

THE Freethinker

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PRICE TWOPENCE

King Pepple.

THERE is a sort of sympathy which Christians find it very difficult to exercise. I mean sympathy with a religion different from their own. When Christianity first came into vogue, and its scholars (such as they were) began to write comparative estimates of their own creed and the Pagan system, they were guilty of the grossest unfairness towards the faith of the Greeks and Romans. Justin Martyr, for example, composed long essays of maundering criticism of paganism, without understanding, or attempting to understand, its true nature and its true place in civilisation. He and his colleagues regarded Christianity as the one genuine religion, and all the rest as false. As a matter of fact, no religion is false. Each religion may teach false doctrine and retail myths to the crowd, but in its essence it is true to the instincts of the people who entertain it. It fits their character. It provides as good a philosophy as they are capable of. If you want to alter a people's religion, you must alter their character, both moral and intellectual. To alter a people's character is certainly possible, but it is only possible by means of a change in their environment and a change in their education. While neglecting these factors, you cannot permanently clap a religion on a man. You may fix a linseed-poultice on his chest, and a creed on the surface of his thought. Both will come off. I wish all the current popular religions to disappear, but I want the process to take place on a sound principle. The form and texture of men's thoughts must be modified before it will be of any avail to modify their religious institutions. In this work of modification the development of a humanist ethics and the advance of a critical Freethought are necessary factors. Of course, some men and some peoples are more plastic than others. Japan embraces new ideas more quickly than China, and Ireland will (I hope) renounce its Catholicism long before West Africa yields up its fetishism. Meanwhile, Christian missionaries are expending an immense amount of money and pains in characterless efforts to change creed without changing exemplified in Miss Mary H. Kingsley's recent *West African Studies*. To this lady's work there is an excellent appendix by M. le Comte C. N. de Cardi, who was connected with the Niger regions from 1862 to 1896. M. de Cardi puts the situation very clearly when he says:—

"Though these people [of Old Calabar] have been in communication with Europeans for at least two centuries, and under British influence for upwards of sixty years, and a mission has been established in their principal town for the best part of fifty years, it was a common thing to see human flesh offered for sale in the market within a very few years of the establishment of the British Protectorate."

There are three causes, says M. de Cardi, which prevent the success of Christian propaganda. First, the native fetishism suits the African mind, accounting for the action of all things, fell or pleasurable, by the presence of spirits. The Fetish philosophy is kept going by a well-administered system of Ju-ju priests. These priests travel from one point of the country to another, and both keep in communication with each other, and exert a continuous influence on the imagination of the Negro. Secondly, the native marriage custom is polygamy. An African wife, after the birth of an infant, retires from the companionship of her husband, and spends two years in

nursing. The man would be wifeless if he had not other women to conduct his household. Then, again, a woman is not permitted "at certain times" (this phrase of M. de Cardi's evidently alludes to the menstrual period) to prepare food for anybody but herself. A plurality of wives guards against this inconvenience. It might seem feasible for the husband to cook his own meals; but such is not the native habit, and a man feels safe only when his food has been served up and tasted by a wife as a testimony of the absence of poison. Thirdly, the negro middle-men on the coast are anxious to prevent the intrusion of white men (missionaries included) into the interior. They fear the white traders will rob them of their occupation by making their brokerage unnecessary. Thus religious, social, and economic agencies form a barrier to the efficient spread of the Christian doctrine. The same agencies would, doubtless, thwart the work of a purely Rationalistic mission. But my present point is to indicate the ignorance of human nature and sociology which renders Christian activity in West Africa (and elsewhere) both feeble and ridiculous.

All this preamble leads us up to King Pepple. This personage furnishes a quaint illustration of the absurd side of Christian evangelisation among the pagans. Pepple was the negro King of Bonny some forty or fifty years ago. A small civil war occurred in his dominions, and Pepple found a haven of refuge in England for four years. The Christian public and the gospel press patronised him, and he conceived the plan of raising £20,000 for the conversion of Bonny to the religion of the Holy Trinity. His appeal was unsuccessful. How much money he was able to raise M. de Cardi does not inform us. But good fortune has preserved for us the verses which Pepple says he recited in order to touch the sympathies of the British nation. Here is the opening stanza:—

Beloved brethren, young and old,
I come to-day to ask for gold
To help the missionary coons
Who brave Bonny's hot simoons.
Tooralooral! rich and poor,
A pewter plate is at the door.

My opinion is that his Majesty was not the author of this remarkable poem.* It betrays its European origin. There sparkles in its lines a sense of humor which the King of Bonny might appreciate, but was probably incapable of expressing even in British slang. However, the problem is a nice literary question, and we almost need the aid of a Higher Criticism to unravel it. I omit the second verse for fear of infringing a possible copyright, and I pass on to the stern warning conveyed in the third:—

And then it must not be forgot
That hell is wide and awful hot,
And gibbering fiends around us grin
With joy to see us tumble in.
Tooralooral! don't forget,
The Devil he may have you yet.

This is Miltonic in its massive terror. The interjection of the "Tooralooral" has a weird effect, all the more impressive because one cannot divine what on earth it means. Nothing, surely, could be better calculated to unloose Christian purse-strings than the terminal couplet of the fourth verse:—

Tooralooral! tip us a bob,
To help us on our holy job.

* M. de Cardi leaves the question ambiguous, though he quotes the entire composition; and Miss Kingsley is silent on the subject.



Unless, indeed, it were the searching interrogatory of the fifth stanza :—

Tooralooral! are you willing
To subscribe another shilling?

King Pepple (or his hired poet) understood the value of climax. As he draws to the end of his appeal he strikes an increasingly melodious and insistent note :—

If you will help to save the nigger,
Your crown of glory shall be bigger,
More white your robes, your sandals smarter,
When we shall meet above here-arter.
Tooralooral! psalms and hymns,
Cherubs sweet and seraphims.

This might seem an Olympic flight beyond which neither European nor African genius could soar. But the resources of pious fancy are not exhausted. There is a higher brilliancy to come; and King Pepple leaves the reader amid this splendid blend of music and rainbows :—

Fields of glory, floods of light,
Sweet effulgence, angels bright,
Sounds symphonious, jewels rare,
Streets of gold and perfumed air.
Tooralooral! fellow-men,
Hallelujah! and Amen.

The "Tooralooral," though it failed to draw in the £20,000 necessary to imbue the natives of Bonny with the principles of the Nicene Creed, appears to have aroused a good deal of friendly interest in the prospects of the royal evangelist. King Pepple's British friends subscribed £900 to charter a vessel to convey him and his queen Eleanor to the Niger coast. Pepple reached Bonny in August, 1861. He had surrounded himself with a suite of nine Englishmen and two Englishwomen, one of the latter being entitled Maid of Honor to Queen Eleanor. To all of these persons he had promised substantial salaries. The salaries were never paid. Pepple's suite lingered at Bonny for two or three months, and then, assisted by the generosity of some of the Bonny River merchants, they returned to their native land. Pepple died a few years later, leaving his debts unpaid. His fame, however, rests secure on the merits of a poem which, in all likelihood, he did not write, but in the public adoption of which he displayed an insight as unique as it was discriminating.

F. J. GOULD.

Justice to Freethinkers.

In the *Nineteenth Century* for August appears a well-written article by Michael MacDonagh upon "The Evolution of the Parliamentary Oath." We are exceedingly gratified to see that the writer gives a fair and appreciative account of the part Mr. Bradlaugh played in the important struggle to obtain the legal right to affirm instead of swearing. It has been our duty so frequently to complain of either the "conspiracy of silence" upon the part of the press of this country towards Freethinkers, or else to point out its gross misrepresentation of their work, that it has been a pleasure to us to read Mr. MacDonagh's just tribute to the services of the great English Freethought leader. To those who thoroughly appreciated the indomitable courage and untiring labors of that undaunted fighter for liberty, the facts adduced and the words of approval recorded by the writer in the *Nineteenth Century* will be enthusiastically welcomed. Of course, the article contains much information as to events which took place as far back as 1563, when members of the House of Commons, before they could discharge any legislative duties, had to take an oath of Supremacy and Uniformity. At a later period, what was termed the "Gunpowder Plot" occasioned a long and complicated addition to oath-taking. It was in 1610 that the words were added—"upon the true faith of a Christian," which shut out all but Protestant believers in Christianity from Parliament.

Before the year 1829 the amount of swearing imposed upon a man who aspired to a Parliamentary position was enormous. At first he had to take the oath of Allegiance and Supremacy before the Lord Steward, then he had to repeat the same at the table of the House. Besides this, he had to take the oath of Abjuration, and also to make a declaration against transubstantiation, invocation of saints, and the Mass. It was in the year

1829 that a special Parliamentary oath was made for Roman Catholics, but it was not until 1833 that any Protestant Christians were permitted to affirm. After waiting many years, a Quaker in the person of Joseph Pease was allowed to affirm and take his seat in the House of Commons. In 1829 Daniel O'Connell, after being elected several times and having made a speech at the Bar of the House, was the first Roman Catholic who sat in the House since the days of the Revolution. After twelve years' struggle the Jews were admitted in 1858, under a Sessional order, which had to be repeated every session up to the year 1866. A compromise was then made, by which the Commons were at liberty to admit a Jewish member, and the Lords were at liberty to exclude a Jewish peer. Lord Campbell alluded to this incident thus: "It was as much as to say to the Commons: We know that we should be damned if we agreed to admit a Jew to sit among us, but we give you authority to allow Jews to sit among you, and if you please you may do so, and be damned to you."

Mr. MacDonagh gives numerous examples of the wording of the oaths which were in former times supposed to be necessary to support the Government, the King, and Religion. Those oaths concluded with the famous line, "So help me God." To show the nature of this oath-taking, it may be mentioned that the new Act of 1868 abolished six hundred oaths which had been taken, up to that time, by officials outside of Parliament. The oath which members of both Houses had to take was then reduced to the following more reasonable dimensions: "I, A. B., do swear that I will be faithful and bear allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Victoria, her heirs and successors, according to law. So help me God." This was all that survived of a form which was deemed necessary to protect Church and King. Lord Sherbrooke is cited as saying that every Peer and every Commoner was already, before entering Parliament, bound to bear true allegiance to the Queen. In Germany, France, and America neither oath nor affirmation is required, but only a declaration of fidelity to the Commonwealth.

The writer of the article in the *Nineteenth Century* devotes considerable space to recording the action Mr. Bradlaugh took upon the oath question. He points out how the member for Northampton had to struggle year after year, and to bear the most unjustifiable insults before he could serve his country in Parliament. Referring to the disgraceful treatment Mr. Bradlaugh received in August, 1881, Mr. MacDonagh writes: "But this time he was violently seized at the very door of the lobby of St. Stephen's Hall, and, finally, ejected (helpless and bedraggled, and panting with exertion and resistance) into the Palace yard, which was thronged with a host of his enthusiastic followers." Our author then describes the conduct of the ejected one as a "splendid fight for freedom of thought," and adds that he lived to become "one of the most honored and respected members of the House." For ourselves we look back with utter disgust at the brutality manifested towards one of the bravest of men—one whose public life is a record of the most heroic deeds that ever ennobled human character. Mr. Bright witnessed the outrage committed, and told the House that he hoped he might never see the like again. There was one special feature in this conflict that should be noted, which is this: Mr. Bradlaugh was opposed by both Liberals and Tories, and the Bill brought in by Mr. Gladstone was defeated in the Commons. It is highly gratifying to the Freethought party to see the efforts of their leader fairly recorded in the history of the evolution of oath-taking in England. Of course Freethinkers know all about the facts of the case, but it is pleasant to find that the general reader is put in possession of the knowledge of the leading incidents of this struggle by a popular monthly magazine which finds its way into the libraries of the nation. That such an article should appear in the *Nineteenth Century* is in itself evidence of the progress of Secular views and the abatement of theological prejudice.

