltation of the religious sentiment, generally without any corresponding strictness in morals; and Dr. Toselli of Milan, Dr. Raab of Vienna, Dr. Ball of Paris, and Dr. Adolph Kühn of Berlin, all point out the close connection between nervous derangements and strong religious feelings.† The difference, therefore, between our own and preceding generations is not that the manifestations of human nature have undergone a radical alteration, but simply that we form different estimates concerning them. We physic or confine the class of people whom our ancestors deified or obeyed. Given a man to-day preaching the same beliefs in the same manner as did many of the religious leaders of earlier times, and he would as certainly be classed of unsound mind as will many of the religious features of contemporary life be attributed to mental morbidity or mental unsoundness by our successors.

It would, however, be a mistake to infer, because morbid mental conditions everywhere accompany the rise of religions, that these are the sole factors in their production. This is far from being the case. The absurd to-day has not always been the absurd. There are stages of human culture when it wears a reasonable, even a philosophic, aspect. There is nothing more absurd in the early Christians ascribing every-day events

\* See *Natural Causes and Supernatural Seemings*, p. 176; and *Life*, by William White.

† For detailed illustrations see *The Blot on the Brain*, by W. Ireland, M.D., Edin., chap. ii.

to the action of supernatural powers than there is in a tribe of Africans indulging in the same beliefs. To us such things are absurd, but that is because the growth of civilisation has led us to view nature from an altogether different standpoint to that of our predecessors. To others these beliefs, far from being ridiculous, may be as truly an expression of their civilisation as the doctrine of evolution is of ours. They are the consistent reflection of an epoch when man regarded the universe as alive, and himself the sport of powers which were really created by his own imagination. It is when "the terrestrial has been aggrandised at the expense of the theological; when, in the progress of civilisation, art and literature and government become, in a great measure, secularised; when the mind is withdrawn by ten thousand intellectual influences from dogmatic considerations; and when the traces of these considerations become confused and unrealised, a new habit of thought is gradually acquired. A secular atmosphere is formed about the mind. The measure of probability is altered."\* People no longer, in the majority of cases, condescend even to discuss the belief in the miraculous or the supernatural, but brush it on one side as something inherently incredible. Long experience has taught the world that such a matter is not so much a question of evidence as it is the result of the normal workings of the mind at one stage of its development. People do not see miracles unless they believe in their existence beforehand, and they cease seeing only when they cease to believe in them.

It is the gradual growth of civilisation that renders the creation of a new religion impossible, and even its retention a matter of increasing difficulty. The results of scientific investigation gradually sink from the study to the market-place, and the mass of the people become infected with its teachings and its tendencies. Scepticism, once the property of the privileged few, is rapidly becoming the heritage of all. All are tinged with it; the most conservative cannot escape its influence, while the more progressive hail it as the dissolvent of worn-out beliefs. Viewed in the light of present knowledge, the religions of the civilised world represent but the varied survivals of forms of thought properly belonging to a lower stratum of civilisation than that in which we are living. Literally, religion in civilised countries is present knowledge of himself or of the universe, but rather the ideas of bygone generations, which continue to exist as the result of a spirit of blind conservatism quickened into activity by the operation of threatened vested interests.

C. COHEN.

### The Number of Israelites who came Out of Egypt.

ALTHOUGH the subject of the present paper is not, perhaps, of the most exciting nature, it is one of the highest importance, for it deals with matters which prove in the most conclusive manner the fictitious character of the Bible story of the sojourning in Egypt. In Exodus xii. 37, 38 we read:—

"And the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand on foot that were men, besides children. And a mixed multitude went up also with them; and flocks and herds, even very much cattle."

Here is stated in round numbers the total number of males, "from twenty years old and upward," who are alleged to have gone out of Egypt with Moses. The women are doubtless included in the "mixed multitude" that accompanied them. That there is no mistake in the figures is proved by the fact that, later on, the exact numbers are twice mentioned.

While the Israelites were stationed at Sinai, we are told that "the Lord," after giving Moses instructions for the making of the tabernacle and its furniture, ordained that whenever a census of the people was taken every man of twenty years of age and upwards should give half a shekel to the Sanctuary. This money was to be paid as "a ransom for his soul," and in order

to "that there be no plague among them" (Exodus xxx. 11-16).

Looking at one of the acts of David in the light shed by this command, we can see wherein lay that monarch's "sin" in ordering a census to be taken at the latter end of his reign. That pious king caused the people to be numbered without making them pay the Lord's half shekel, thus omitting the only essential part of the divine law. It is true that David does not appear to have had any knowledge of the regulation respecting the half shekel; but the Lord knew, and that was sufficient. Small wonder it is, then, that "the Lord," who in dealing with minor offences is said to be "slow to anger and plenteous in mercy," was upon this occasion filled with righteous indignation, or that, to punish David for such negligence, he sent a pestilence which destroyed 70,000 of those who had not paid the half shekel.

Moses, however, did not forget such an important matter. After receiving all the Lord's commands on the Mount, he came down and gave orders for an official enumeration of the people. This was about five months after leaving Egypt. In Exodus xxxviii. 26 is recorded the number of men "from twenty years old and upward" who paid the half shekel—viz., 603,550. The money contributed (which was in silver) was melted down to make the sockets, hooks, and fillets required for the various parts of the tabernacle or "tent of meeting" (xxxviii. 27, 28). This structure, when it was completed, was set up near Sinai, and a month later—that is, thirteen months after leaving Egypt—the Lord commanded Moses to again number the men who were "twenty years old and upward," and, strange to say, the total was exactly the same as eight months previously—603,550 (Numbers i. 46). No mention is made, on this second occasion, of the paying of the census money; but since no plague is recorded, we must suppose that the Lord's tribute was duly paid.

Assuming these two enumerations to have been facts, there must have been several thousands of young men at the date of the first census who were from one to seven months short of twenty years, and who at the time of the second numbering would have attained that age, and be required to pay the half shekel. What had become of these? This question must be left to ingenious Christian Evidence mongers to answer.

Setting aside this small matter, let us examine the Bible statement that, of the multitude of Israelites who left Egypt, the men alone numbered 600,000. Now, it is simply impossible that the number of adult males could amount to anything approaching the figures mentioned. We have seen that in the list of those who are stated to have gone down to Egypt there appear the names of at least seventeen persons who could not have been born at that time, and also that the period of sojourning in Egypt could not have been more than 170 years, at the outside. Omitting, then, these seventeen names, the number (including Joseph and his two sons, and Jacob himself) was only 53. If we add to these a wife for each of Jacob's eleven sons (ail except the "lad" Benjamin), the total number of immigrants to Egypt would be 64. Assuming that the Israelites lived in Egypt for 175 years, the case stands thus: that 64 persons—men, women, and children—went down to Egypt, and sojourned there for 175 years; at the end of that period the descendants of these 64 persons left that country, and at the departure the number of men alone was found to be 600,000.

Now, according to Malthus, Darwin, Mill, and other authorities, the shortest period in which any people or nation might be expected to double its numbers is 25 years. But in the case of the Israelites, if we believe the sacred narrative, the male population suffered a check which would prevent that sex from multiplying at such a high rate, or, in fact, from increasing at all. Besides the compulsory labor of the men, the male infants were ordered to be cast into the Nile, and this command, it is implied, was strictly enforced. The child Moses is cited as an exceptional instance of escape from early death. We will assume, however, that the Israelites, notwithstanding this check, doubled their population every 25 years. At this rate, the 64 Israelites who went down to Egypt would, in 175 years, have increased to 8,192, and the men of twenty years of age and upwards would be about one-fourth of that

\* Lecky, *History of Rationalism*, library edition, c. i., p. 201.

number—viz., 2,048. In other words, the number of men among the Israelites is represented as being 290 times greater than it could possibly be under the most favorable conditions for increase of population.

But even if we allow the whole seventy persons named on the fabricated list in Genesis to be immigrants to Egypt, with twelve more added as Jacob's sons' wives, including one for the little lad Benjamin—that is, 82 in all—and if, without the smallest authority for so doing, we extend the sojourning in Egypt to 200 years, then, assuming that these 82 persons multiplied at the rate stated, the total number of men, women, and children at the departure from Egypt would be only 20,992, all told. Of these the males would be about a half—viz., 10,496, and the men of "twenty years old and upward" would number only 5,248, a mere handful compared to the immense army of 600,000 named in Exodus. To get the last-mentioned figures, the Biblical writer would have to count every man among the Israelites 114 times over. Thus the proof of fabrication is clear and incontrovertible.

Let us now look at the systematic misrepresentations of the sacred writer. In the first chapter of Numbers is recorded the number of men "from twenty years old and upward" of each tribe separately, with the exception of that of Levi. These are given as follows:—

Reuben ...	46,500	Ephraim ...	40,500
Simeon ...	59,300	Manasseh ...	32,200
Gad ...	45,650	Benjamin ...	35,400
Judah ...	74,600	Dan ...	62,700
Issachar ...	54,400	Asher ...	41,500
Zebulun ...	57,400	Naphtali ...	53,400
Total ...	603,550.		

Here we have twelve distinct fabrications, each contained in a separate paragraph of two verses. It is not too much to say that the man who could perpetrate these frauds would be capable of inventing the whole story of the sojourning of the Israelites in Egypt. This the writer has not done. He has only worked up and put into form an old Jewish legend, and fabricated all the details. In the foregoing list it will be noticed that in each of the twelve tribes the number of men alone is stated to be greater than that to which the whole nation could possibly have amounted in the extended time, and at the liberal rate, mentioned.

We will now apply a final test. Though the tribe of Levi was not numbered with the other tribes, all the males "from a month old and upward" were afterwards counted for another purpose. The numbers are given as follows:—

Descendants of Levi's son Gershon ...	7,500
Descendants of Levi's son Kohath ...	8,600
Descendants of Levi's son Merari ...	6,200

We will take the family of the Kohathites. All the males of this family are stated to have numbered 8,600 (Numbers iii. 28), and of these 2,750 are said to have been between thirty and fifty years of age (Numbers iv. 36). Now, the names of a considerable number of the males descended from Kohath are recorded—sufficient, in fact, to fairly test the figures given. From various passages we find that the men of the several generations were the following:—

#### FIRST GENERATION.

Kohath, who is stated to have lived to the age of 133.