The Affirmation Bill which Mr. Bradlaugh introduced the House to pass was really the settlement of a question which had for years impeded the action of all who dissented from Christianity as interpreted by the Church and the law. Since the passing of this Act no

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oath is necessary from anybody, although, judging from frequent reports appearing in the newspapers, certain magistrates do not seem to be aware of this fact. We confess that it appears to us strange that the very men who are appointed to administer the law should be ignorant of the fact that Charles Bradlaugh, the Secularist, made affirmation a strictly legal form in this country. Even if he had done nothing else for the general good, this service alone entitles him to be enrolled on the list of the nation's benefactors. So long ago as the time of the Commonwealth, Cromwell wrote that if men were willing to serve their country that was sufficient, independent of their opinions; but until the Affirmation Bill became law it was quite impossible in England to act on his intimation. Christian barriers to intellectual freedom, and the forced practice of administering justice with theological exactions, were by that Act for once and for ever broken down and destroyed. It must appear strange to many of the present generation that any persons should have been excluded from Parliament in "Christian England" for wishing to obey Christ's command to "Swear not at all." But such was the case. This was another instance of orthodox inconsistency, showing the great difference between preaching and practising upon the part of professed Christians.

It is useful to recall from time to time the absurd and unjust conduct of the promoters of the dominant faith; and also to remind our theological opponents how persistently Freethinkers have worked in defence of personal and national freedom. The supporters of the Church only ceased their opposition to the rights of the people when the law deprived them of the power of further exercising their retarding influence. Liberty, which, the poet has said, "gives the flower of human life its lustre and perfume," has had to fight the religious bodies inch by inch, for its very existence. At length, however, after many struggles and much suffering, the friends of freedom have achieved many victories, and this gives us hope for the further progress of the human race.

CHARLES WATTS.

The Twilight of the Gods.

The vitality of error is as remarkable as it is unpleasant. Too slippery to be easily held, one may expose it to-day, only to find it rearing its head as lively as ever to-morrow. Cut it into two, and each part becomes a living whole. Grind it to powder, a few grains will still retain enough strength to flourish anew in all their noxious vitality. We hear much of the power of truth—few tell us of the power of falsehood; yet the latter is often far stronger than the former. Men who have spent their lives and met their deaths in the attempt to benefit their fellows have had their reputations blackened and blasted for centuries, and been handed down to posterity as the vilest characters, as the result of the lies that have been assiduously circulated concerning them. The mass of the people cling fondly to old ideas; the innovator, the reformer, comes among them as a disturber of that mental stagnation which ignorance and thus himself has a hand in preparing a fruitful soil for the lies, sown by those interested in keeping things as they are, to take root. And, even when people recognise the falsity of the beliefs they have subscribed to, there goes up the parrot-like cry of "What will you put in their place?"—as though it were essential to put something in the place of a lie before exposing its character. And, worse still, something is usually put in their place, and something average man that one religion is bad, he manufactures another. One king, by the possession of unlimited power, proves himself a tyrant, and the force of public opinion dethrones him, and often hands on the same amount of power to his successor. It is thus that we find history constantly repeating itself—the same in and although different in form. This principle is much more clearly exhibited in religious matters than elsewhere—perhaps because the things have more power here than in other directions.

At all events, students of religious history can readily trace in the growth and decay of religions certain well-defined stages where the same features are observable, however much they may be disguised by local covering. All religions take their origin from the same type of mind; their rise to power is usually by the same methods; and their decay is due to exactly the same set of causes. There is a Greek story, paraphrased and put into verse by Tennyson, of one who received from the chief deity the gift of immortality, but not that of eternal youth. And, as time went on, the poor fellow grew so shrivelled and so unsightly that, out of sheer pity, the gods converted him into a grasshopper, and thus gave him a fresh youth. Pretty much the same moral holds good of the Christian deity. He may possess immortal life; he certainly lacks perpetual youth. He, like Tithones, has grown old, and his power gradually less. The thunder no longer roars at his bidding, the lightning no longer strikes at his wish; the winds and waves have slipped beyond his power; and his creator, man, is striving to give him a fresh youth by altering his form, so repulsive has the old one become in the sight of all.

We are, as I have said, simply repeating history in much that is going on in the religious world, and nothing will show this more conclusively than a brief study of the writings of a great classical writer—Lucian. In Rome, seventeen or eighteen centuries ago, the observer might have witnessed in many respects very much the same condition of affairs as can be seen in Great Britain to-day. There were present the same extremes of wealth and poverty, rank and degradation. Visitors were there from all corners of the civilised world, and numerous writers found ample and congenial employment for their pens in satirising the vanity of fashion or the abuse of wealth. In religious matters the parallel was still closer. The most diverse and discordant religious sects were to be found within the walls of Rome. Osiris and Mithras, Zeus and Jove, Odin and Jehovah, Buddhism and Zoroastrianism, all had their representatives in that Rome which seemed to swallow all without assimilating any. All religions were free to come and go, provided they did not threaten the national security. And over against these representatives of all the religions were those who stood as the representatives of their negation. The oft-quoted statement of Gibbon, that to the philosopher all religions were equally false, and to the statesman equally useful, undoubtedly represented a growing fact in Roman life. It is not always the case that a man gives up one delusion to embrace another, and many of those that had rejected the religion they had been trained to believe showed but little inclination to adopt any other. The poem of Lucretius, Cicero's essay "On the Nature of the Gods"—both written about the same time—show pretty conclusively the strong antitheistic feeling that then existed; while in the writings of Lucian there is not only a good presentation of the case against fundamental religious beliefs, but they are directed by as powerful a satire as was ever wielded by Voltaire or Swift. Altogether it was a period when superstition ran into some of its wildest excesses, and when reason put forward some of its loftiest claims.

Lucian was born at Samosata, not far from Antioch, between 120 and 130 A.D., the precise date of his birth, as of his death, being uncertain. He was born of poor parents, and at the age of fifteen was apprenticed to an uncle, a sculptor, a profession at which Lucian is said to have shown marked ability, particularly in modelling small figures of gods such as were set up in front of houses. Destroying gods during the latter part of his career was thus, in some sense, an atonement for manufacturing them at the commencement. His stay with his uncle was, however, but brief. He gave up all intention of seeking eminence in that direction, threw himself into study, travelled widely, practised for some time as a lawyer, studied philosophy in the schools at Athens, and finally became a follower of the Epicurean philosophy and a close friend of that Celsus whose attack upon Christianity was so powerful that the Church destroyed all trace of his writings, save such as were preserved in Origen's reply.

Most of the writings that have made Lucian famous were produced after he had reached his fortieth year, and these consist chiefly of satirical dialogues dealing

with the customs of society, the unwarrantable pretensions of the different philosophic schools, and the ridiculous nature of religious beliefs. All the absurdities and impostures of his day were lashed by him with a strength of satire that has seldom been equalled, and hardly ever surpassed. And his satire and ridicule stung and worked for good where elaborate logical processes would have failed to make any impression. Like all men who have refused to attack falsehood as though it were something too sacred to be roughly handled, Lucian's writings gave rise to bitter antagonisms. The superficial, who were unable to see that his ridicule was only a covering for a burning hatred of all falsehoods, cried out that he was only a mocker. Lucian was far more than that. Underneath most of his satire there is a serious note which tells of a clear, brave, manly mind, intent upon dragging imposture into the light of day; trying, as his immediate predecessor Persius said, "to pull the old woman out of men's hearts." Honest endeavor after truth, or genuine desire to do good, he never satirises. In one of his dialogues, in which he represents himself as being chased by all the philosophers, he says he is a hater of imposture, of falsehood, of pride, a lover of truth, of beauty, of sincerity; and there is little reason to doubt the truthfulness of his confession.

Nor was he disliked only by the pagans whose religious beliefs he satirised. The Christians found him just as little to their taste. For one of the most valuable features of his theological dialogues is that they held good not only against the decaying pagan religions, but also against the rising creed of Christianity. But one need pay little heed to what religious advocates say concerning the enemies of their faith. In ordinary matters it may be a good rule to assume that a man is truthful until he is shown to be a liar; in theological controversy it would appear to be just as good a rule to assume that a man is a liar until he is shown to have spoken the truth. It was Erasmus who said that those who spoke evil of him, "one may be sure, were those whose festering sores he had probed." For centuries Christian ignorance and bigotry buried both his name and his works. He was brought to life again at the period of the Renaissance—the period when so many found in pagan literature an antidote to the sickly dogmas of Christianity. From then until now he has won recognition from some of the ripest scholars of Europe. Erasmus spoke loudly in his praise; Rabelais and Swift were largely indebted to him; even Jeremy Taylor borrowed from him the opening paragraphs of his "Holy Dying."

All of Lucian's dialogues possess the qualities of wit and grace, and all may be made to yield valuable lessons if read aright. To Freethinkers, however, there are several that are of special interest, one of which, entitled "Zeus the Tragedian,"* I propose outlining, in order to give non-readers of Lucian a taste of his quality, and because it shows more clearly than any other how well this ancient Freethinker fought the superstitions of his day, and how essentially unaltered the religious position remains age after age.

The opening scene of the dialogue is placed in heaven. Zeus, the chief deity, is discovered much perturbed in mind, and, being pressed for the cause of his uneasiness, explains that the whole Pantheon is in danger of extinction, from the fact that people are ceasing to believe in them. Strolling about the city of Athens, he had come across two professors disputing. He says:—

"I found a good-for-nothing scamp of an Epicurean named Damis, and the respected and excellent Stoic, Timocles, arguing together. Timocles was perspiring with eagerness and hoarse with shouting. Damis was turning him into ridicule and driving him distracted with his coolness. The subject of discussion was ourselves. Damis maintained that we had no concern with men and their doings, and almost denied our existence. Indeed, this was what he meant, and many of his audience applauded. Timocles took our part, passionately and indignantly. He argued well of Providence. He was not without his friends, but he was unequal to his work.....The party in favor of Damis grew larger every moment, till, seeing what was likely to happen, I ordered

* The best English translation of this dialogue is to be found in Froude's *Short Studies*, vol. iii. I quote from that translation, and have also borrowed his description of the dialogue as a title for these articles.

up night to bring the meeting to an end, leaving them to finish the argument to-morrow.....You see the danger.....From men we desire our glory, our honor, and our revenues. Let men once conceive that we do not exist, or that we have nothing to do with them, and victims, incense, and prayers will cease to be offered to us. We shall be left sitting idle here in heaven, banquets and ceremonies at an end, perishing of hunger. It concerns us all, gentlemen; it concerns us all.....We depend on a single man, either to continue as we are or to sink into mere names."

C. COHEN.

(To be continued.)

Theistic Insincerity.

THE *New York Evening Journal*, stimulated seemingly by the death of Ingersoll, has been filling its columns with a discussion on Atheism. And as the discussion and its mode of conduct admirably illustrate a couple of phenomena in contemporary journalism, it is perhaps worth a passing notice here.

In the issue of July 25 the discussion is apparently opened, and there is a large heading on the leader page "Laurence Gronlund Answers an Atheist." Then follows a letter signed "Truth," and prefaced by the editor with the remark that it "unfortunately voices the sentiments of many unhappy men and women who are discouraged by what is evil in the world, and who lack the education which would enable them to see that society, like a building or an animal in its incomplete stage, is unsightly and repulsive, though its ultimate end and destiny are beauty and pleasure." Then follows the letter which puts the Atheist view, and of which the gist is as follows:—

"If God is everywhere, why does not He let Himself show up just to give us a chance to look at Him?"

"If He is the Ruler of the rulers, why does He permit such a misrule as we are affected by nowadays?"

"When He did create the first man, if it is true that He was a philosopher, why did he not create him perfect? It would have saved him a good deal of trouble, such a keeping account of all the prayers of every single individual in order to be able to designate him his deserved place in the new world."

"Why does He let so many good people die from hunger, while in the very next door others have all the luxuries (with much to spare) that Mother Nature can produce?"

"Let the people generally understand that we do not want any more humbug, but light and truth."

This epistle is crude enough to rouse a suspicion that it may be a product of the *New York Journal's* own. But though the writer, either naturally or artificially, assumes an unpolished and somewhat vulgar style, its points are legitimate enough. How are they dealt with? The editor tells us that he has got "Mr. Laurence Gronlund, author of *The Co-operative Commonwealth* and *The New Economy*, a thoughtful, able, and sincere man," to reply. And Mr. Gronlund's reply is given with a great flourish and in much larger type than his first letter. Here it is, and it is worth reproducing in full:—

"MR. GRONLUND'S REPLY.

"This is a very foolish letter on 'God' from an apparently very honest man.

"The gist of the letter is that three questions will give the writer's opinion, give 'a more correct idea of God and what He has done for us.' These questions are: 'If God exists, why does he not show up, just to give us a chance to look at Him?' 'Why did he not create the first man perfect?' 'Why does He let so many good people die of hunger?'"

"This letter simply goes to prove what an immense amount of harm Colonel Ingersoll has done among honest but honest people by his attacks on Moses, Jonah, and other Bible characters.

"Religion properly means the conviction we have of our relation to the universe, and particularly to the mystery in the universe—to God and immortality. Now as a matter of fact, Moses, Jonah, and the other Bible worthies have absolutely nothing to do with that conviction—that is, with true religion. Colonel Ingersoll has taught half-educated people that they have, and he has terribly injured religion.

"And yet Colonel Ingersoll might at this time have done great service to religion if he would but have followed in the footsteps of Thomas Paine, whose memory he professes to venerate. For Paine believed in God and

immortality, and never even suggested that his strictures on the Bible in the least invalidated such belief. Unfortunately for him, he published his ideas one hundred years too early.

"The questions of our correspondent are foolish, because they show that he does not want any mystery, when educated people have learned that the more they know the greater actually becomes the mystery.

"Why does not God 'show up'? Well, electricity is daily manifesting itself as a mighty force; yet it does not 'show up,' and we cannot look at it.

"Why did He not create the first man perfect? Perhaps it would not have been a good thing for mankind. Again, perhaps God could not have done it. J. S. Mill came to the conclusion that God cannot be at the same time omnipotent and all-loving.

"Why does He permit good men to die of hunger? That is not God's fault; that is distinctly man's fault. When our people have grown sufficiently wise they will remedy all that.

"No, the existence of God is altogether too deep a question for our correspondent in his present condition; he will have to know a good deal more before he can permit himself to doubt it.

"LAURENCE GRONLUND."

In some respects this production might be allowed to pass without comment. Mr. Gronlund seems to be one of the class of apologists who pretend to regard Free-thinkers as utter fools, and imagine that any nonsense is good enough with which to confute them. Of course it is only a pretence. It is intended for orthodox admiration, but can only make the Freethinker smile, though it can hardly beget respect. For what is Mr. Gronlund's reply? He raves for half his space about Colonel Ingersoll, Moses, Jonah, and "other Bible worthies," though not one of these individuals is as much as mentioned in the letter to which his purports to be an answer. And, then, there is the old stuff that if Colonel Ingersoll "would but have followed in the footsteps of Thomas Paine," he would have done great service, and, doubtless, earned Mr. Gronlund's approbation. Though, if Mr. Gronlund had lived in Paine's day, he would, doubtless, have been found recommending Paine to follow some previous reformer. The fact, however, is that Ingersoll *did* follow in the footsteps of Paine. Thomas Paine was practically abreast of the current philosophical thought of his age; and that is exactly what Ingersoll was. It is not Paine who published his ideas one hundred years too early, but Mr. Gronlund, who, having been pushed by Paine's work and the work of the early Freethinkers to Paine's position, now comfortably owns to doctrines which would have brought ruin to him, possibly, if enunciated in Paine's day. The praise of the dead heroes is cheap, and the courage of the camp-follower, who only appears when the victory has been won, is not impressive.

But when all the verbiage about Moses and Jonah is ended, we get to the great answer to the poor, ignorant Atheist. That answer—that "perhaps it would not have been a good thing for mankind" to make them good, and that perhaps Omnipotence cannot prevent hunger—is simply beneath notice. It seems that "when our people have grown sufficiently wise they will remedy" the existing disorder. But "infinite wisdom" made "our people" foolish—and even some of them tricky. So we remain as we are.

The reference, of course, by Mr. Gronlund to John Stuart Mill is simply one more foolery or one more trick. Mr. Gronlund knows perfectly well that the god criticised and the god which he was pretending to defend was the god of orthodox belief. No one dealt with the "limited liability" god of Mill's hypothesis, which is neither here nor there as a subject of serious discussion. Whether the orthodox believers in New York were satisfied with Mr. Gronlund's defence we do not know, though, if they were, they must be easy to please. But for Mr. Gronlund himself, "the existence of God is altogether too deep a question" in his present condition; "he will have to know a good deal more before he can permit himself" to believe it—and, in addition to knowing a good deal more, will have to train himself a little more in candor and straightforwardness.

The ugly impression, however, which the whole episode leaves, as to the utter insincerity of the present age, is really the most depressing. The editor of the *New York Journal*, who, in all probability, "believes" as little as Ingersoll, cannot introduce a discussion on Atheism without posing as orthodox, and talking of

the "unhappy men and women" whose Atheism he insinuates is the result of ignorance. All this, of course, lest he should be suspected for a moment of heterodoxy, though the transparent cant of the whole thing one would imagine to be as revolting to a sincere religionist as to an "unbeliever." And then Mr. Gronlund, with all the pomp of big type, patronising an honest man than himself, and solemnly propounding nonsensical "answers" with an air of cocky superiority as though he were really a profound philosopher. Verily, this is the age of make-believe. Whatever they were in mediæval times, at least they were sincere; it was the sincerity of ignorance. They accepted the most ridiculous nonsense, perhaps, and bowed down before bits of wood. But they really believed in the nonsense, and thought the bits of wood miraculous. They were really in earnest—for the most part. But to-day everybody seems shamming, everybody is shuffling, everybody is pretending to be something they are not. The priest is shamming to the congregation, and the congregation is shamming to the priest. The editor is afraid that if he does not sham he will lose his readers, and the readers are afraid if they do not sham their neighbors will ostracise them. And so the gigantic hypocrisy goes on, and everybody is afraid of everybody else.

The fact is that one of the main functions of Free-thought to-day is to bring back intellectual sincerity to the world—the plain facing of facts and the fearless proclamation of beliefs. And, if for nothing else almost than this, honest men to-day ought to rally to the Free-thought flag. For under it alone do men think freely, under it alone in the intellectual world to-day are Truth and Courage, and to it alone belongs the future; it alone has the promise and the potency of the mental regeneration of the world.

FREDERICK RYAN.

Acid Drops.

GHOSTS are very shy creatures. They do not like appearing at all in daylight, nor even at night in much-frequented places. You never hear of a ghost in Cheapside or the Strand. If one is reported anywhere in London, it is far away in the suburbs, where the houses are not so thick together and the gas-lamps are fewer and farther between. Generally speaking, ghosts turn up in secluded country places. The latest apparition has been visible at Dryfa Bridge, near Lockerbie. It was tall and white, and was surrounded by a luminous halo. It was seen by a young man, who ran half a mile after meeting it. Of course, the event has "caused a sensation" in the neighborhood. But nobody thinks of inquiring what precise state the young man was in before he started running.

Glasgow Town Council has decided by an overwhelming majority not to open its Picture Gallery on Sundays. It is thought that, if the Glaswegians spent any part of the blessed Sabbath in looking at works of art, they would have less respect for the godliness displayed by such pious gentlemen as the late City Treasurer.

An old lady has written to Mr. Arthur Balfour offering him a handsome allowance, payable quarterly, if he will swear never to play golf on a Sunday. The *Eastern Daily Press* is the authority for this statement, which there is no reason to doubt. The old lady apparently is prepared to pay for her fad, which can hardly be said of a great many of the Sabbatarian bigots, who would willingly bar other people's enjoyment—if they can do so at no expense to themselves.

Which really is the day to be kept "holy," in the sense of being devoted to the service of the gods? With the Christians it is Sunday; with the Greeks, Monday; Persians, Tuesday; Assyrians, Wednesday; Egyptians, Thursday; Turks, Friday; Jews, Saturday. The institution must be Divine; there is so much uncertainty about it.

The *Life and Remains of the Rev. H. R. Quick*, recently published by the Cambridge University Press, contains some interesting matter. The reverend gentleman was a school-master and afterwards an inspector, and knew what he was talking about when the subject was education. He did not care much for the religious element in public education, and he points out that the rich people—who, by the way, regard religious teaching as so necessary for the lower classes—do not set very much store by it themselves. "This religious element," Mr. Quick wrote, "is hardly thought of in the education of the rich, and nobody knows or even thinks about it when a son is sent to Eton, Harrow, or Winchester." Mr. Quick was a boy at Harrow, and the religious education then consisted of one lesson a week from Watts's *Scripture History*.

Mr. Quick has left a lively picture of a diocesan school inspection. "You ask God," the examiner asked the pupils, "to forgive you as you forgive —?" This produced a shout of "Him." The examiner quoted, "Teach us thy works to do," and asked, "What are his works?" Chorus: "Miracles." Asking about the name Joshua, the examiner said, "It's the same as another name, isn't it? That name is Je——?" And the universal reply was "Jehovah."

We are continually being reminded that this is a Christian country. The strong feeling aroused by the alleged marriage of Prince Lobengula and a white lady shows clearly the contempt with which white Christians view "God's image carved in ebony." If the lady had married the Prince of Darkness himself, the outcry could not have been greater.

Believers in a Carpenter-God are always prating about the Brotherhood of Man, and actually have the impudence to pretend to love their enemies. Their treatment of the colored races shows they do not understand the meaning of fraternity, while their treatment of Freethinkers shows as clearly that they cannot even respect their neighbors.

Those purists, who have taken Rudyard Kipling and other popular writers to task for the somewhat bloodthirsty ideas found in their books, would do well to overhaul the hymn books. These "spiritual" productions fairly bristle with the word sanguinary written in the vernacular.

One of the contributors to the *Daily News* discussion on "Is Mr. Kipling Profane?" points out that there are "passages in the Bible which one would hardly choose to read before boys and girls." He might have said that there are passages in the Bible that no one would dare to read before boys and girls.