#### SECOND GENERATION.

Sons of Kohath:—Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel.

#### THIRD GENERATION.

Sons of Amram:—*Moses and Aaron.*

Sons of Izhar:—*Korah, Nepheg, and Zichri.*

Sons of Hebron:—*Jeriah, Amariah, Jahaziel, and Jckameam.*

Sons of Uzziel:—*Mishael, Elzaphan, and Sithri.*

#### FOURTH GENERATION.

Sons of Moses:—*Gershon and Eliezer.*

Sons of Aaron:—*Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.*

Sons of Korah:—*Assir, Elkanah, and Abiasaph.*

The other descendants of Kohath are not recorded. Up to the third generation the list is complete (see Numbers iii. 19; Exodus vi. 18-24; xviii. 3, 4; 1 Chron. vi. 2, 3, 18; xxiii. 12-19, etc.); but in the fourth generation there are lacking the sons of Nepheg, Zichri, Jeriah, Amariah, Jahaziel, Jckameam, Mishael, Elzaphan, and Sithri. Those of the third generation whose names are in italics, as well as those recorded of

the fourth, are mentioned or referred to as living after the departure from Egypt (Exodus xviii. 5; Leviticus x. 1-6; Numbers xvi. 1; xxvi. 11). We will assume, however, that all the third generation and all the fourth generation were among the Israelites numbered after the Exodus. This gives us 21 out of the 8,600 Kohathites, and leaves 8,579 to be accounted for. To furnish this number we have but the sons of the nine men of the third generation, whose posterity is unrecorded. If we allow these nine Levites four sons each (which is above the average), the total number of the Kohathites, men and boys, would be 57, all counted. Yet the Biblical writer represents the males of this family as numbering 8,600—that is, 150 times greater than the very liberal approximate figures prove they could have been. In other words, the nine Kohathites of the third generation would have to have had 8,579 sons between them, which gives an average of 953 sons for each man. Again, it is stated that there were at this time 2,750 men of this family who were between thirty and fifty years of age. We have thus fabrication upon fabrication.

It may, however, be contended that there were some descendants of Kohath of the fifth generation among those enumerated. This is just possible. We will assume, then, that forty-three out of the forty-five males of the fourth generation were each the father of four sons; for two of this generation are stated to have died childless (Numbers iii. 4). This gives us 172 more persons. With this addition, the total number of males of the Kohathites, assuming every one of the third, fourth, and fifth generation to be living, would be 229, which is a very small fraction of the Biblical 8,600.

We have thus proof, as clear as proof can be, of the employment of a system of wholesale fabrication in the compilation of the Bible story of the Exodus and the sojourning in Egypt.

ABRACADABRA.

## Mr. Watts in America.

SOME years ago, when a poor country lad, I came into possession of several pamphlets written by Charles Watts. Having been reared under the most pious Methodist influences, these writings strangely impressed me. They opened up to me a new world of thought. They fascinated me with their audacity; they shocked me with their bold presumption. I realised that they treated of questions and principles that lay beyond the horizon of my simple country life—that lay out in the active world of men and thought. Among other religious books I had read Tupper's *Proverbial Philosophy*, and committed much of it to memory. To understand Tupper, in my mind, was to know the best of all that was worth knowing; to be, in fact, somewhat of a philosopher myself. These pamphlets of Mr. Watts dispelled this delusion, and taught me that there were ranges of vision far beyond the perceptions of poet Tupper; that practical thought most concerned this world. In Tupper I found that I was studying conditions of an existence of which I was not a part. In Mr. Watts's essays I discovered that I was studying the conditions which affect men in this world. It was thus that I imbibed my first Secular idea. Tupper was dethroned, and Charles Watts became my philosophic ideal. And I will say that, while my studies have led me to the investigations of the writings of men of greater fame, that ideal has remained like a first love. I wondered if I would ever escape from my humble surroundings and visit some of the great cities of my country, and see some of the great men of whom I had read. To the American country boy, Charles Watts of the mighty London town seemed as far away as the lost Pleiad.

But life has its strange vicissitudes. Charles Watts is here in Cincinnati, and I am his medical adviser. It is this meeting with Mr. Watts that has impelled me to write this communication. I want to tell this little story as an illustration of the far-reaching influence a little Secular pamphlet may have. Cast adrift in London, and passing from hand to hand, it finally came into my possession, a boy living in a remote village of Ohio. At the age of sixteen I became a school-teacher, and so thoroughly imbued had I become, through the reading

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of Mr. Watts's pamphlets, of the necessity and justice of a secular education that I refused to open the school exercises by reading a chapter from the Bible. The warfare then begun between Christian domination and myself has continued ever since.

Mr. Watts has been a very sick man. About three or four weeks ago he contracted a cold in Toronto, later on was prostrated with *La Grippe* in Chicago, and, while still suffering from the same, he came to Cincinnati. In making the trip here from Chicago he calculated too much upon his strength, and became dangerously ill. He was confined to his room for a week, by which time the fever subsided, leaving him very weak and nervous.

He was billed for a debate in this city on March 6, 7, 9, and 10 with Rev. Isaac Selby, formerly of Australia, but he was unable to appear the first two evenings, and his place was filled by Mr. Jamieson, a well-known and old-time lecturer and debater. Mr. Jamieson more than held his own, but the inability of Mr. Watts to appear was a great disappointment to the members of the Ohio Liberal Society and other Liberals, who had worked unceasingly to awaken enthusiasm over this debate.

Against my advice, Mr. Watts took the platform the last two evenings. When it was known throughout the city that Mr. Watts positively would appear on Thursday evening, excitement ran high among the Liberals; but many who had called upon him, knowing his physical condition, were fearful he would experience a breakdown. Fortunately, this did not occur.

The debate was held in the Auditorium, and the house was packed. It was a magnificent audience; Christians and infidels were about equally divided in numbers, and the best elements of each represented. The chief difference noticeable in the character of the audience was that the Liberals were represented by the leading scientific and professional men, and the Christians mostly by women and girls. All the leading dailies were represented at the reporters' table, and it proved a great night for the Liberals.

Rev. Isaac Selby, according to his own statement, was formerly a resident of Australia, and was an Atheist and a Freethought lecturer for eight years. He became converted to Christianity, and joined the Christian or Disciple Church, which had its origin and start about fifty miles from this city. This city is its headquarters. It has here a large publishing house and also its leading paper. A missionary from these parts ran across Selby in Australia, and imported him to this city. He goes from church to church holding crusades against infidelity. This is his program: For three nights of the week he talks against infidelity. By this time he has worked up good audiences. The fourth night he lectures on Australia, giving stereopticon views, and charging a good admission. It is thus he manages to advertise himself, get free hall rent, and rake in the shekels. I particularly make note of this new phase of bunko, as it is a new game in this country, and when it is once demonstrated to be a successful play we may look to see it repeated by numerous adventurers.

In debate Selby is a trick lawyer. Having been an infidel lecturer, he well knows all the assailable points against Freethought, as well as the strongest points in favor of Christianity. He well knows the general ignorance of Christian audiences, and shapes his discussion to fit their understandings and prejudices, regardless of history, nature, or fact. He has ransacked infidel literature and scientific research for such passages as those wherein the infidel writers have been liberal enough to credit Christianity with some little good, and very skilfully uses these isolated statements of the infidel against his infidelity. The Christians, ignorant of the general character of the authors and the writings from which he quotes, applaud the deceit, and imagine him to be a skilful debater and a great man. The more he evaded Mr. Watts, and the more dirt he threw at infidelity, the more he pleased the numerous young misses who composed such a large part of his audience.

He has attained such prominence here as an exterminator of infidelity that we thought a salient lesson should be given both him and his duped and blatant followers, and so arranged this debate. But he is not the great man that he was. Mr. Watts came up to the full measure of our expectations; he exposed Selby's methods, and drove him to the wall on every point. On

the one side was the presentation of evidence, fact, and honest investigation, and on the other nothing but evasion, deceit, and artful dodging.

After the close of the debate Mr. Watts was fairly surrounded by Christians seeking an introduction. The Freethinkers were all happy. It was a treat not often enjoyed. In the language of Davy Crockett, a noted American backwoodsman of nearly a hundred years ago and a great wit, it was "rich as a hog with two mouths." The dailies commented at length upon the debate, giving the balance of praise to Mr. Watts; the leading daily stated that Selby at no time was in it, and that Watts did the whole of the debating.

The subject for discussion was: "Christianity is not of Divine Origin, neither is it Designed to Meet the Demands of Mankind." The subject for the next evening was: "Is Secularism Sufficient to Satisfy the Needs of Mankind?" Mr. Watts was in poor physical condition, and was compelled to sit through most of the debate. But it was generally conceded that he surpassed his first evening's effort. The Liberals were entirely satisfied, and the debates ended greatly to the benefit of the Freethought cause in this city. The Christians, incensed at the favorable notice given Mr. Watts by the newspapers on the previous debate, visited the editors of the dailies, and told them that they were throwing their moral strength to infidelity, and that Christianity was not being fairly treated. The threat had its effect, and the reports on the last debate were somewhat conciliatory, as balm for the wounds given in reports of the previous debate. The Christians were thus compelled to beg and threaten for the newspaper applause which they failed to win in the arena of public debate.

What with the Ingersoll lecture on Sunday evening, March 5, the Watts-Selby debate through the week, and a spirited controversy in the daily press between all classes—Jews, Catholics, Infidels, and Protestants—as to the position of the Bible in the University of Cincinnati, this has been a great week for Liberalism in this city. Mr. Watts gave his able lecture, "The Doom of the Churches," before the Ohio Liberal Society on Sunday evening, March 12. He was warmly received by a full house and an appreciative audience. Much to our regret, this terminated his engagement in Cincinnati. He has numerous engagements ahead, but I have advised quiet and rest for a week or two. He is unable at this writing to stand the strain of travel, and a relapse would precipitate a serious condition. We hope that he will live to visit us again, and, when he does, a royal welcome will await him.