Reviewing Sir A. C. Lyall's *Asiatic Studies*, the *Daily News* remarks: "Of course, the enlightened statesmen of Peking do not believe in this religious system of theirs. The system is an organised hypocrisy." No doubt. But may not the same be said of the enlightened statesmen and the religious system in England? Gibbon's great epigram cannot be too often repeated. The religions of antiquity, he said, were held by the people as equally true, by the philosopher as equally false, and by the statesman as equally useful. Credulity is the mother, bamboozlement is the nurse, and oppression and plunder are the trade to which the child is apprenticed.

Pastor Meyer, of Christ Church, Westminster Bridge-road, has been speaking in the great Gospel Tent, in New York, and seems to have accommodated himself easily to the intellectual atmosphere of the place. He told a story of a saloon passenger on the *Campania* who was a Freethinker, and who kindly dropped an orange into the lap of a poor old woman who was asleep at the steerage door. When he came back that way she was awake, and she said the Lord had sent the orange in reply to her prayer, as she couldn't eat the stuff they gave her in the steerage. But the infidel explained that he had put the orange in her lap himself, and that her Heavenly Father had nothing to do with it. "Ah," she said, "but you'd never have done it if he hadn't put it in your mind to do it." The infidel had no answer, and he walked away silenced. "Yes," exclaimed Pastor Meyer; "it's old mother's faith that you can't answer."

Well, it is not easy to answer the old woman's faith; indeed, it cannot be answered, simply because it is unanswerable. She asserts what cannot be proved or disproved, and a proposition of that kind is no subject for debate. But it is easy to ask questions on the lines of her faith which Pastor Meyer will have some difficulty in answering. Why, for instance, did the Lord send that kindly impulse to the "infidel," and not to one of his own "true believers"? Why did the Lord stop at that one orange? Why did he not suggest to the ship's authorities, who were probably Christians, that the poor old woman ought not to be given stuff that she couldn't eat?

Pastor Meyer clings to the old woman's faith. Naturally. There is a lot of the old woman in most preachers.

Dean Saffereuter, late Roman Catholic instructor at the Salford Workhouse, has been dismissed by the guardians for "improper conduct," whatever that means. We suppose it is the usual clerical weakness.

Judge North has delivered the ridiculous judgment from the bench that Lord Rosebery is not the proprietor of his own speeches. He lays it down that the copyright belongs to the reporter who took them down. This is making the parasite, so to speak, the lord of the superior organism. But anything may be expected from Judge North. He is the Roman Catholic bigot who sentenced the editor of the *Freethinker* to twelve months' imprisonment for blasphemy, after grossly insulting and browbeating him in the dock, and playing the part of prosecuting counsel on behalf of his friend who is now Lord Chancellor.

What are the wild waves saying? The number of amateur and professional soul-savers on the sea-fronts at the principal seaside resorts who are shouting about hell leads one to suppose that the waves are everlastingly speaking of a savage theology.

Jesus of Nazareth made the mistake of supposing that Providence takes cares of birds. Ornithologists know differently. Birds perish wholesale every year, especially during their migrations. They are also liable to many accidents. The other day, in a heavy thunderstorm, five hundred rooks were killed by lightning at one place in County Monaghan. No instructed person now believes that there is a special providence in the fall of a sparrow.

Mr. Eugene Stock, in the third volume of his *History of the Church Missionary Society*, registers the complaint that the Salvation Army in Ceylon "caused sorrow and anxiety by singling out villages in which there were already Christians, and seeking to draw those Christians to their own body." That is what the Salvation Army does everywhere. It drags in recruits from all other denominations, and then boasts of the progress of Christianity.

Canon Cheyne's recent sermon on Miracles is published in substance in the *New Age*, and the reverend gentleman is reported as saying: "When you thoroughly probe an educated man of this generation you find, unless he is an incoherent thinker, he does not believe in miracles." Canon Cheyne even says that the wonderful works recorded in the New Testament cannot now be accepted as actual history, and that "this view is accepted by eminent living theologians and historians, by clergymen and laymen." If this be true, the said theologians and clergymen hold precisely the same view as that which was held by Thomas Paine. He told the truth, and the clergy persecuted him and his followers with the greatest ferocity. Now the clergy teach what he taught, and swear they discovered it.

Christ said "Woe unto ye rich," and "Blessed be ye poor." The clergy know that this was only the Blessed One's fun. The average income of every beneficed clergyman in England is over £400! whilst the right reverend Fathers-in-God imitate the poor Carpenter on the incomes of princes.

Burglars visited the house of the Rev. Richard Owen, curate of Rhosddu, a suburb of Wrexham, while he was away for his holiday. They slept in his bed, washed in his room, stole his razors, took his shirts and socks in exchange for theirs, and drank his whisky. They also appropriated his valuable pocket communion service, and several articles of jewellery. Altogether it was a strange haul to make at the house of a blessed-be-ye-poor gentleman.

By order of the Minister of Education in Russia, the fifth commandment has undergone an alteration in the way of a slight addition, for use in the schools. It now reads: "Honor thy father and mother, the Emperor and his officials, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." The italicised words have actually been inserted by official order. True, they are not by any means the first interpolation that has been made in Holy Writ, and they are probably quite as much the "Word of God" as the commandment can rightfully claim to be. All the same, their introduction at this time of day, is more than a trifle audacious.

The old Puritan spirit is asserting itself with a vengeance in some parts of America. In Winstead, Connecticut, the obsolete "blue laws" have been revived, with the result that a few Sundays ago, a number of cyclists were arrested, twenty leading citizens were taken into custody for having their Sunday dinners cooked, and thirteen men found themselves in durance vile for kissing their wives. "A happy place is Winstead!" exclaims the *Christian World*. But are we not worried in this country with Sabbatarian bigotry which is nearly as absurd?

Legal proceedings are threatened against the directors of the Crystal Palace in connection with their Sunday concerts which are carried on for the purpose of assisting the Prince of Wales's Hospital Fund, to which the proceeds go. The Rev. Canon Coles appears to be one of the leading spirits in this opposition movement, which we heartily hope will fail. The concerts, of course, are infinitely more attractive than anything offered in the gospel-shops either around the Palace or elsewhere, and hence the opposition. It would be easier to believe in Canon Coles's sincerity if he afforded a guarantee that an equal sum would be contributed to the Hospital Fund by some other means of his devising in the event of these Sunday concerts being stopped.

Once more we have an example of how these Christians love one another. A few Sundays ago the Protestants of Osuna, in Southern Spain, were attacked in their chapel by three seminarists and a number of sextons, acolytes, and others. The intruders attempted to drag the Bible to the

ground and to overturn the Communion table, but were resisted by the worshippers. They then retreated and pelted the chapel and adjoining house with stones. The proceedings, we are told, were "watched with approval by three priests who were lurking in the shadow of a doorway." The latter statement is quite a fine little touch, added by an obviously Protestant pen.

The Vicar of Ashburne must be a remarkably cool perverter of the truth. In his parish magazine he boastfully and quite untruthfully asserts: "Never has the State given one farthing to the Church of St. Oswald at Ashburne. Never was a Romish Mass said at its altar." These statements are quite too much for the *Christian World*, which declares that the Romish Mass was said in the church from 1241 to 1549, and again from 1553 to 1559. "The law compelled landowners to pay tithes, part of which the vicar receives to this day, besides £150 a year from the Ecclesiastical Commissioners," whose funds were originally derived from public lands. What does the Ashburne Ananias say to this?

The Lord continues to manifest his usual indifference with regard to the conventicles specially dedicated to his service. The church at Ludgershall has been destroyed by fire, and so effectively that, if it had been a music hall with concerts or even ballets every Sunday, it could hardly have fared worse.

During the recent thunderstorms in Gloucestershire the parish church of Tinley, near Tewkesbury, was struck by lightning, a pinnacle being broken off and the roof badly damaged. In South Cambridgeshire the parish church of Shepreth was also struck by lightning. The very houses of "Providence" enjoy no immunity in these natural convulsions.

"Providence" has been active again in the West Indies. The number of deaths reported at Puerto Rico alone is 2,000, while many more of the inhabitants of the island are daily dying from injuries and privation.

That dastardly cruelty is not at all incompatible with a great profession of religious belief is shown in the case of a Leeds Methodist local preacher, who has been sentenced to fourteen days' imprisonment for cruelly working a pony. This preacher of the Gospel had been three times previously convicted.

The *Gazetta de Venezia* having attacked the bishops attending the recent conclave of Spanish-speaking Americans at Rome, as men of loose morality, the *Observatore Catholicico*, a Vatican organ, replied, declaring that the lives of the bishops present at the conclave were above suspicion. The *Gazetta* responds affirming that the majority of the bishops brought with them to Rome their mistresses, and, in some instances, their children. That journal offers to disclose the names of the bishops against whom it levels the charge.

A writer in the *Christian Budget*, in the course of a mad sort of tirade against publicans—suggestive of nothing so much as an attack of *delirium tremens*—says: "How any man can be a Christian and make or sell intoxicants I am at a loss to know." Poor man, he must "have 'em very bad." A glance at Mr. Foote's *Bible and Beer* might bring him to his sober senses. At any rate, he might just look up the account in the New Testament of Christ turning water into wine for marriage guests who were "well drunk."

The same old device adopted by George Muller, of the Orphan Homes at Bristol, is resorted to by his successor, Mr. James Wright—namely, that of persistently advertising that he does not advertise. He is publishing far and wide that he does not resort to publicity. Subscriptions flow in solely as the answers to prayers, and not at all as answers to the paragraphs about reliance on prayer. Last week a number of Christian papers published more or less of a statement supplied to them of "Striking Answers to Prayers" in connection with the Orphan Homes.

In the list of donations thus published is "£1 sent to the Lord's work instead of sending it to a veterinary surgeon for a horse that was ill." To help the orphans is very well, but what about the poor horse? Perhaps the pious donor has had the horse attended to by the veterinary, and proposes to let that gentleman whistle for his fee.

The East Parade Chapel at Leeds has been sold for £31,000 to the North British Insurance Company, by whom it will be converted into offices. The work of insurance against fire will, therefore, still be carried on, the pastor having turned his attention to fire hereafter, and the Company directing their attention to fire here and now.

The anti-Jewish fever runs high in France. M. Bonnet, a locksmith, living in the Rue Marcadet, Paris, was going home one morning, when a man who had been following him for some minutes called out: "Hullo, that looks like one of those dirty Jews; I must do for him." The man fired a revolver at his victim's stomach, and then ran

away. The poor locksmith had to be taken to the hospital. He was not a Jew at all.

Captain Monro and "Donovan" contribute excellent letters to the *Eastern Morning News* in reply to W. Stephenson, who wrote from a distant seaside resort, where he is enjoying himself, against allowing the working men of Hull the opportunity of a tram ride on Sunday morning. The bigoted Town Council has resolved to discontinue the Sunday morning cars, and the noble Stephenson, the C. E. societies, the P.S.A. people, and other Sabbatarians, are clamoring for the total abolition of Sunday running. Poor working man! The upper classes are always looking after his morals and religion, instead of minding their own business, and going to heaven (or the other place, for that matter) their own way.

William Henry Duncan, mechanical engineer, has been arrested on a charge of attempting to bribe a London County Council official. Prisoner begged the prosecutor not to press the charge on "an old man, in his seventieth year, on the verge of the spirit world." At the same time, he declared that, although his body was locked up in Holloway Prison, his soul was "free and ready to enjoy the joys of immortality." In fact, he was "adding stars to his immortal crown," which, however, he was in no hurry to wear, if he could help it.

Rev. Thomas Champness, who has paid a visit to China, gave some of his impressions of it at the recent Wesleyan Conference. He spoke of the "awful, dreadful need of the heathen," and of "the utter failure of the religion which did not come of Christ." But, according to the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes, there are three million heathen in London. This proves that Mr. Champness need not have gone as far as China in search of heathen. It also proves the utter failure of religion which did come of Christ.

Mr. Champness declares that the qualities of the missionaries are John Bull pluck, plus Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost. Where does God the Father look in?

It is an old trick to suggest that a great man died in the faith of the Church of Rome. This has been suggested of the late Mr. Gladstone, chiefly on the ground of a statement by Mr. George Russell that the G. O. M. had in his dying chamber a picture of Newman, an altar, and a crucifix. Mr. Stephen Gladstone, however, denies this statement. He says there was no altar in the sick room, the small crucifix in the room was placed there by a friend, and the picture of Newman was merely one of several prints on the walls. We think Mr. Stephen Gladstone is rightly indignant at these attempts to make out that his father was a son of Rome.

Dr. James H. Pettee, a well-known American missionary in Japan, says that there are now about 40,000 Protestant Church members in the island empire. But, he adds, three-fourths of the students in the colleges are Atheists. Dreadful! Education will be the death of religious belief, if something is not done to stop it.

Mrs. Donald Campbell possesses a child-like confidence in God which must be the envy of many of her co-religionists whose eyes have been opened to the rude facts of existence. She has published a book entitled *Answers from Heaven*. "Glancing over these homely records," says the *Christian Age*, "we note that nothing is too trivial in Mrs. Campbell's eyes to form the subject of a petition heavenwards—from the loss of a fur-lined cloak or a pet parrot to the reclamation of a drunkard or the founding of a philanthropic institution." Well, notwithstanding this covert sneer, Mrs. Campbell is proceeding on strictly Scriptural grounds, though likely to encounter many disappointments which it would be difficult for her to reconcile with her faith. All the same, she is more of a Christian than this writer in the *Christian Age*, who seems not to have read his New Testament.

A great deal of fuss is made about the consecration of churches, and the idea seems to prevail that the buildings, by that ceremony, are made essentially superior to other structures of brick or stone. But the Lord does not seem to think so, for he lets the elements play havoc with them, just as if they had not been solemnly dedicated to his service. They stand no better chance than do other edifices against earthquakes, winds, waves, lightning, and fire.

This week we come across an illustration of the upper portion of the tower of a church in the peninsula of Jutland, Denmark. The remaining part of the church is comfortably buried in sand, which in that region has made very extraordinary encroachments. As God did not appear to take any care of his church, the stolid Jutlanders have left the building to its fate. They seem to have taken umbrage at what has happened.

The Countess Schimmelmänn has converted a "savage Atheist" to Christ. She tells the story in her own modest way. He was a leading man in a Canadian town. She

preached in that town one afternoon at an open-air meeting. He stood and listened. Suddenly he flung his hands above his head, and cried: "I believe in Christ, who saves me from sin." From that moment he was a savage Atheist no longer, but a humble follower of Christ. Truly a quick conversion. But we will not rudely doubt her ladyship's word. We can only compliment her on her powers of preaching, and congratulate her on her convert.

In these days of New Criticism, when many a parson wishes to God that he hadn't a Bible to defend, it is refreshing to find a cleric of the good old type, free as the air from all new-fangled notions. We have found such a one in the Rev. Dr. J. M. Farrar, of Brooklyn, U.S.A., who took the pulpit the other Sunday for the Rev. H. Elvet Lewis at the Harecourt Church, Canonbury, N. He said he was prepared unreservedly to accept the authority and text of Scripture "without the alteration of a dot" as being the revelation of the will of God to man. Now, that is what we like. It is an attitude that is honest, though ignorant; far more manly than that of the other Farrar who is Dean of Canterbury, and not less defensible. Of this Brooklyn parson we may well say: "Among the faithless, faithful only he."

A wonderful plebiscite is in progress in the pages of a weekly Christian journal. The editor finds that "the assertion is frequently made that thoughtful people are losing faith in Christianity, and that the majority of men and women of this country are sceptics. In order to test this allegation, we have addressed inquiries to a number of representative people in high positions, and shall publish their replies." These replies have yet to make their appearance. The only names so far given of those who have responded to the invitation are Lord Wolseley and Sir Evelyn Wood.

Now, what on earth do these two men know more than ordinary folks about the question of Scepticism *versus* Christianity? Of course, the whole subject is quite out of their line, unless, indeed, they gave us the benefit of their special knowledge on such phases as the battles recorded in the Old Testament, or the many and bloody wars of the Christian era. To solicit their testimony in a general way is like inviting the opinion of a musician on the work of an architect.

Rev. J. Darlington, vicar of St. Mark's, Kennington, has hit upon a new interpretation of "compel them to come in." He has limelight Bible scenes cast on a sheet stretched between the two pillars of the church front. A crowd is thereby attracted, and some of them are allured to the service inside. Another clergyman, the vicar of St. Michael's, Bowes Park, has adjourned from his church to the vicarage lawn, where seats were arranged for the congregation, who took the sermon *al fresco*. Who shall say, after this, that the clergy are not getting up to date?

"In connection with the Transvaal situation," says the editor of *To-Day*, "I have been greatly struck by the virulence of clerical writers against the Boers. The clergyman is almost invariably a violent politician."

Referring to the Cross which is fixed up in the Court where Dreyfus is being tried (heaven save the mark!) at Rennes, even the *Sporting Times* asks: "Will Christianity and Charity ever stand together on the same platform?" and denounces "the hideous blasphemy of confronting a Jew with the sacred emblem of an alien creed, the while he is being racked and riddled, body and soul."

According to the *Morning Leader*, a Mr. Briscoll, who is the owner of Tara Hill, is resolutely digging there in search of the Ark of the Covenant, which is supposed to be buried in Irish soil. The Board of Works remonstrated with him for spoiling the scenery, but he keeps digging away, and is apparently determined to find the Ark or reach New Zealand.

Death of Mr. William Simpson.

MR. WILLIAM SIMPSON, the veteran artist and war correspondent, died on August 17 at Willesden. He was born at Glasgow in 1823. Mr. Simpson was personally known to the late J. M. Wheeler. He was a very pronounced Freethinker; a fact which is, of course, not mentioned in the ordinary press obituaries. Some of his writings on religion were printed for private circulation. Others, like the *Praying Wheel*, were accessible to the general public. Mr. Simpson had been a very great traveller, and had made profound studies of oriental faiths; and it is a great pity that he did not write more fully on the subject with which he was so intimately acquainted. As long ago as 1876 Mr. Simpson contributed anonymously to the *Secularist*, under Mr. Foote's editorship, an amusing skit on the theory of the odd but by no means foolish Myles McSweeney, in which he showed that Myles was not an actual personage, but a sun-myth.

Special.

I AM back in London, in good health and bright spirits, and am proceeding with the formation of the projected Company. A prospectus will be forwarded as soon as possible to those who have sent me promises of support. It will also be printed in the *Freethinker*, with a fresh appeal to the party, in which I shall state my views of what may be done in the immediate future. All I have to add now is this. While I am still anxious to receive further promises, I am quite satisfied with the response already made at this unfavorable time of the year, and have little doubt that nearly all the nominal capital of the Company can be raised by Christmas.

G. W. FOOTE.

P.S.—The following are the promises of support already received, the figure after each name indicating the number of £1 shares:—

Previously acknowledged:—

Mr. George Anderson, 500; A London Friend, 500; Mr. Horace S. Seal, 200; Mr. Fr. Essemann, 100; A Scotch Friend, 50; Mr. S. Hartmann, 30; Messrs. John and James McGlashan, 20; Mr. Richard Johnson, 20; Mr. C. Girtanner, 20; Mr. T. E. Green, 10; Mr. George Dixon, 10; Mr. C. Daviss, 10; A Gateshead Friend, 10; Dr. T. R. Allinson, 10; Mr. G. J. Warren, 5; Mr. Joseph Barry, 5; Mr. Jas. Partridge, 5; Mr. A. L. Brame, 5; Mr. S. M. Peacock, 5; Mr. W. H. Spivey, 3; Mr. M. Christopher, 2; Shares to Mr. G. W. Foote (say), 1,000; Mr. Sydney A. Gimson, 25; Mr. W. Hardaker, 20; Mr. Joseph Guy, 15; Mr. B. L. Coleman, 10; Mr. L. Gjemre, 10; Mr. William Bailey, 10; Mr. Peter Gorrie, 10; Mr. R. A. Strange, 10; Mr. G. Langridge, 10; Mr. Richard Green, 5; Mr. A. B., 5; Mr. G. E. Lupton, 5; Mr. J. D. Leggett, 5; Mr. J. H., 5; Mr. T. Ollerenshaw, 3; Dragon, 2; Miss E. M. Vance, 2; Mr. L. Leggett, 2; Mr. R. Alger, 2; Mr. Freeman, 2; Mr. T. A. Spivey, 2; Mr. C. Shepherd, 1; Mr. Harold Elliot, 1; Mr. A. G. Lye, 2; Mr. John Summer, 1; Mr. John Roberts, 3; Mr. J. Maling, 5; Mrs. Mary Ann Button, 5; Mr. David Mitchell, 5; Mr. Jesse Oliver Bates, 10; Mr. James Fulton, 10; Mr. H. A. Cumber, 5; Mr. C. E. Brammer, 5; Mrs. Martha Dye, 5; Mr. G. H., 1; Mr. E. G. H., 1; Mr. Martin Weatherburn, 5; Mr. James Neate, 3; Mrs. Neate, 2; Mr. George Taylor, 2; Mr. H. Poyser, 2; Mr. John Waller, 5; Mr. J. Bullock, 2; Mr. A. F. Bullock, 1; Dr. R. T. Nichols, 10; Mr. J. Keast, 1; Mr. R. Dowding, 2; Mr. J. G. Thompson, 2; Mr. Albert Smart, 5; Mr. Richard Carroll, 10; Mr. J. M. Day, 1; Mr. W. N. Sweetman, 2; Mrs. D. P. Sweetland, 2; Mr. T. H. Seymour, 10; Mr. C. N. Hayes, 2; Mr. H. Barratt, 5; Mrs. Charlotte S. Giffin, 4; Mr. F. W. Donaldson, 5; Mr. R. Axely, 2; Mr. F. J. Gould, 1; Mr. J. F. Hampson, 5; Mr. H. Garthwaite, 1; Mr. W. Garthwaite, 1; Mr. C. E. Hall, 5; Mr. George L. Alward, 5; Mr. H. B. Dodds, 2; Mr. T. Hill, 2; Mr. J. G. Dobson, 2; Mr. G. W. Holloway, 4; Mr. Robert Jacob, 10; Mr. A. Brown, 1; Mr. W. M. Constant, 2; Mr. G. Parr, 2; Mr. James Davie, 10; Mr. J. W. Dawson, 2; Mr. Peter Dawson, 2; M. A. Lewis, 2; Mr. David Watt, 1; M. H. J., 5; Mr. Luke Vickers, 2; Mr. J. Fish, 1; Mr. S. Holmes, 2; Mr. J. W. Griffiths, 1; Mr. J. T. Embleton, 2; Secular Society Limited, 20; Mr. George Ennson, 5; Mr. J. C. Pickett, 2; Mr. Jas. Baker, 1; Mr. J. M. McInnes, 2; Mr. Hugh Irving, 10; Mr. E. Wilson, 5; Mr. John Proctor, 10; Mr. J. Slyfield, 2; Mrs. Mensbier, 5; Mr. E. C. Cooke, 20; Mr. R. Robinson, 2; Mr. J. Seddon, 1; Mr. Frederick Ryan, 4; Mr. R. F. Garven, 3; Mr. William Barks, 2; Mr. Arthur Button, 5; Mr. J. G. 1; Mr. C. Cohen, 2; Mr. C. Pegg, 5; Mrs. M. E. Pegg, 5; Mr. A. E. Elderkin, 1; Mr. J. Jones, 5; Mr. T. E. Whitta, 1; Mr. H. F. Sesemann, 20; Mr. B. Dudley, 2; Mr. Joseph Pruett, 10; Mr. J. C. Banks, 3; Mr. J. Oscar, 1; Mr. Robert Gibbon, 5; Dr. E. B. Foote (New York), 5; Mr. J. Ferguson, 1; Mr. W. J. K. Rider, 2; Mr. Thomas Johnson, 10; Mrs. A. W. Hutty, 3; Blackburn Branch, 2; Mr. James Weston, 5; David Jones, 3; Mr. E. Jackson, 1; Mr. W. H. Deakin, 2; Mr. R. Slack, 2; Mr. T. Perkins, 1; Mr. William Mitchell, 2; Mr. Henry Trotman, 5; Mr. J. M., 1; Mr. G. H. Williamson, 2; Mr. G. Fryar, 2; Mr. F. S. Finden, 1; Mr. Albert Hecht, 10; Mr. G. A. Lovett, 1. Total, 3,119.