J. B. WILSON, M.D.  
(Cincinnati.)

### The Catholic "Crisis."

We have heard a good deal latterly of the "crisis" in the Anglican Church—a crisis, by the way, which seems to have arisen over the vexed question whether the Christian God is partial to wax-candles and millinery. It has been said, indeed, that the struggle is between some people who want incense in their churches, and others who are satisfied with mere nonsense. And our friends the Roman Catholics have, metaphorically speaking, been feasting on all this fun; they have been assuring us that of course all this "anarchy" is the frightful result of flouting Rome, that she offers the only "haven of rest" in this "troubled sea," and all the rest of it. It is a pathetic spectacle.

But, according to recent events, it would seem that the Anglicans are not the only people who are disturbed at present, and that "crises" are not limited to the ecclesiastical organisation supposed to be under the control of the Archbishop of Canterbury. Within the past few weeks we have had several storm-signals from another quarter, which show that everything is not as calm in the "haven" as it might be. There was the rather remarkable letter from the Pope to Cardinal Gibbons denouncing the new heresy with the strange title of "Americanism." And almost simultaneously comes the news that Dr. Schell, a Catholic Professor of Apologetics in the Catholic University of Würzburg, has been pulled up, and has had a number of his books

placed on the Index. All this does not betoken that peace which one would expect. The "Americanism" heresy, which found its expression in the Life of some Father Hecker, seems to take the form of suggesting that Catholicism should bring itself more up to date, should admit a certain liberty into the Church, so that those in power might be checked and restrained, and that the freedom of the individual should be more fully recognised. The phrase used in the Pope's letter to describe the doctrine he is condemning is, "that the Church should adapt herself more distinctly to the civilisation of a ripened age, and, relaxing somewhat from her former severity, should make concessions to tendencies and principles which have lately been introduced among nations."

Professor Schell's "heresy" (put forward in books entitled *Catholic Dogma*, *Catholicism as the Principle of Progress*, and *The New Spirit and the Old Faith*), as well as one gathers from the Catholic press, seems to consist in much the same suggestion as Father Hecker's, and also in a coolness on Hell. Professor Schell's pupils for the priesthood, it is said, had to be re-examined and strengthened on the Hell question, owing to their instructor's lukewarmness on the point.

Now, all these difficulties, of course, may be patched up. Indeed, it is announced that the American bishops who sanctioned the Hecker doctrines have "submitted"; and it is "a happy incident," according to one Catholic paper, that Dr. Schell has "recanted," and is doubtless now convinced that Hell is still hot, and plenty of his fellow-men have still a chance of damnation. That is certainly most gratifying.

But, in spite of all these patchings and "submissions," anyone who has the least knowledge of history and the least appreciation of the trend of modern thought knows that the phenomenon will be of an ever-recurring description, because it is a phenomenon which is world-old. To Freethinkers, of course, these domestic squabbles of the Churches are of remote interest, but to students of human progress they furnish food for thought. It is questionable, from the Church's point of view, who are the wiser diplomats—the Dr. Schells or the Leo XIII.'s. Face to face with the growth of knowledge, the Church must ever accommodate herself or go down. Take an example. Take this hell belief. Practically speaking—I do not count stray exceptions—practically speaking, every man of the least humane feeling in or out of the Churches has ceased to believe in this odious relic of barbarism. Suppose, then, the Church sets herself to maintain this belief, she will simply be preparing disaster for herself. Let her abandon it, and she admits that for centuries she has been infallibly teaching a lie. It is an ugly dilemma for the interpreters of "Eternal Truth"; but it has to be faced. And the more astute of the Church's counsellors seek to prepare the way by modifying their doctrine and re-arranging it to suit the new spirit. In any case, there is trouble ahead—trouble which we can survey unmoved.

But such, after all, is but an epitome of the history of humanity. Sometimes the old formulas are frankly seen to be false, and the human spirit bursts and breaks its bonds. Then we have revolutions and reformations. Other times—perhaps oftener—the human mind, in its growth, puts new meanings into the old phrases, and the spirit of the old formula passes, whilst the letter possibly remains the same. Such a process is frequent in political matters; but both processes are inevitable, and both are constant. Man has created all the gods he ever worshipped, and civilised all the gods he ever created. Religion simply hovers after human culture and human morals, and changes with human growth. And that human growth is going on always, imperceptibly and slowly; and not all the Papal encyclicals ever penned can stop it. It drags gods, and popes, and kings after it. For it is Man—Man in his strength and his weakness, Man in his glory and his shame—Man who has fought his way so far against the phantoms which his own folly raised, and it is Man who will free himself from the phantoms by the same natural process which first gave them light.

FREDERICK RYAN.

The lamp of truth is the light of the wise.—*Tiruvalluvar*.

## Acid Drops.

Rev. Hugh Price Hughes has poured his jeremiad into the ears of a newspaper interviewer over the projected Sunday editions of the *Daily Telegraph* and *Daily Mail*. He calls it a gross violation of the Christian Sunday; which is funny enough when we remember the race to which the proprietor of the *Daily Telegraph* belongs. Likewise he says it is a sure prognostic of the downfall of England. A people that listens to Mr. Hughes on Sunday will be great and progressive, but a people that reads Sunday journals will be weak and decadent. Mr. Hughes himself says so, and therefore it *must* be true.

Of course, the Wesleyan President talks about the wickedness of Sunday labor. But isn't this rather thin humbug? Sunday's paper is produced on Saturday. It is Monday's paper which is produced on Sunday.

Mr. Hughes has some more observations on this subject in the *Methodist Times*. He says that Sir Edward Lawson's *Sunday Telegraph* enterprise is "the first serious attempt to flood England on Sunday with the full stream of modern journalism." But this is only Mr. Hughes' grand geographical way of talking. A Sunday paper may flood London, or any other city in which it is published, but it can't flood England. The newspapers like *Lloyd's* and *Reynolds'* that publish a Sunday edition in London have to publish an earlier edition for the provinces.

This is the first serious attempt, is it? Why, there were a dozen Sunday papers as far back as 1813. But you can't expect a Christian preacher to be accurate. He preaches fiction for a living, and finds it a lot easier than taking the trouble to hunt up facts and evidence.

Mr. Hughes remarks that "the men who defeated Spain, created our Empire, and made modern England" were not nourished on Sunday newspapers. Neither were they nourished on Methodism.

According to Mr. Hughes, we ought to spend most of our time on Sunday on "preparations for another world." In the very next paragraph we read that "The President of the Conference [Mr. Hughes himself] continues to recover satisfactorily from the inflammation in the leg." In other words, while he prepares for heaven, he is satisfactorily keeping out of it. Let us pray!

Annie Sudbury, a domestic servant, aged twenty-one, appeared on March 21 in the North London Police-court, charged with stealing a pair of boots from Mrs. Ellen Harsant at Robert-street, Gray's-inn-road. Prisoner's mother, who gave evidence, stated that the Salvation Army had got her daughter away from home against her wish. She further stated that her daughter had stolen the boots in order to get money to contribute to the Salvation Army's Self-Denial Week's Fund.

*Reynolds's Newspaper* speaks out plainly at last about the Salvation Army, calling Booth "an ignorant man," and declaring that to hear some of the Salvation Army speakers is "really shocking." Our contemporary sneers at "banjos and other tomfoolery," and says it is "monstrous that so many able-bodied young men should be wasting their lives in this way."

An American man of God, the Rev. Mr. Sheldon, author of *In His Steps*, complains that the people of the United States pay forty million dollars annually for their religion, and two hundred million dollars annually for their tobacco. But is not this a professional complaint? Might not the tobaccoists complain that so much as forty million dollars is spent on religion instead of on smoking? Could they not maintain that tobacco beats religion hollow as a soother and consolator?

So the Yankees spend forty million dollars a year on religion, do they? Had business been anything like as brisk when Judas was cashier, he wouldn't have sold Jesus for less than thirty dollars, in which case there would have been no Crucifixion, no Atonement, no Christianity, and alas! no Rev. Mr. Sheldon.

Mr. D. L. Anderson, a Philadelphia millionaire, has taken to evangelising. He says that religion must be up to date, so he uses a large phonograph, operated by an assistant, which quotes words of famous preachers, exhorts sinners, and sings hymns. We don't see any report of how many souls are saved.

Mr. J. K. Sykes, of Southend, saw a public meeting advertised on the Sunday Closing question. He attended and found a small, unimportant gathering, which was rain-

by sky-pilots. This set Mr. Sykes's back up. He is a teetotaler, but he is also a Freethinker, and doesn't want to compel other people to do as he does. Nor is he able to see that compulsion is any better for being attempted on a Sunday. So he tried to move an amendment, but the reverend chairman wasn't taking any. A long report of the proceedings appears in the *Southend Echo*, which also prints a smart letter from Mr. Sykes.

Sam Jones, the Revivalist, has had a special line of business at Chattanooga. The expenses amounted to about two thousand dollars. Sam Jones's personal receipts were 963 dollars. Other members of the troupe had the rest. There is no report to hand of the number of souls saved, but the City Council has ordered all the saloons to be closed at ten o'clock at night. Sam Jones is satisfied. He believes that if Jesus travelled round repeating that old wine-and-water trick he would get through it before closing time.

There has been a "scene" at Colyton, in Devonshire. A lecture was delivered in St. Andrew's Hall by the Rev. W. H. Proby, a local clergyman, who denounced Protestantism and all its works, and declared that the Church of England had much more in common with Rome than with Protestant Dissent. After the lecture Mr. Mountsphen rose and said he was disgusted, but the chairman declined to allow discussion. This wouldn't have been much of a "scene" in a bigger town, but it was a fair-sized one at Colyton. Yes, the Church question is fast ripening.

Mr. G. Stanley Ellis gives some more odd answers by school children in the *Cornhill*. "Why," asked an inspector, "did Elijah pour water on the sacrifice?" And a girl answered: "To make the gravy, sir." Another inspector, at Croydon, tried in vain to elicit the name of the weapon with which Samson slew the thousand Philistines. "What is this?" he suggested, laying his hand on his cheek. The children saw it at once, and cried: "The jawbone of an ass, sir."

The Pi-ute Indians say that the Moon is the Sun's wife, and the Stars are his children. Whenever he can he swallows his children, and his wife then looks sad. Every month she goes into mourning on account of her husband's cannibalism. A comet is a star that the sun has snapped at: mad with pain, it flies across the sky, a great spout of blood flowing from it. Very absurd, of course; but not more so than Joshua stopping the sun and moon while he went on fighting.

"Providence" has sent a strange answer to the Czar's Peace Rescript. Famine and disease are ravaging the Volga provinces. Multitudes are reduced to eating garbage, and the grain necessary for the spring sowing has mostly been eaten as food. The outlook is simply terrible.

A *Daily News* correspondent has interviewed Leopold Sulerjitzky, who, with Count Tolstoi's son, has superintended the emigration of four thousand of the Doukhoborts from the Caucasus to Canada. There are three or four thousand more of these people to follow. They are Christians in Count Tolstoi's sense, and refuse to enter the Russian army under the conscription, believing it to be wrong to fight under any circumstances. "Two years ago," this gentleman said, "there were 20,000 of us. Our settlements were broken up, our houses and chattels taken away from us, and we were hunted from one place to another. In one of our settlements, with 4,000 people, more than a fourth of them perished from privation and ill-treatment in about two years. Some are in prison, others banished to Siberia, many have lost their lives; but we regard martyrdom for the cause of peace as the most blessed thing that could befall us."

"But," asked the *Daily News* correspondent, "has not the persecution lessened since the Czar issued his Rescript?" "The one concession we have had," was the reply, "came before the date of the Rescript. It was not until February of last year that we were allowed to emigrate. The Government, finding we could not be forced into military service by prison, privation, nor death, said we could leave the country. That is all we ask for. Until we all get away there will be no safety for us in Russia, Peace Rescript or not." What a comment upon Mr. Stead's glorifications of the Christian young man of St. Petersburg!

Those persecuted poor Russians, when they had leave to depart from their own land, soon decided where it was best for them to go. They all preferred to live, if possible, under the British flag. And the feeling that moved them is the best, perhaps the only, justification of the British empire.

Some time ago the Rev. Marmaduke Hare, rector of Bow, absconded. It now appears that he had misappropriated between £4,000 and £5,000 entrusted to him by his young brother-in-law, who is now in the Bankruptcy Court. The reverend swindler has written his brother-in-law one letter, bearing a Portuguese stamp, but, of course, no address. "I

live only to repay everyone," he says; but he hasn't made a beginning yet, and the Official Receiver has no expectations from that quarter.

Mr. John Cadbury, of cocoa fame, has just died at Jerusalem. According to the *Daily News* obituary, he was a Christian and a philanthropist. After reciting many instances of his pious benevolence, our contemporary adds that "on the occasion of the Queen's Jubilee he presented every child in the Board schools in the city with a Bible." What bathos! Let us hope the Bibles were sufficiently expurgated to make them harmless, at least from the point of view of common decency.

The Rev. Dr. John Hall, of the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, New York, was obliged to die some time ago. He left a regular salary of several thousands a year in this world for a very uncertain prospect elsewhere. Since then his church has been hunting round for a successor to him. We dare say there were many gentlemen ready to take the job—of course after due consultation with the Lord; but the church has selected the Rev. Alexander Connell, of London, who has been duly apprised by cable of his good luck. We presume, therefore, that London will lose a Presbyterian preacher and New York will gain one, but whether this will make any particular difference to either city we are happily not called upon to discuss. Probably it will make a much greater difference to Mr. Connell.

If there is any truth in the New Testament, it seems pretty clear that Mr. Connell, if he accepts this handsome offer from New York, will be running a terrible risk. According to the teaching of Jesus Christ, no man with several thousands a year can expect a residence in heaven. But perhaps Mr. Connell is prepared to take the risk of going to the other establishment, and even to take it smilingly, as thousands of men of God have done before.

Rev. Ewen Macleod, of Oban, has presented a report on Sabbath observance to the Free Presbytery of Lorn, in which he laments the laxity displayed in the highest circles. This long-faced man of God deplors that "the Queen and Royal family have not shown a happy example to the people in the matter of Sabbath observance." "Her Majesty's recent journey to France," he adds, "and arrival there on a Sabbath day must have been a grief to every enlightened Christian subject of her own, and very pernicious in its influence over the giddy and godless French." It would be difficult to beat this for cool self-conceit. The writer assumes to speak for every "enlightened" Christian—an expression, by the way, which implies that there are plenty of *unenlightened* Christians. Note, too, the quiet assumption that the people of France regulate their Sabbath observances by the example of the Queen of England. This noble Macleod ought to be exhibited.

The French Touring Club has struck Zola's name off its list of members. We dare say he will survive the blow. We rather fancy, after all, that it was Zola who honored the Touring Club, and not the Touring Club that honored Zola.

A Spiritualist medium in New York appears to have been very sadly too "previous." He was holding a *seance*, and a number of spooks sent messages through him to their friends and relatives. The hit of the evening was the materialisation of the spirit of Senator Sherman, whose death had just been reported. This gentleman's spook appeared to the company, told them how pleased he was to be in heaven, and desired his compliments to be given to President McKinley and other members of the Administration. Of course it was all very touching and very edifying; but, alas, the newspaper report was erroneous, and Senator Sherman was not dead at all, at all—as the Irish say. Still, we don't suppose this will make much difference to that medium, professionally. People who believe in spooks are not easily undecieved.

The cold snap last week ran the London death-rate up from 22.4 to 24.1 per thousand. Diseases of the respiratory organs carried off 61 more than the average. Influenza carried off a total of 125. Thus the weather decides the emigration statistics to Heaven and Hades. God and the Devil only keep the accounts.

Mr. James Alexander applied for leave to place the *Freethinker* on the table of the Watford Free Library reading-room. After characterising the application as "impudent," and the paper as "objectionable," the Committee resolved to ask Mr. Alexander to submit a copy of the publication. "A Watford Ratepayer" has written an open letter to the Committee, which we reproduce from the columns of the *Watford Observer*: "Gentlemen,—You have been asked to allow a paper called the *Freethinker* to be placed upon the table of the reading-room. One of you characterised the application as 'an impudent thing to ask.' No one seems to have protested against the bigotry of this remark. Freethinkers being ratepayers equally with Christians, will you kindly say where the impudence comes in when they ask for permission

to place their paper on the table of a public reading-room? The request you have made to have a copy of the paper submitted to you assumes that you have a right to decide what is proper for the public to read, or what it shall leave alone. I most respectfully submit that you have no such right. You are not Press censors, neither have you been appointed to sit in judgment upon any paper. May I suggest that you turn your attention to the prize-fighting and betting odds columns of the daily papers in the reading-room, the money-lending and other objectionable advertisements, etc.? Whatever you may find in the *Freethinker*, you will never find any of this sort of stuff in its pages. Trusting this letter will not be considered 'impudent.'

A pathetic story of a sheep was told a few days ago in the newspapers. During a fire at a farmstead at Cliftonmorth, Westmoreland, this sheep passed through the flames twice to rescue its young, and, failing to escape, was burnt to death with them. Of course that sheep had no soul. Every good Christian knows that. The Hertford men and women who kept quiet in their houses while a most brutal murder was being committed outside have souls. And every good Christian knows that.

"A city of subterfuge, lies, hypocrisy, and deception. An earthquake underneath. God's judgment." This warning was chalked on the Fleet-street pavement, outside the office of *Punch* on Monday morning. The prophet ran away when he saw a policeman coming, and the earthquake seems to be postponed.

The Isle of Thanet (Kent) Board of Guardians, at their meeting last week, received an application from the Ramsgate Evangelical Free Church Council for permission to be allowed to send two ladies to visit the inmates of the Workhouse on days other than the ordinary visiting days. The letter was the subject of a long discussion, and, from the remarks passed, several of the Guardians were evidently of opinion that they already had enough ladies visiting the House, and one remarked that they would soon be having ladies there every day. The Clerk to the Board evidently had some misgivings as to the behavior of the lady members of the Free Church Council, for he suggested that the Board should grant the request and place sufficient confidence in the Council to send people who would behave themselves properly and do some good. If there was any complaint against them, no doubt it would be made, and then the Board could put a check upon them. On these conditions the request was granted.

From the above facts it is pretty plain that these ladies who visit workhouses in such numbers are regarded as nuisances. They are a bore to the nurses, they are a bore to the matron, and, above all, they are a bore to the poor inmates on whom their visits are inflicted. It seems to us that the inmates themselves are the persons to be consulted in this matter, and they should not be compelled to receive visits from people whom they have no wish to see. It is quite time that these visits to workhouses were confined to the Visiting Committees and those whom the people whose misfortune it is to reside there have no objection to seeing.

Father Staunton told a story last Sunday from the pulpit of St. Alban's, Holborn, at the expense of a Christian of another denomination. A friend of his the other day met a Baptist who, referring to the recent fire at St. Alban's, said it was a visitation from heaven upon them for their Ritualistic practices. Father Staunton's friend asked this Baptist: "What about the fire at Spurgeon's Tabernacle? That was surely a larger manifestation." The poor Baptist was settled.

While Mrs. Dennis Tabor, of Hilton, New York, was reading the Bible at the opening of a meeting of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, a week or so ago, she suddenly became unconscious, and remained so until she died five days later. Her death is attributed to "stage fright," but, as there was an erratic Providence concerned in the matter, this is only a surmise. If she had been reading Paine's *Age of Reason*, all true believers could assign the cause of her death without hesitancy.—*New York Truthseeker*.

The Christian Endeavor people in the Huddersfield district have been holding their sixth annual meeting at Berry Brow. One of the speakers, Miss Pearce, is reported to have read an "instructive" paper, in which she contended, amongst other things, that sweetstuff shops should all be closed on the Lord's Day. No toffy for the kids between Saturday night and Monday morning. Let them chew the cud of reflection, think how wicked they are, and put their coppers in the missionary box for the dear men of God, who give well-printed Bibles to heathen who can't read.