This week's acknowledgments:—

Mr. George Brady, 10; Mr. Thomas Whiteley, 3; Mr. William Hewson, 2; Mr. H. B. Price, 1; Mr. Francis Neale, 1; Mr. J. H. Bain, 1; Mr. W. Garthwaite (2nd), 1; Mr. James McGhee, 3; Mr. T. Shore, 1; Mr. W. McCulloch, 3; Mr. Edwin Lucas, 2; Mr. T. Williams, 2; Mr. J. G. Henderson, 2; Mr. James Waugh, 2; Mr. C. Mascall, 2; Mr. Andrew, 2; Bella and William Scott, 2; Mr. A. McLean, 2; Mr. M. S. Turner, 5; Chatham Secular Society, 5.—Total this week, 51.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

September 3, Athenæum Hall, London; 10, South Shields; 17, Glasgow.

To Correspondents.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—September 3, New Brompton; 10 and 17, Athenæum, 73 Tottenham Court-road; 24, Birmingham. October 1, Sheffield; 29, Glasgow. November 12, Liverpool. December 10 and 17, Manchester. —All communications for Mr. Charles Watts should be sent to him at 24 Carminia-road, Balham, S.W. If a reply is required, a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed.

J. B. ASTBURY.—We are much obliged to you for your frank but kind letter. You must not suppose, however, that we are ignorant of what men like Myers, Hodgson, and Sidgwick have to say upon the subject. But they are, as you yourself see, in a far higher category. We were dealing with what was said by one of the recognised organs of Spiritualism, and our criticism was limited to the occasion. As to your view that, if we accepted the belief in a future life, we should be more successful in our opposition to Christianity, we can only reply that the belief in a future life seems to us to be the root from which all religions have grown. For the rest, we do not deny a future life; we only say that we perceive no proper evidence of it. Moreover, a future life which did not involve a relationship to the present life would be quite uninteresting.

G. V. H.—The scansion of your lines is defective, though they have merit in conception.

WESTMINSTER SECULAR SOCIETY.—Your lecture notice for last week was dated August 14, but it did not reach our office until Wednesday morning. Perhaps there was a delay in the post. We state the fact to prevent misunderstanding.

R. S. ROGERS.—Browning's reference was to the *Cenci* in apostrophising Shelley and speaking of "your superb achievement." No doubt the *Prometheus Unbound* will be considered by many, if not most, Shelleyans as the poet's masterpiece; but there is perhaps a higher strength in the actual drama.

T. J. H.—We do not share your view that the leaflet, which we had seen before, is calculated to do the N.S.S. or the Secular movement any harm. Decent people—and the Secular movement wants no others—are only likely to be disgusted with such illiterate vulgarity. We can hardly be expected to take notice of its authors, who simply belong to a type of character that oscillates between the prison and the lunatic asylum.

M. ROGERS.—It is hardly like the *Morning Leader* to give such a puff to that institution. Müller's Orphanage is not advertised in the common meaning of the word. But in reality it is splendidly advertised in hundreds of papers as the institution that never advertises.

J. H. BAIN.—Thanks for the cuttings. We have included you for one share. There is "real need for advertisement," as you say. Pleased to hear that you, as a Socialist, warmly approve Mr. Ryan's article on Atheism and Socialism.

W. HEWSON.—We note you hope that you may be able to take more shares at some future time.

GLASGOW READER.—Pleased to hear you find the references "refreshing."

H. B. PRICE, in promising to take a share in the new Company, regrets he cannot do more, but hopes "all Freethinkers in West Ham will do their best to help on what I am sure will be a successful promotion under your direction and supervision."

S. THORN.—Hardly up to our level.

G. W. BLYTHE.—We see no use in pursuing the matter further.

W. GARTHWAITE.—We have substituted your promise of two shares for the first promise of one.

JAMES MCGHEE.—The 30s. has been placed to your credit. Thanks.

T. SHORE.—You mistake us. We are not of opinion that the price of twopence is better than the price of one penny. The advantage lies on the side of the latter. Only the question of ways and means has to be considered. A large circulation is desirable for the progress of the movement, but a very considerable loss would have to be faced for some time if a drop of one half were made in the price. We increased the size of the *Freethinker* and improved its contents, while keeping it at one penny, and nearly ruined ourselves in doing so, incurring debts from which we are not yet free. Still, the circulation went up steadily, and the corner might have been turned if we had been able to stand the strain longer. The new Company will be free to deal with this matter when it chooses.—The rest of your letter shall have early attention.

DONOVAN.—Thanks. See paragraph.

W. H. HARRIS.—Your tribute to Ingersoll is well written and does you much credit, but would be rather superfluous in our columns now.

W. MCCULLOCH.—We have booked your promise, and note that you expect to take more shares later on. Thanks for your good wishes for our success. You ask why Mr. Foote does not come to Sheffield? We reply that he will be very happy to do so if a hall can be obtained for him in a central situation.

G. BRADY, who will take ten shares in the new Company, says: "I trust the whole proposed capital will be applied for shortly. I think the response already made is encouraging enough, considering the holiday season of the year."

H. S. ELDERKIN.—Thanks. See paragraph.

SAMOTH.—There is no good photograph of Ingersoll on sale in England. The translation you refer to was substantially accurate. Your own is more strictly literal.

ANDREW MILLAR (Paisley) quite too flatteringly says: "It seems to me that you are doing more for Freethought than any of your predecessors or contemporaries. The Secular Society, Limited, and the new Company are two great strides in Secular progress."

JAMES NEATE.—Pleased to hear that Mr. Rowney had fine audiences in Victoria Park on Sunday; also that the Branch propaganda there on Sunday evenings has brought out the religious opposition and made the place lively. Keep pegging away, as Lincoln said.

T. J. PERKINS, 12 Dovecote-terrace, Green-lanes, Wood Green, supplies the *Freethinker* and other Secular literature.

A. FROEBEL.—The *Journal's* translation of the French words on the urn holding Ingersoll's ashes was rough, but near enough for the purpose.

J. WAUGH.—Mr. Forder could supply you with a copy of Mirabaud's (D'Holbach's) *System of Nature*. Thanks for your good wishes.

A. B. MOSS.—Glad to hear of your good meetings at Limehouse and Stratford on Sunday. Such work must tell.

J. KING.—We did not really suppose that any reader would tire of the "Ingersoll Echoes." You will see that we have done more in the same line this week.

H. R. SPARKES.—See paragraph. Sorry the West Ham Branch could not join the general excursion to Littlehampton.

T. WILLIAMS.—It has been stated again and again that not more than 10s. per share will be called up in 1899. However, we repeat the statement for the sake of those who may still be under any uncertainty.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Northern Daily Telegraph—Secular Thought—Sydney Bulletin—New Century—Public Opinion—Isle of Man Times—People's Newspaper—Blue Grass Blade—Two Worlds—El Libre Pensamiento—Progressive Thinker.

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

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.

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.

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

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

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.

ANOTHER Freethought Demonstration took place on Sunday afternoon in Battersea Park, Mr. Wilson's brake serving as a platform. Mr. Heaford, who acted as chairman, led off with a rousing speech, and was followed effectively by Mr. Moss. Then came Mr. Cohen, who was much applauded; and finally Mr. Foote, who was cheered enthusiastically. One parson in the crowd stood listening for some time, but he grew uncomfortable and edged out while Mr. Foote was showing that the money for Old-Age Pensions could be got out of the Church by reducing all the clergy to £1 a week for a beginning. Miss Vance superintended the collection, and distributed some of the literature provided by Mr. George Anderson.

London Freethinkers will please note that the Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road, reopens for Sunday evening lectures on September 3. Mr. Foote will occupy the platform on that occasion.

The London Freethinkers' annual excursion takes place to-day. A special train is chartered for Littlehampton, by the seaside, and the time of starting is made as late as possible, so as to suit the convenience of persons coming from distant parts of the metropolis. Mr. Foote will join the party at Victoria Station. Messrs. Watts, Cohen, Forder, and others will join it at other points. Full particulars of the excursion will be found in our advertisement columns. Should the weather be fine, as it promises to, there ought to be a bumper gathering of "saints" on this occasion, with a goodly proportion of ladies.

We have to warn London friends against a misprint in the handbills announcing this excursion. The train is therein stated to leave Victoria at 9.35. The correct time is 9.25. The train times stated in the *Freethinker* advertisement may be taken as accurate.

We reprint in another column a "Personal" by our old friend

and colleague, Mr. Joseph Symes, who edits the *Liberator* at Melbourne, and also preaches Freethought from the platform there. Mr. Symes left England in 1883, while we were tasting Christian charity in Holloway Gaol. He came up to the prison with a special order to see us, and our interview took place in the "cage" room. About six feet of space was between him and us, and two rows of bars, with a warder standing between them to "supervise" the conversation. We have never seen Mr. Symes since, and we are delighted to know that we shall probably have an opportunity of seeing him early next year. We may have something to say later on about the pecuniary difficulties Mr. Symes has to encounter. He has been away for sixteen years, and has had anything but a bed of roses nearly all the time, and he is certainly entitled to a trip to old England.

Mr. Symes suggests that Mr. Foote should visit Australia. Well, that may be possible some day, but not just yet. Besides, how is Mr. Foote to meet Mr. Symes if he dodges off to Melbourne while Mr. Symes comes to London?

Mr. W. Heaford is paying a visit to Porth, in South Wales, where he will deliver open-air lectures from September 3 to 10. No doubt he will make a stir in the locality.

Newcastle-on-Tyne friends are desired to note that the local Branch's picnic takes place to-day (August 27). Brakes will leave the Grey's Monument at 9.45, and journey to Roker, where the Stanley and other friends will join the party. Tickets for the drive are 2s. 6d. each, and should be applied for beforehand to prevent disappointment. The secretary's address is Mr. J. G. Bartram, 117 Morley-street, Heaton. Tickets can be had also of Mr. J. W. Mein, 225 Shields-road, or Mr. T. Freeman, 1 Grainger-street.