Joseph Hocking, in the *Christian World*, gives an account

of a conversation he had about a year ago with an Irish priest. This priest told him that Atheism was very strong in the very country of the Pope. "Half a century ago," he said, "there was comparatively little unbelief in Italy, but now I have no hesitation in saying that a third of the nation is Atheistic." With regard to Venice, he said: "It is only the ignorant men and the women who go to church. The thoughtful men, the reading men, say that we have no religion. It is all superstition, nonsense. We see what these priestly claims amount to, and—and—well, we laugh at it."

Dr. Marshall Randles is the author of a book called *For Ever*, in which he upholds the doctrine of eternal hell. He is a professor at a Wesleyan College, and therefore feels he has some right to speak about the true Christian faith. He denounces the new Free Church Catechism as "meagre, halting, and superficial," and complains that it was put forward by an irresponsible, self-appointed Committee. Dr. Randles's great objection seems to be that the Catechism doesn't contain enough Gehenna.

Sabbatarianism is going it hot and strong at Llandudno. We have already drawn attention to the Nonconformist ministers' protest against the employment of watering-carts and street-sweepers on Sunday. These dissenting men of God say: "Let us all be dirty on the Lord's Day, and let the dust fly about like the powdered sulphur of Hades." It now appears that the Council elections are turning upon this momentous question. A voting-card lies before us as we are writing, which says: "If you are opposed to the Cleansing and Watering of Streets on SUNDAYS, place your mark as shown on the other side"—that is to say, for the Sunday-dirt-and-dust candidates. Christian men never had an opportunity to fight for a more high-toned issue.

The Sunday-dirt-and-dust party also appeal to the rate-payers to resist the project of running the electric trams on the Lord's Day. They appeal to their "fellow Christians" in devilish bad English. Perhaps the Welsh on the opposite side is an improvement. It couldn't easily be anything else.

Rev. David Johnstone, minister of the Gaelic Church, Paisley, has to pay damages and costs for libelling a worshipper, Mr. James Baird, cabinet maker, of High-street. Sheriff Henderson expressed a very low opinion of the man of God's veracity. But the righteous were always persecuted.

Rev. R. Logie, a Quaker missionary, preached a sermon lasting thirty-six hours to twenty-seven Indians. So says the *Advance*, of Chicago. The result was that all but six of the Indians were "immediately converted." We presume they really couldn't stand any more of it. No doubt the unconverted six retired in coffins.

All sorts of New Testaments are being printed. The latest is called "The Marked Testament," special words and passages being underlined or printed in red and black ink. We suggest that somebody should now bring out "The True Testament." It is sadly wanted.

## Philosophy.

He said: Those eyes alone see well that view  
Life's lovely surfaces of form and hue;  
And not Death's entrails, looking through and through.

Bones, nerves, and veins, and flesh are covered in  
By this opaque transparency of skin,  
Precisely that we should not see within.

The corpse is hid, that Death may work its vile  
Corruption in black secrecy; the while  
Our saddest graves with grass and fair flowers smile.

If you will analyse the bread you eat,  
The water and the wine most pure and sweet,  
Your stomach soon must loathe all drink and meat.

Life liveth but in Life, and doth not roam  
To other realms if all be well at home:  
"Solid as ocean-foam," quoth ocean-foam.

If Midge will pine and curse its hours away  
Because Midge is not Everything For-aye,  
Poor Midge thus loses its one summer day;  
Loses its all—and winneth what, I pray?

—James Thomson ("B. V.").



Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, April 2, Athenæum Hall, Tottenham Court-road, London: 7.30, "The Romance of the Resurrection."

To Correspondents.

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

"FREETHINKER" DEFENCE FUND (WEST HAM).—G. Freeman, 2s.; W. Pike, 1s.; Two Glasgow Secularists, 1s.; J. Baker, 1s. 6d.; A. J. White, 2s. 6d.; W., 2s. 6d.; Athenæum Friend, 1s.; C. M., 2s. 6d.; G. Proctor, 2s.; R. Blossom, 2s.; H. D. Peters, 2s. 6d.—Further subscriptions to this Fund are not solicited at present. We are awaiting the result of Alderman Fulcher's motion to rescind the resolution of February 28, by which the Freethinker is placed behind the screen in the West Ham Free Libraries. Meanwhile we are providing lecturers for the open-air Freethought meetings at West Ham.

HAROLD ELLIOT.—Received, and under consideration, with a view to use.

A. INKPEN.—Thanks.

A. STEPHENSON.—The matter is dealt with in Mr. Foote's Book of God. It has not been sufficiently emphasised by Freethinkers that the Bible is an oriental book. It comes from the East, like all the so-called Sacred Scriptures of the world, and is one member of a numerous species.

G. F. DUPLAV.—Perhaps we don't understand you; certainly you don't understand us.

AGNOSTIC (Cork).—Your order is handed over to Mr. Forder, our publisher. Your letter shall appear next week.

W. B. THOMSON.—Thanks for the papers and your welcome and interesting letter.

C. COHEN reports having received two applications from James Weston and John Gorrill, Sheffield, for membership in the Secular Society, Limited. These applications, with others, will of course be laid before the Board of Directors at their next meeting.

B. J. TRIGGS, 360 High-street, Stratford, complains of our speaking of him as "the lunatic Triggs," and of our stating that he was "laughed into silence" when addressing the West Ham Town Council against the Freethinker. He says that he did not speak at all on that occasion. We reply that we relied, as we were entitled to, upon the report in the West Ham Herald—which report we were not aware that Mr. Triggs had corrected. However, we don't want to misrepresent him, so we give publicity to his assertion that the Herald report was inaccurate as far as he was concerned. With regard to the word "lunatic," we beg to say that it was used as an adjective, and was directed against Mr. Trigg's public utterances, not against his private conduct, of which we know nothing, and want to know nothing. Mr. Triggs calls himself honorary secretary of "The Freethinker Expulsion Committee," and has applied a good many strong adjectives to this journal. But he objects to any adjectives, except flattering ones, being applied to himself. Well, we are not going to flatter him; and we repeat that his bigoted action is "lunatic" or worse.

W. MILLAR.—Not without merit, but the merit is not quite sufficient for the length.

T. W. HEWITT.—Pleased to hear from you. See paragraph.

C. BAKER.—Accept our thanks.

C. D. CAMP.—The "Parson's Prayer" you send us is forty years old or more. We printed it as a "Freethinker Tract" some twelve years ago. Sorry you have taken so much trouble in vain.

E. BALL.—Orders for books, pamphlets, &c., should be sent direct to R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter-street, E.C.

FRANCIS NEALE writes:—"My doctor says I am a lot better, and I suppose I am. But I have never been so deadly ill in my life." Our readers will all wish Mr. Neale a speedy restoration to health, and be glad to see his pen busy again in the Freethinker.

RECEIVED.—Freeman's Journal—The Isle of Man Times—People's Newspaper—Watford Observer—Cambria Daily Leader—The Ethical World—Sydney Bulletin—Waterford Citizen—Southend Echo—New York Truthseeker—Public Opinion—Liberator—Western Times—Huddersfield Examiner—The Crescent—Two Worlds—The Awakener of India—Aberdeen Journal—Secular Thought—Blue Grass Blade—Independent Pulpit—Progressive Thinker—Torch of Reason—Lucifer.

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 returns to the Athenæum Hall for two or three Sundays. This evening (April 2) being Easter Sunday, he will take a seasonable subject—namely, "The Romance of the Resurrection." Freethinkers should give a little publicity to this lecture amongst their more orthodox friends.

The Birmingham Branch of the National Secular Society, as our readers will recollect, was turned out of the Bristol-street Board school, where it was holding too successful Sunday meetings. Ridiculous false charges were trumped up to stop the progress of Secular propoganda in the Midlands capital. Fortunately, the Branch was able to obtain the use of the Circus for three indignation meetings, which Mr. Foote went down to Birmingham to address. The evening meeting was a grand one, and a resolution condemning the action of the School Board was carried with only one dissident.

Since then the Birmingham Branch has been making desperate efforts to obtain another meeting-place. Refusal after refusal was met with, and the Committee almost began to lose heart. But at last the Prince of Wales Assembly Room, in Broad-street, was secured. The situation is excellent, and the hall is all right when you reach it, but you've got to reach it first. It is at the top of a fairly high building, and some of the elderly folk find the stairs something too much like a section of the Tower of Babel. However, you can't have everything your own way in this world, and particularly in Birmingham—that is to say, if you happen to be a Freethinker.

Mr. Foote accepted an invitation to run down again and deliver the first course of three lectures in this new hall. He had been suffering from a nasty cold, and had advised the secretary (indefatigable Mr. Partridge) to have someone in reserve for the afternoon lecture, in case of necessity. Mr. Percy Ward, being on the spot, kindly volunteered to play the part of understudy for the occasion. But, as luck would have it, the weather grew suddenly milder on the Saturday, and Mr. Foote, although a little hoarse, was able to get through the heavy day's work without assistance. He had good meetings both morning and afternoon; in the evening the hall was terribly crowded, and many people were unable to obtain admission. All three lectures were very greatly applauded, there was a large sale of literature at the bookstall, and the Branch officers seemed to find the collections quite satisfactory.

Evidently the Birmingham bigots won't find it an easy job to suppress Secularism in their city. Sunday lectures will be continued up to Whitsuntide in the Prince of Wales Assembly Room. Mr. Cohen occupies the platform next Sunday (April 9), afternoon and evening, and we have no doubt he will have good meetings and a warm welcome.

A good letter, signed Arthur G. Lye, appears in the Aston News, with regard to the refusal of the Aston School Board to grant the use of one of its schools to the Secular Society. Well-written letters by Secularists in the local press are of much service to our cause.

It will be highly gratifying to the Christian bigots of West Ham and the surrounding neighborhood to learn that the meeting held on Tuesday week resulted in the formation of a new West Ham Branch of the National Secular Society. Upwards of thirty members enrolled themselves at the meeting. Mr. H. R. Sparkes was elected as secretary, and a meeting arranged for Thursday, March 30, at the Workman's Hall, West Ham-lane, at 8 p.m. Arrangements are already made for active outdoor work during the summer. The local committee who have been watching the interests of the Freethinker have almost to a man joined the Branch, and that "blasphemous" journal will be on sale at all meetings. Surely the Christian Councillors are entitled to the best thanks of the Secular party!

From the last number of the Liberator to hand we see that our old friend, Mr. Joseph Symes, is alive and kicking vigorously in Melbourne. He must be getting pretty grey by this time, but his spirit is as indomitable as ever. Mr. Symes reprints in this number of the Liberator two articles—

one by Mr. Foote, the other by Mr. Neale—from our own columns.

Councillor Strange has been elected Mayor of Waterford, in spite of the opposition of the clergy and the cry of "heretic" raised against him. The local *Citizen* says that Mr. Strange's return means "the defeat of the clergy," and that he "may in future pose as the John Morley of Waterford."

Mr. Heaford reports a successful meeting in Battersea Park last Sunday, the speakers being himself and Messrs. Pack, White, and Edwards. We understand that the Battersea Branch has every prospect of a fine future if the members only stick closely to the work.

Ingersoll's newest lecture on "The Devil" is being reprinted for English readers, and will be on sale at Mr. Forder's on Thursday week. Ingersoll has done nothing on this subject before, and this pamphlet will doubtless have a wide circulation. Every admirer of Ingersoll will be sure to get a copy, and the title is one to attract outsiders likewise—for who isn't more or less interested in the Devil? Old Nick is far and away the most fascinating figure in the Christian pantheon.

The *Chatham and Rochester News* prints a long and fair report of Mr. Foote's recent Sunday morning lecture at New Brompton on "Truth and Falsehood About Freethought." A somewhat shorter report appears in the local *Observer*. It is pleasant to see the press boycott against Freethought breaking down in this fashion.

An anti-clerical demonstration was announced to take place on Sunday last at Barcelona, but was prohibited by the Prefect. When this was known a multitude of people marched towards the Prefecture, and the Prefect thought it advisable to withdraw his prohibition. Accordingly the demonstration took place, as announced, in the theatre. "Violent speeches" were delivered, says a Reuter telegram; but we all know what that means. An ex-priest was one of the most "inflammatory" orators. The meeting broke up amid cries of "Long live liberty, down with clericalism and reaction."

### "In His Steps."

NEARLY two thousand years of Christian teaching has resulted in open-mouthed astonishment at an American minister's attempt to portray the effect of a practical application of the teachings of Christ in every-day life. The amazement is not unnatural, for here in England professional followers of the "Carpenter of Nazareth" have seats in the House of Lords, and live in palaces and well-to-do rectories. Many others pocket princely salaries for occasionally reading printed sermons on Sundays, and pass the remainder of each week as men of substance at seaside and country resorts. Others never preach at all, but farm out their "cure of souls" to "clerical guinea-pigs," and annex the difference; whilst they throw their energies—which they solemnly promised to give to the service of Christ—into book-writing, or to increasing the circulation of "religious" papers, one-third of which consists of puffing somebody's pills or soap, and a portion of the remainder in interminable squabbles about ecclesiastical millinery. Small wonder the masses are not converted when these professional followers of Christ fail woefully to practise what they preach. The horrors of slavery and the brutal treatment of prisoners and other inhuman outrages were never denounced by the *professional* teachers of Christism until lay men and women cried shame upon them. The spiritual lords almost invariably voted against reforms. They voted against the Bill for abolishing capital punishment for stealing from shops property of the value of five shillings. The Roman Catholic Disabilities and the Jewish Disabilities Repeal Bills met with their determined opposition. The right reverend fathers-in-God resisted the motion for the admission of Dissenters to the Universities, and also the Bill to permit in churchyards funeral services other than that of the Church of England. And, finally, they have, in fighting the Deceased Wife's Sister Bill, displayed the intelligence and the noble firmness of mules. It is facts like these that explain the utter astonishment of the average man and woman at Mr. Sheldon's book, for the author of *In His Steps* takes Christianity seriously.

MIMNERMUS.

### Lucilio Vanini.

LUCILIO VANINI was born at Taurisano, near Naples, in 1584 or 1585. His father was steward to the Duke of Taurisano, Viceroy of Naples, and, according to the son's statements, a man of elevated character. Besides his natural prenomens of Lucilio, Vanini during his lifetime assumed others, such as Julius Cæsar and Pompey. This affectation of celebrated names brought upon him an accusation of pride, but he defended himself on the ground that a miserable theologian of Rome unfortunately bore the same names as himself, and shared his renown without partaking in his labors. His father sent him to Rome, where he studied theology and philosophy, his first master in theology being Barthelmi Argotti, whom he highly praises, calling him the phoenix of preachers; in philosophy he had for master Jean Bacon, whom he styles the Prince of Averroists, and from whom he learnt to swear by Averroes. His favorite authors were Pomponatius, Cardan, Averroes, and Aristotle, but to none of them did he pin his faith. Each of them is occasionally severely handled by Vanini in his works, although he accords to them all praise when seemingly due. Besides theology and philosophy, he studied physics, astronomy, medicine, and civil and ecclesiastical law. He afterwards at Padua made theology his special study, became a doctor of canon and civil law, and was ordained a priest.

Vanini's father, although a worthy man, was not well to do, and had left his son no fortune. The young doctor and priest was therefore poor, but he supported his poverty with honor and courage. "All is warm," he writes, "for those who love; have we not braved the most piercing colds of winter at Padua, with wretchedly insufficient raiment, animated solely by the desire to learn?" When he had completed his studies in this city he found himself prepared to travel through Europe, to visit the academies, and to assist at the conferences of the learned. According to his own writings, he must have travelled over the greater part of Europe, visiting not only the whole of Italy, but also France, England, Holland, and Germany. Fathers Mersenne and Garasse, the two principal authorities for the facts of his life, inform us that before his execution at Toulouse he confessed before the Parliament there assembled that at Naples, before starting on his tour, he and a dozen of his friends had formed the project of journeying over Europe to promulgate Atheism, and that France fell to his share. M. Rousselot, however, the editor of Vanini, stigmatises this as a libellous detraction from Vanini's character, and declares that he was obliged to quit Italy, where his lectures recalled those of Pomponatius, and seek refuge in France, where he published his two principal works, the *Amphitheatrum Æternæ Providentiæ*, &c., at Lyons in 1615, and the *De Admirandis Naturæ Regina*, &c., in 1616. Everywhere he went he discussed and expounded, arousing the opposition of the bigoted, and extorting the admiration of the independent. From Lyons he was compelled to flee to London to avoid being burnt, and even at the latter place he was imprisoned for forty-nine days by the zealous religionists of our own metropolis. This happened in 1614, five years before his death. Father Mersenne alleges that about this time he entered a convent of Guienne, where he made fervid professions of faith, but whence he was expelled for depraved conduct; but, as M. Rousselot observes, this is an allegation advanced without proof. If the holy Father deemed it his duty to cite the fact, he ought also to have recognised an obligation no less great to prove it. At Paris Vanini had for host and protector the Marshal de Bassompierre, whose almoner he became, and to whom he dedicated his second great work. Here also he enjoyed the friendship of the Papal Nuncio, Roberto Ubaldini, Bishop of Politio, whose rich library afforded him invaluable opportunity for study. But his naturally uneasy and adventurous spirit impelled him to wander like a knight-errant of philosophy, and he quitted Paris for Toulouse. There happened, however, just then a circumstance which fully justified his departure. The two works above cited had been examined and sanctioned by the censors of the Sorbonne; but as the latter in particular made a great noise, the Sorbonne examined it afresh and condemned it to the flames. The author was

accused of reproducing the ideas of a book called the *Three Impostors*, nay, even of reprinting the work itself; but, as a matter of fact, this work, although much talked of, has never been seen by any one, and probably never had existence. This charge of plagiarism is on a par with the statement of Father Mersenne, that Vanini's preaching and writing had perverted so many young men, doctors and poets, that he had 50,000 Atheistic followers at Paris!

At Toulouse Vanini found his life overshadowed by this sentence of the Sorbonne, and before long the fate of his work became his own also. He was accustomed to hold conferences with his friends on matters of philosophy; by one of these, a respectability named Francon, he was denounced as an impious heretic. The following are the words of Father Garasse, which may serve as a specimen of the style in which the enemies of Vanini speak of him: "Lucilio Vanini was a Neapolitan nobody, who had roamed over all Italy in search of fresh food, and over great part of France as a pedant. This wicked rascal, having arrived at Gascogne in the year 1617, endeavored to disseminate his own madness, and to make a rich harvest of impiety, thinking to have found spirits susceptible to his teachings; he insinuated himself with effrontery amongst the nobles and gentry, as frankly as if he had been a domestic, and acquainted with all the humors of the great; but he met with spirits more strong and resolute in the defence of truth than he had imagined. The first who discovered his horrible impieties was a gentleman named Francon, possessed of sound sense. It happened that towards the end of 1618 Francon, having gone to Toulouse, as he was esteemed a brave gentleman and an agreeable companion, soon saw himself visited by an Italian, reported to be an excellent philosopher, and one who propounded many novel and startling curiosities. This man spoke such fine things, such novel propositions, and such agreeable witticisms, that he easily attached himself to Francon, by a sympathy of the supple and serviceable disposition of his hypocritical nature. Having made an opening, he commenced to insert the wedge; little by little he hazarded maxims ambiguous, and every way dangerous, until, no longer able to contain the venom of his malice, he discovered himself entirely." The worthy Father says that Francon's first impulse was to poniard Vanini, but after reflection he preferred to denounce him. It was thus that Vanini, who perhaps had fallen into a trap, was delivered into the hands of the law. The President Gramond, author of the *History of France under Louis XIII.*, gives an account of the trial which ensued, and of the wretched arguments for the existence of God which Vanini adduced in answer to interrogations concerning his belief in Deity. One cannot read these last without suspecting that the arraigned culprit, with infinite contempt, was expending his masterly irony on the judges who were trying him. Gramond himself thinks that he reasoned so, not from conviction, but from vanity and fear. His judges apparently took the same charitable view of the case, for they condemned him to have his tongue cut out, and then to be burnt alive. During the trial his courage seemed to fail him; men with the indomitable heroism of Bruno are not abundant, but rare as the fabled phoenix. He confessed, took the communion, and professed a readiness to subscribe to the tenets of the Church, which he certainly disbelieved and despised; but when the sentence destroyed all hope he flung away the Christian mask, and recovered his natural dignity. The fearful suspense was less bearable than the certainty of having to stand at the stake. Let us not hypocritically be harsh in our judgment on this man; rather let us reprobate that bigotry and intolerance which could be the means of reducing a naturally proud spirit to such degradation.