The West Ham Branch holds no meetings to-day (August 27), but is running an excursion to Stanford Rivers. Brakes leave the Broadway, Stratford, at 9 a.m. Tickets 4s. each, including meat tea.

We are glad to see that Mr. Charles C. Moore, editor of the *Blue Grass Blade*, Lexington, Kentucky, is a free man again. He was sentenced to two years' imprisonment on a ridiculous indictment, but an agitation was raised against this atrocity, and President McKinley commuted his sentence to six months. Mr. Moore seems to have had rather a good time in gaol. He suffered neither the privations nor the indignities of the imprisonment to which Mr. Foote was sentenced for "blasphemy" in 1883. He saw visitors nearly as often as he pleased, wrote as much as he liked, and practically edited his paper from the lock-up. Still, we are glad that his prison experience is over. We are also glad to notice that Mr. Moore has the sense and good taste to write like a sound-hearted Freethinker on the death of Colonel Ingersoll, about whom he wrote some reckless nonsense a few months ago. Mr. Moore is an idiosyncratic writer, though not perhaps as great a man as he occasionally appears to fancy himself. On one side he is almost a philosopher, and on the other side almost a crank. He is a man of impulse, and says just what comes into his head at the moment. No doubt he forgets much of it afterwards, and probably wonders that other people remember it. He is getting on in life, but we hope there is time left him to learn that attacking his fellow Liberals, just because they do not happen to agree with all his opinions or approve of all his doings, is not exactly the height of wisdom in the editor of a Freethought journal.

Mr. Bernard Gibbs, of Bushbury, Wolverhampton, writes to the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle*: "After reading the tribute of Mr. Joseph Hatton on Colonel Ingersoll, one could not help but look upon him with kinder eyes. Ingersoll was loved for what he was. He learned that love alone would uplift and transform mankind. He lived to love. His oratory, so rich in eloquence, so tender in pathos, so brilliant in wit, never carried him beyond the line of reason and conviction. He was so child-hearted, and yet so brave, that when surrounded by a sea of angry eyes he stood 'a pillar steadfast in the storm.'"

Another correspondent of the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle* writes: "Perhaps it is not so generally known that the late Colonel Ingersoll—I think it was about 1883—paid a brief visit to Great Britain. Whilst so doing, he visited the land of Burns, and, while standing in the cottage where Burns was born, the 'mighty Pagan' composed the following poem:—

Tho' Scotland boasts a thousand names
Of patriot, king, and peer,
The noblest, grandest of them all
Was born and cradled here.

Here lived the gentle peasant prince,
The loving cottar king;
Compared with whom the grandest lord
Is but a titled thing.

'Tis but a cot roofed in with straw,
A hovel made of clay;
One door shuts out the storm and snow,
One window greets the day.

And yet I stand within this room
And hold all thrones in scorn,
For here beneath this lowly thatch
Life's sweetest bard was born.

Within this hallowed hut I feel
Like one who clasped a shrine
When the glad lips at last have touched
That something deemed divine.

And here the world through all the years,
As long as day returns,
A tribute of its love and tears
Will pay to Robert Burns."

Mr. Joseph Hatton, in his latest batch of "Cigarette Paper," hastens to modify certain expressions in his previous tribute to Ingersoll which seemed rather to disparage the ability and methods of Bradlaugh. He ungrudgingly recognises that both were great men, with dissimilarities which marked the individuality and originality of each.

Miss Lillie A. Goyne, 114 Anderton-road, Sparkbrook, Birmingham, is desirous of speaking for various Secular societies during the next few months. Miss Goyne is headmistress of one of the Birmingham Board schools. That speaks for her culture and ability. She has a pleasant voice and a most agreeable manner, and should be an ornament to the Freethought platform. Miss Goyne has already lectured for the Birmingham Branch, and has been invited to lecture again. Those who attended the N.S.S. Conference in the Birmingham Town Hall will recollect her bright little speech on the question of Secular Sunday Schools.

Personal.

A TRIP TO ENGLAND (?).

FOR years past friends have advised me either to return permanently to England, or, at least, to pay a visit to the old country. I have always cherished the idea of a visit, but never supposed I should go and settle down there.

Some few months ago I wrote to my friend, Mr. Foote, editor of the *Freethinker* and President of the National Secular Society, to say that, if possible, I should most likely visit England some time next year (1900).

Mr. Foote, like himself, has treated my communication with all the cordiality and kindness I could possibly wish, and done more than I could have hoped for. The Annual Conference of the National Secular Society was held in Birmingham, May 21, and my name occurs three times in the *Freethinker* report (May 28) of the proceedings. I am re-elected for the twenty-first time one of the Vice-Presidents of the Society. The Annual Report says: "The report must not close without a reference to the probable visit to England of Mr. Joseph Symes, one of the Society's Vice-Presidents, who has been gallantly upholding the Freethought flag at Melbourne for the last sixteen years."

The agenda paper prepared by the Executive contained a motion *re* my visit, and Mr. Foote himself did me the great kindness to move on behalf of the Executive: "That this Conference, being much pleased to hear that Mr. Joseph Symes hopes to visit England shortly, after so many years' absence at the Antipodes, hereby cordially invites him to come as soon as possible, and promises him that everything shall be done on the part of the British Secularists to make his visit pleasant and successful." This motion was carried unanimously.

To confess myself highly gratified by the action of my British friends is but human, and I beg to tender my sincere and earnest thanks to Mr. Foote and all the rest for the extremely fraternal manner in which they have treated my communication.

If I can secure the continuance of the *Liberator* during my absence, get the platform supplied, and raise sufficient money to take me to England, I shall go, all being well, next year, leaving in February or March.

But the three items I have named are great ones. At present I know no one who would undertake the arduous task of carrying on this paper for half a year or more. If some good lecturer would take a trip from England, I believe he could pay himself in Melbourne and elsewhere. Is there one who will venture it? Let us hope so. I would suggest a visit from Mr. Foote himself, but fear that that would be impossible.

As to the money for my trip, it looks next to impossible to raise it, and I will say no more upon that at present.

No doubt a trip to England would be a benefit to me and to Australian Freethought.

I shall be glad to learn what my friends think of all this, if they have anything to say upon it; nor can I object to hear what my foes may have to say.

—The *Liberator*.

JOSEPH SYMES.

Enlightenment from the Antipodes.

Freethought and the Gospel. By J. K. HENSHELWOOD (Melbourne, Victoria). (London: Partridge & Co.)

PROBABLY no section of thinkers in the whole world of thought are more willing to listen to all that may be advanced against their opinions and cherished convictions than they who are variously styled Atheists, Agnostics, Infidels, Freethinkers, and the like. They measure the strength of their position by observing the weakness of those by whom they are assailed. When they find that so poor a case can be made out against them, they are naturally inclined to feel additional confidence, if any such addition can be made, in the conclusions to which they have been led by their early investigations.

Interesting as it may be to old Freethinkers to read all that continues to be written in support of their views, it is probably still more interesting, or one would rather say more entertaining, to read, as they appear, the various attacks upon those views which religious advocates and apologists are from time to time emboldened to make.

Many published defences of Christianity are such that the Freethought party might with advantage assist in their circulation. There are none that we need hesitate on the ground of their supposed strength and effectiveness—to recommend thoughtful inquirers to carefully read. An intimate acquaintance with all that can be said on "the other side" is a sovereign specific for stability of opinion during life, and a source of unshaken confidence at the approach of death.

Christian apologetics and Christian criticism of Freethought necessarily vary in strength and ability according to the calibre of their respective exponents. But even the weakest have the compensating feature that, if they convey no instruction and fail to carry conviction, they at least afford some material for quiet amusement. One smiles at the puerility of what is advanced without any intentional disrespect to the champion who, mistaking his abilities or the strength of his cause, has undertaken an obviously impossible task.

Mr. Henshelwood is a Christian apologist who is under the impression that he can enlighten Freethinkers as to the inestimable value of the Gospel, and he has made an endeavor to do so, but without the slightest approach to success. He commences with a definition of Freethought, observing that the term "Freethinker" is a "softer name for Infidel." As the real infidels are the Christians who never do, and never can, carry out that which they profess to believe, the definition is likely to lead to confusion. Indeed, as we proceed, we discover so much confusion in this advocate's mind that anyone who attempts to follow him will speedily find himself in a state of absolute bewilderment. "Freethought," he says, "Proteus-like, assumes a great variety of forms." This, of course, is not equally true of Christianity, with its multitude of differing phases, each professing to be the only real, true, and genuine article.

"However Freethinkers may differ from each other, the one point on which they are all agreed is the rejection of the Bible as the only Divine revelation. There are some whose rejection is the result of causes which render hopeless any efforts that Christian advocates can make to remove their unbelief or bring them to the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus."

There is something mysterious about this latter sentence. What does it mean? It is really too bad of Mr. Henshelwood to express himself in such an obscure fashion that, if we wish to be enlightened, we must write all the way to Melbourne for an explanation. No doubt there are causes which render hopeless the efforts of Christian advocates—lack of evidence, for instance, and irreconcilability of Christian teaching with rational thought and conduct. Leaving that dark saying, we learn that "so long as the Freethinker is sincere and amenable to argument"—which looks like a very courteous suggestion that some Freethinkers are not—"there is hope of his ultimate arrival at the point where reason and faith together embrace the seeker after God." Yes, there is always hope, but Mr. Henshelwood's advocacy is hardly likely to suggest that the hope is based on a firm foundation.

He thinks it inconceivable that any rational being,

capable of exercising his ratiocinative faculties at all, can be an Atheist, and suggests that the way to show the absurdity of the Atheist's position is to ask him to define the word "God." This is a very comic reversal of the ordinary procedure in controversy. The merest tyro would see that it devolves upon the Theist to define the God he affirms. Furthermore, he thinks that the Atheist should give a rational account of the origin of the universe as it now exists. Here he assumes that the universe had an origin. If he is assured of that, it is for him to prove it, and to tell us about the origin of its originator.

Turning to the Bible as the revelation of this assumed creator, Mr. Henshelwood calmly asserts that the "attempts which have been made by such assailants as Bishop Colenso and the theologians of the Tübingen School to throw doubt on the genuineness of the Pentateuch, and of other portions of Scripture, instead of weakening have tended greatly to strengthen the faith which it was their aim to destroy." Surely a man who can gravely pen such an absurdity as this cannot be a fair representative of the modern thought of Melbourne. He says:—

"From the days of Porphyry to those of Thomas Paine, and more recently those of Ingersoll, reason has been kept constantly at work to detect flaws and to discover contradictions, disagreements, mistakes, errors, and falsehoods in the Bible. Freethought has enlisted and hired her as Balak did Balaam to curse Israel, and with exactly the same result.....The fact that reason has failed to discover contradictions in the Bible is of itself a proof of its divinity."

This is enlightenment with a vengeance. No contradictions in the Bible! How many clergymen in the Mother Country would Mr. Henshelwood find to-day, except a few old fossils, who would support him in this long-abandoned delusion? The truth is this Australian defender of the faith is so far behind the times, and his production is throughout so astonishingly weak and ineffective, that one wonders how it came to be thought worthy of being reprinted in this country. Christian evidence at the present time must be in a parlous state when it relies on a reed like this.