Vanini was burnt at Toulouse, on the Place St. Etienne, February 19, 1619. That he died bravely cannot be denied. *Le Mercure François*, which cannot be suspected of any partiality towards him, reports "that he died with as much constancy, patience, and fortitude as any other man ever seen; for, setting forth from the Conciergerie joyful and elate, he pronounced in Italian these words, 'Come, let us die cheerfully like a philosopher.'" There is a report that, on seeing the pile, he cried out, Ah, my God! On which one said, You believe in God then; and he retorted, No; it's a

fashion of speaking. Father Garasse says that he uttered many other notable blasphemies, refused to ask forgiveness of God, or of the king, and died furious and defiant. So obstinate, indeed, was he that pincers had to be employed to pluck out his tongue, in order duly to execute the sentence of the law. The President Gramond writes: "I saw him in the tumbrel, as they led him to execution, mocking the Cordelier who had been sent to exhort him to repentance, and insulting our Savior by these impious words: 'He sweated with fear and weakness, and I, I die undaunted.'" Thus perished Vanini, at the age of thirty-four, a victim to religious bigotry, to the last an obstinate heretic.

Vanini's scepticism was of the most pronounced character; in fact, it is very doubtful whether he had any belief at all in the existence of God; certainly he was declared an Atheist by his persecutors, and put to death as such. In the Amphitheatre he undertakes to defend Providence against the malicious attacks of precedent Atheists, such as Diogoras, Protagoras, and others. But his replies to their arguments are wretchedly weak, and he constantly falls back upon Holy Scripture as an all-sufficient answer to objectors; admitting, however, that the Atheists are still unconvinced, seeing that they regard the Bible as he does Esop's Fables or the dreams of old women. In the Dialogues on Nature he passes in review all beliefs, discussing them with the utmost verve and audacity, and forgetting not the impostures of priests, whose institutions are to him but pious frauds. The mask worn in the Amphitheatre is here lifted enough to show the features concealed. No wonder it brought upon him the judgment of death.

Vanini was one of the most hardy and enlightened spirits of his century. Mixed with graver matter, there are in his writings a number of superstitions and examples of false science, such as are to be found in every author of the time; but this in no way detracts from his greatness. He was one of the most sceptical in an age of intellectual revolt, a champion of reason against the power of authority. In the prime of his life he perished at the stake, bravely and defiantly, notwithstanding his previous moments of weakness. He, too, wears the crown of martyrdom, and is enrolled in the Freethought calendar of saints as a heroic warrior in the cause of human redemption. G. W. FOOTE.

Cinderella Science.

If the diseases of society consist in the weakness of its faith in the existence of the God of the theologians, in a future state, and in uncaused volitions, the indication, as the doctors say, is to suppress Theology and Philosophy, whose bickerings about things of which they know nothing have been the prime cause and continual sustenance of that evil scepticism which is the Nemesis of meddling with the unknowable.

Cinderella is modestly conscious of her ignorance of these high matters. She lights the fire, sweeps the house, and provides the dinner; and is rewarded by being told that she is a base creature, devoted to low and material interests. But in her garret she has fairy visions out of the ken of the pair of shrews who are quarrelling downstairs. She sees the order which pervades the seeming disorder of the world; the great drama of evolution, with its full share of pity and terror, but also with abundant goodness and beauty, unrolls itself before her eyes; and she learns, in her heart of hearts, the lesson, that the foundation of morality is to have done, once and for all, with lying; to give up pretending to believe that for which there is no evidence, and repeating unintelligible propositions about things beyond the possibilities of knowledge.

She knows that the safety of morality lies neither in the adoption of this or that philosophical speculation, or this or that theological creed, but in a real and living belief in that fixed order of nature which sends social disintegration upon the track of immorality, as surely as it sends physical disease after physical trespasses. And of that firm and lively faith it is her high mission to be the priestess.—*Professor Huxley, "Collected Essays," vol. ix., pp. 145, 146.*

A West African, on a visit to England in connection with a missionary society, was shown a collection of photographs. "What is this?" he asked, gazing wonderingly at one of them. "That is a snapshot taken during a scrimmage at a Rugby football game." "But has your Church no missionaries to send among these people?" he demanded.—*Ware.*

## Keep the Devils Out of Children.

WILLIAM KINGDON CLIFFORD, one of the greatest men of this century, said: "If there is one lesson that history forces upon us in every page, it is this:—Keep your children away from the priest, or he will make them the enemies of mankind."

In every orthodox Sunday-school children are taught to believe in devils. Every little brain becomes a menagerie, filled with wild beasts from hell. The imagination is polluted with the deformed, the monstrous, and malicious. To fill the minds of children with leering fiends—with mocking devils—is one of the meanest and basest of crimes. In these pious prisons—these divine dungeons—these Protestant and Catholic inquisitions—children are tortured with these cruel lies. Here they are taught that to really think is wicked; that to express your honest thought is blasphemy; and that to live a free and joyous life, depending on fact instead of faith, is the sin against the Holy Ghost.

Children thus taught—thus corrupted and deformed—become the enemies of investigation—of progress. They are no longer true to themselves. They have lost the veracity of the soul. In the language of Professor Clifford, "they are the enemies of the human race."

So I say to all fathers and mothers: Keep your children away from priests; away from orthodox Sunday-schools; away from the slaves of superstition.

They will teach them to believe in the Devil; in hell; in the prison of God; in the eternal dungeon, where the souls of men are to suffer for ever. These frightful things are a part of Christianity. Take these lies from the creed, and the whole scheme falls into shapeless ruin. This dogma of hell is the infinite of savagery—the dream of insane revenge. It makes God a wild beast—an infinite hyena. It makes Christ as merciless as the fangs of a viper. Save poor children from the pollution of this horror. Protect them from this infinite lie.

—From *Ingersoll's new lecture on "The Devil."*

## The Land of Pain.

THERE is a land whose lurid shore  
Resounds with maniac cries,  
Where seas of boiling brimstone roar  
And lash the sulphurous skies,

Where frantic ghosts, all stung with pain,  
Jump from the scalding tide,  
But evermore fall back again:  
The second death they've died.

With sickening hearts the angels gaze,  
Then turn away to sing,  
With formal smiles, the formal praise  
Of heaven's ruthless king.

And shuddering saints before the throne,  
With choking voice, declare  
The sweetest sight they've ever known  
Is—loved ones writhing there.

"Oh! Sweet the will of God," they cry,  
And, on his lips upcurled,  
That smile of sarcasm makes reply  
Which chills the shrinking world.

"Oh! Sweet the will of God," they cry,  
"Whatever he ordain;  
Submit, ye saints, and prostrate lie,  
However great the pain.

"What though the fire their nerves inflame?  
He does it for a test,  
To see if ye will still proclaim  
Whate'er he does is best.

"Let feeling, judgment, reason, thought,  
Be crushed, and call them 'pride';  
Look on the tortures, and be taught  
He will be glorified!"

They ceased, and with voluptuous throes  
The trumpets pealed aloud!  
A shout—"Promote his glory!"—rose  
From all that countless crowd.

The Elders swung their censers forth,  
And fell before the throne,  
And Angels' songs declared the worth  
Of Him and Him alone.—

\* \* \* \* \*

But look! That Saint has dropped his harp,  
His eyes are stark and wild,  
His breath is coming swift and sharp,  
But God—has only smiled.

The Saint is staring at the Pit,  
A stony, maniac stare;  
It gleams again! he points at IT!  
He shrieks: "My mother's there!"

"I'll praise no more!" Th' Almighty turns  
(Cold, self-contained, severe),  
One glance, from which an angel learns  
That Saint must not be here;

Swift as a flash the Angel flies,  
But, paralysed with dread,  
The Saint stands rigid. From his eyes  
The spark of mind has fled.

The Angel binds him fast with chains;  
All Heaven quaking stands;  
The Lord looks fixedly, nor deigns  
To voice his stern commands:—

A terror-stricken silence falls,  
And ev'ry murmur's hushed,—  
Lest thought rebel, e'en thought appalls,  
And ev'ry thought is crushed.

The Angel sets his nerves like steel,  
And knits his lips and brow;  
His instant, unreflecting zeal  
Had never paused till now;

He lifts the rebel high in air,  
And hurls him down th' abyss,  
And, as he sinks amid the glare,  
Great jets of sulphur hiss.

God waves his hand; the trumpets tell  
'Tis time the shout to raise,  
And mingle with the shrieks of Hell  
Heav'n's triumphant roar of praise;

The Angels twang their harps again  
And sing their formal songs,  
And hide in smiles the inward pain  
Eternity prolongs.

As victims, on the altar bound,  
Are wreathed with many a flower;—  
Bedecked with smiles, the angels sound  
The praise of boundless power.

But he who made the moral law  
Above it sits confessed;—  
No pang disturbs his calm, nor flaw  
His unimpassioned rest;

Two streams, to swell his glory, blend  
Their satisfying flow;  
Utter prostration in his friend,  
And torture to his foe:

Untrammelled, changeless, absolute,  
Eternal, and alone;  
He sows, and seeks one only fruit,  
The splendor of his throne.

—*Freethought Magazine.*

H. W. BOYD MACKAY.

## 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.

Everything that thou reprovest in another, thou must above all take care that thou art not thyself guilty of.—*Cicero.*

## Book Chat.

THE April number of the *Literary Guide* (Watts & Co.) opens with an article on "The Meaning of Faith," by Mr. Joseph McCabe. Mr. Charles E. Hooper writes on "A Possible Religion of Reason." Mr. F. J. Gould banters the *Spectator* for its nonsense about God. The "Chat" this month is with Mr. Herbert Flowerdew, the novelist. There are the usual reviews and paragraphs to interest readers who don't like long articles. The supplement is a good stew-down of the late Professor Clifford's *Lectures and Essays*, by Mr. C. T. Gorham.

\* \* \*

Enterprising journalists have been comparing Mr. Charles M. Sheldon's book, *In His Steps*, to a prairie-fire in literature, and saying it is a second *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. It has sold by hundreds of thousands in America, the land of its birth, and here half-a-dozen competing publishers are selling it at prices that range from a penny upwards. The root idea of *In His Steps* is the same as that of Stead's hysterical work, *If Christ Came to Chicago*; but, whilst Stead's work is at least clever journalism, this volume has no more claim to be considered literature than the average tract or pill advertisement. It is an attempt to portray the practical effect of the Sermon on the Mount on the actions of the tinker, tailor, candlestick-maker, and the rest of them. Mr. Sheldon is not a latter-day Thomas à Kempis, although some of the howling dervishes of the press would have us believe it. There is too great a gulf between the ecstatic meditations of *The Imitation of Christ* and this modern American parody, if, indeed, it merits even that name. The book is not to be criticised as literature. It is merely a portent and sign of the times. It appeals to the same sentimentalists as the photograph of Christ by the stricken husband at the wife's death-bed, or the lithographic Jesus rebuking the *fin-de-siècle* diners in swallow-tails and expansive shirt fronts, whilst the Redeemer wears the blanket and halo of tradition. As for comparing *In His Steps* to a Kempis, it would be fatuity to hazard a comparison between it and such a work as *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which certainly had some slight claims to literary recognition.

\* \* \*

A very amusing volume of *Fantastic Fables*, by Ambrose Bierce ("Dod Grile"), has just been published by Messrs. Outram's Sons. "Dod Grile's" peculiar humor is too well known to our readers to need any description. This volume is quite up to his usual excellence.

\* \* \*

Swinburne's *Loqrine* was played at St. George's Hall on Monday, March 20, by the Elizabethan Stage Society. The result once more demonstrated that a dramatic poem requires something more than strength of theme and beauty of language to prove effective in the theatre.

\* \* \*

Mr. Geoffrey Mortimer has ventured into the domain of sociology in his new book on *Human Love* (University Press, Watford). Mr. Mortimer writes ably and clearly on the various forms of sex union that have existed, and do at present exist, in the world, and of love customs and rites. Chapters are devoted to prostitution and Free Love theories. Mr. Mortimer brings out very plainly the connection between physical love and so-called spiritual emotion. He alleges that they both spring from a common original—the gratification of the senses. This remarkable book will be read eagerly by students of sociology, and also by Mr. Mortimer's numerous admirers.

\* \* \*

Messrs. Longmans announce that Mr. Andrew Lang's *Myth, Ritual, and Religion* will shortly be added to the popular "Silver Library."

## Correspondence.

### A MATTER OF SCIENCE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I am sorry that Mr. Strickland has ignored my argument and explanation, and that he still holds that Mr. Cohen has been guilty of serious scientific blunders. With a boldness of which he is perfectly unconscious, Mr. Strickland has affirmed that the wetness of water is due to the "accident" that water is a "fluid" [he means liquid, for dry air and dry gases are equally fluid] "at the temperature of the air" [he means the ordinary temperature of the lower strata of the air], and that the wetness is not due to the combination which alone is capable of producing the wet fluid called water. And in putting forward these unproven and untenable inferences of his own he assures us that he has limited himself to "known scientific facts." At the same time he frankly confesses that he is so incompetent to discuss various questions outside the domain of physical science that the greater part of the articles by Mr. Cohen and Dr. Keeling read to him like

sheer nonsense. Would it not be better to instruct himself a little more before proceeding to misinstruct a writer who is able to deal with subjects confessedly beyond Mr. Strickland's comprehension?

I will try to illustrate to him the nature of his position by comparisons. Somebody alleges that a man's death is caused by a bullet passing through the brain. A learned physiologist starts up and declares that this is a serious scientific blunder, and that death is not due to the firing of the bullet, but to the "accident" that vitality departs when the brain is seriously injured. What would Mr. Strickland say to such a contention; or to a man who said that the explosiveness of gun-powder or dynamite was not due to the combination of the ingredients, but was caused by the accidental circumstance that such a mixture or compound happened to possess the quality of explosiveness; or to a man who said that the time-indicating powers of a clock were not due to the combination of its parts, but to the "accident" that such a structure happened to possess such powers? A scientific man should know that science excludes accident, and relies only on the proven order of nature, with its unvarying sequence of event.

I will put the question of causation in another way. Take two vessels full of oxygen gas and hydrogen gas. Keep them as long as you like, expose them to arctic cold or tropic heat if you so choose, mix the gases if you will; but so long as you subject them only to ordinary conditions they will remain dry gases. Combine them chemically, however, by exploding the mixture, and wetness results as soon as the product cools to a temperature below the boiling point of water. Wetness (at ordinary temperatures) will invariably follow such a combination of oxygen and hydrogen. The wetness is a concluding stage of a sequence of event. Why, then, is it not a preceding stage of the sequence? What do we mean by the whole language of causation if the combination is not to be regarded as the determining cause of that which invariably follows under normal conditions? And what is the use of telling us that there is "not a shadow of a proof" in such cases? What other proof is possible but that of oft-repeated experience?

In cases of dispute it is generally advisable to search out the explanation, and, if possible, the reconciliation, of the conflicting opinions. In the present instance the different views appear to me to arise from the fact that the practically-determining cause (chemical combination forming  $H_2O$ ) is not the whole cause nor the whole series of causal links. Some of us fix our attention on the chemical combination which introduces the altered properties, while others look for a more immediate cause or link, which, in this case, they may perhaps find in the general law that matter exists in three states (solid, liquid, and gaseous), which are dependent on temperature, etc. From the latter point of view, temperature and atmospheric pressure are the causes of the liquidity of water—though I still fail to see that this general law is responsible for the wetness which distinguishes the liquid condition of water from the liquid or molten condition of the metals which constitute some three-fourths of the elements. If it be said that the wetness of water is due to some unascertained circumstance, I would not quarrel with such a view, provided the unscientific word "accident" is not introduced. I should merely say that the first view is at least permissible, and is quite capable of including the other views. I can believe a doctor if he ascertains that stoppage of the heart's action is the immediate cause of the death of a man who has been shot through the brain; but, at the same time, I should protest that he was thoroughly in the wrong if he attempted to upset the practical common-sense verdict of a jury who decided that the death was caused by the firing of a loaded gun.

As to Mr. Cohen's alleged "misstatements," they are perfectly true if the qualifying phrase, "under normal conditions," is understood, as it would be by all except hypercritical objectors. If I said that snow was white, or that grass was green, would it be fair to charge me with misstatement on the ground that snow is sometimes pink, or that grass is yellow, or even black, when scorched by the sun or a furnace? Are authors of text-books on chemistry to be convicted of gross ignorance or inaccuracy when they tell us that hydrogen is a gas, whereas, under certain highly abnormal conditions, it can be liquefied, or even solidified? Is it an unpardonable scientific blunder to say that iron is solid, unless we also add "at ordinary temperature"?

The eighth and ninth paragraphs of Mr. Strickland's second letter contain more flaws of language and logic than I care to criticise in detail.

W. P. BALL.

Visiting Parson—"Surely on this, the day we opened the new church, the town ought to have kept sober." Resident Parson—"I'm afraid that is the event they are celebrating."—*Sydney Bulletin*.

Salvation Army Lassie—"Well, dear brother, how is your soul to-day?" Patient (rather deaf, thinking of his complaint)—"Much better, thank you. I had a poultice on it last night."

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

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

### LONDON.

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "The Romance of the Resurrection."

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, A Concert.

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 16 New Church-road): March 31, Ball. April 1, at 7, Debating Class—H. W. Belsey, "The Literature of Socialism and Secularism." Sunday, at 7.30, Dance and Entertainment.

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Surrey Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road, S.E.): 11.15, Discussion; 7, J. Clarke, M.A., "Arbitration: Its Needs and Possibilities."

### OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, F. A. Davies, "The First Easter Morn."

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, R. P. Edwards, "What Would Jesus Do?"

HAMPSTEAD HEATH (near Flagstaff): 3.15, E. Paek.

KILBURN (corner of Victoria-road): 7, R. P. Edwards, "What Would Jesus Do?"

MILE END WASTE: 11.30, E. Paek.

THE TRIANGLE (Salmon Lane, Limehouse): 11.30, Stanley Jones.

STRATFORD (The Grove): 11.30, A lecture.

VICTORIA PARK (near the Fountain): 3.15, R. P. Edwards, "What Would Jesus Do?"

WESTMINSTER (Grosvenor Embankment): 11.30, W. J. Ramsey, "The Gospel of Secularism."

### COUNTRY.

GLASGOW (Lecture Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): 12, Discussion Class—Impromptu Speeches; 6.30, A lecture.

GREAT YARMOUTH FREETHINKERS' ASSOCIATION (Freethinkers' Hall, bottom of Broad-row). Thursdays, at 8.30, Elocution Class. Sunday, at 7, J. M. Headley, "Did Christ Rise from the Dead?"

HULL (Friendly Societies' Hall, No. 2 Room): W. Gibson, "Disestablishment and Disendowment of the Church of England."

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): J. M. Robertson—3, "The Revival of Catholicism"; 7, "The Indestructibility of Freethought."

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, Willie Dyson, "The Story of the Resurrection."

STOCKTON (Borough Hall Dining Room): H. Percy Ward—11, "The Rights of Women"; 3, "Jesus the Infidel"; 6.30, "How Christianity has Cursed Humanity."

### Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—April 9, Birmingham; 16, m., Limehouse; a., Victoria Park; 23, a., Victoria Park; e., Athenæum, Tottenham Court-road; 30, m., Mile End; a., Victoria Park; e., Athenæum. May 3, Mile End Waste; 7 and 14, Manchester; 21, Birmingham Conference.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon-road, S.E.—April 23, e., Edmon-ton. May 7, a., Victoria Park; 14, a. and e., Brockwell Park; 21, a., Victoria Park.

H. PERCY WARD, 5 Alexandra-road, Edgbaston, Birmingham.—April 2, Stockton; 16, Glasgow.

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