FRANCIS NEALE.

Methodism Declining.

THE Rev. Joseph Posnett, of Leicester, brought some awkward facts before the Wesleyan Conference. He came armed with statistics, and the accuracy of his figures was not challenged. He rose to call attention "to the slow growth of their Church membership," and his speech clearly demonstrated that Methodism is a rapidly declining force. The statistics are as follows: Forty years (from 1810 to 1850), total increase, 221,280; forty years (from 1860 to 1899), total increase, 136,266. Comparing the last forty years with the previous forty years, there is a deficit of over 80,000; yet during the first period they only had half the ministers and half the chapels they have now.

The Rev. J. P. says these facts "make him tremble," and he threatens to write a pamphlet that some of his brethren will not like. The *Methodist Recorder* submits that Mr. Posnett's figures deserve "prayerful consideration." The only remedy that seems to suggest itself to Mr. Posnett and his colleagues is a return to the old discredited and disgraced orthodox of which the Churches are rapidly getting ashamed. We are to have a further instalment of the "old doctrines." The fires of hell have been burning rather low lately, but they are to be stirred up. Persuasion fails, so the parsons are going back to coercion and threats. Dr. Rigg urged the preachers to "go back to first principles." "Let them avoid poetry and literature and fashionable culture, and give the people Gospel preaching." Very necessary advice. If folks get a taste of poetry and an insight into the delights of literature, they won't relish discourses on Satan, with his seven heads, or Hell, with its never-dying worm.

Some of the speakers did not hesitate to blame Saturday football for spoiling the attendance at the Sunday morning services. I am afraid the indictment is true. The football and the bicycle have done a glorious work of emancipation, and the result is becoming very manifest. Everywhere interest in the "Gospel" is declining, and the people are taking "the Lord's Day" into their own hands.

A. E. E.

If everyone who received a kindness at the hands of Ingersoll should lay a flower on his tomb, a mountain of roses would rise on the last resting place of this great Freethinker.

Ingersoll Gleanings.

THE *Christian World*, while admitting Ingersoll's "lovable traits" which "inspired hosts of friends with devoted attachment," calls him "an erratic and brilliant Atheist." Such a journal could not very well deny his brilliancy, which had been so handsomely acknowledged by Mr. Gladstone, but it felt bound to throw in some detraction, and "erratic" was a most suitable epithet, as it means almost anything you please. This is a trifling matter, however. It is still more regrettable to find the *Christian World* repeating that old absurdity, which did hard duty on the death of Bradlaugh, that a great Atheist's philosophy is due to false conceptions of God presented to him in his youth. Critics who write in this way prove one of two things: either they have not read Bradlaugh and Ingersoll, or they deliberately misrepresent them in order to keep the mob of believers in countenance.

The San Francisco *Bulletin* gives a report of a sermon on Ingersoll's death preached by the Rev. J. W. Hudson, pastor of the People's Christian Church, Santa Rosa. Mr. Hudson was pastor of the First Christian Church in that city, but he was too liberal-minded to please the Board of Trustees, and he left the Church with about 150 members, who organised the People's Christian Church and selected him as their pastor. Mr. Hudson contended that Ingersoll was a Christ-like man, although he denied the dogmas of Christianity. "If there is a heaven," he said, "I expect to find him there." We quote the following passage from Mr. Hudson's sermon in its entirety: "He was a sane force in our civilisation; it is fashionable to say he destroyed what others built, without giving anything in substitute. A man is not bound to replace what he considers error and rubbish. His first duty as a reformer is to destroy it. Ingersoll did his first duty according to Ingersoll. But he was not only a destroyer, but a builder of what he thought a truer, a holier religion—a religion based on reason. He stood for a loftier Christianity—divested of much tradition called theology, and much credulity called faith. He lived a Christian, I repeat, even if dogma would not allow him to profess to be one. The preponderance of his influence was for good. He made himself felt through Christianity, and was sometimes unconscious of his influence. When his career was begun the whole religious world was against him; when he died he merely stood with the advanced pulpits of to-day. There has been no other one-man influence of wider magnitude in nineteenth-century religion, differ from him as we may. He was tolerant in the face of intolerance. What Christ was to Jewish bigotry, so, in his lesser sphere, was Ingersoll to Christian dogmatism. He left the Church the message of liberty of conscience; he told it that the greatest blasphemy is to answer argument with calumny. His influence served to elevate the Bible from a fetish to a book. He tried to replace bigotry with a sensible humility. He dethroned the absurdities of a theological Christ, and gave us a Jesus who loved his fellow men. He uttered not one word against a hope of immortality. He arbitrarily swept away no man's belief. He merely said 'Think!' and men called him a blasphemer."

More than 1,500 admirers of Ingersoll attended the Memorial Meeting at Studebaker Hall, Chicago, on August 6. Many veterans were present of the cavalry regiment which he commanded in the Civil War. Everybody dwelt on Ingersoll's noble and generous character. Half the speakers, at least, stood as representatives of the Christian faith.

It is not true, as some of the Christians assert, that Ingersoll amassed a fortune and died a millionaire. He made money freely, but he spent it prodigally. His hand was always being dipped into his pocket to aid others. This was the motive which prompted his fine utterance on one occasion. "Don't be mean, he said; do everything royally; if you have only a dollar, spend it as though it were a leaf and you were the king of boundless forests. Such a man does not die rich. Indeed, his friends often looked upon his lavish generosity as a species of madness. And the result is, according to Mr. Farrell, his relative and publisher, that Ingersoll's life-policy is practically the only provision left for his family.

Here is an instance of Ingersoll's open-handed benevolence. While he was living in Peoria a family of emigrants drove into the town and stopped to feed their team near Ingersoll's residence. They were evidently very poor, and, though it was late in the autumn and cold, the children were thinly-clad and barefooted. Ingersoll (says Mr. Hammond, who tells the story) went over and chatted with them, and then took the children down town, bringing them back all warmly clothed. Provisions were got for them from a grocer, and some money was added to the gift. This same Mr. Hammond relates that he called on Ingersoll after a lecture, and the Colonel inquired about all his old Peoria neighbors, not excepting even their washerwoman. He was told that she was still living, but growing old and feeble; and the Colonel gave Mr. Hammond a fifty dollar bill to give to the old lady when he returned.

Ingersoll was doing that sort of thing every day of his life. His heart was as tender as a delicate woman's. He has been known to leave a rich client in his law office while he ran out to pick up a poor child he had seen stumbling in the street.

One story of Ingersoll's kindness has its humorous side. We cull it from the New York *Truthseeker*. On one occasion a travelling preacher was hired to give Ingersoll a scoring. He stood at the corner and talked an hour, not knowing that Ingersoll was in the crowd listening to him. When he had finished, the Colonel walked up, took him by the hand, congratulated him on his speech, and asked him if he drew a salary for it. The poor devil replied that he lived on voluntary contributions. "By your clothes, you do not live well," said Ingersoll, and the preacher agreed with him. The Colonel took him to a clothing store and bought him a suit. When he asked the name of his benefactor, and learnt it was Bob Ingersoll, the preacher broke down, and said the Colonel had more religion than the people who had got him to talk at that corner.

The following poem is by George Macdonald, of the New York *Truthseeker*; it is evidently suggested by the death and cremation of Ingersoll, and is well worth reproducing:—

DEATH AND RESURRECTION.

There rests on our faces a grief, and over our spirits a pall;
Death stalks for a season as chief; the Grave is the monarch of all.
On the mighty has fallen a sword, on the humble the stroke of a rod;
Our tongue is grown mute for a word, our heart is borne down as a clod.
For a cloud rises ghastly and gray where the fires that incinerate burn,
Consuming our Tower in a day, or an hour, and they give back—an Urn;
An urn and a handful of dust, and a hurt that endures though it hide,
And hope that is less than a trust of life where no trust shall betide.
Yet out of the ashes and cloud, heroic, and mighty, and vast,
Disdaining the urn or the shroud, the permanent form is recast.
Even one that in future shall stand, like that which we gave to the flame,
Nor death, with impertinent hand, shall ever this image reclaim.

Ingersoll had in his library a splendid edition of Voltaire, and once, on being asked how much it cost him, he replied: "It cost me the governorship of the State of Illinois." This is how it happened. Ingersoll's gifts and character had made such an impression while he was attorney-general to the State that, when the Republican State Convention met at Peoria in 1868 to nominate a candidate for Governor, it was found that Ingersoll was already the first choice of three-fourths of the delegates. But his heterodoxy stood in the way, and he was hated by half the preachers in Illinois. So a committee was appointed to wait upon the Colonel, and to ask him, not to renounce his opinions, but to avoid all religious discussion during the campaign. Ingersoll's reply was characteristic. He said that he was not asking to be Governor of Illinois, that he hardly knew if he would accept the nomination if offered. But, in any case, he was not prepared to give up a jot of his right to declare his convictions from the housetops. "I would rather refuse to be President of the United States than do so," he said. That ended the matter, and the idea of Ingersoll's candidature had to be dropped.

"Spiritualistic mediums all over the States," the *New York Herald* says, "are busily arranging for exclusive conversations with the late Colonel Ingersoll." The first in the field was a Dr. Franks. This gentleman, in a trance, during which he uttered what he affected not to know afterwards, talked a lot of nonsense in the name of Ingersoll. One egregious blunder was perpetrated. Ingersoll said (through Franks) that he had met Dr. Parker, of London, in the spirit world, and that Dr. Parker had realised the falsity of many things he had taught on earth. No doubt the noble Franks thought that Dr. Parker was dead. But it was Dr. Parker's wife who died some time ago, and the Doctor himself is still living.

Another appearance of Ingersoll's, according to the *Spiritualist Progressive Thinker*, was to "one of Rochester's foremost and best-known citizens"—or rather, not to the citizen himself, but to a lady medium in his presence. The medium's name is not given; the citizen's name is not given either. And this is some people's notion of evidence.

Mrs. Richmond, the famous and eloquent Spiritualist preacher, of Chicago, has also been into a trance, in which Ingersoll spoke through her instrumentality. Those who listened said it wasn't at all like Ingersoll, but astonishingly like Mrs. Richmond.

G. W. FOOTB.

Flammarion on Spirit Delusions.

In a cable message to the *New York World*, M. Flammarion, the eminent French scientist and Freethinker, says:—

"I have not repudiated Spiritualism lightly. A serious man, naturally, always dislikes to admit that he has been mistaken all his life. As is well known, I have been one of the stoutest apostles of Spiritualism.

"I always believed I was having regular intercourse with the other world. Galileo's spirit never failed to come to me when summoned. His revelations about the appearance and manners of the inhabitants of other planets were incorporated in my writings always with the utmost confidence till modern instruments discovered five satellites of Jupiter and nine of Saturn, whereas what I believed was the spirit of Galileo always affirmed to me that Jupiter had four moons and Saturn eight.

"At first I felt sure the astronomers must be mistaken, but now I have seen with my own eyes. Therefore, as it is inadmissible that real spirits could err or jest, evidently my intercourse with Galileo was a long delusion. I acknowledge it frankly and without shame, because I have acted in good faith in this matter and refuse to lend support to error.

"You must understand, however, that I do not renounce all belief in spiritual manifestations, the existence of which has been proved beyond doubt. I have simply reached the conclusion that such manifestations cannot be attributed to the spirits of dead people.

"I explain them by our power to throw a part of our spirit outside of ourselves. This exteriorized spirit undoubtedly is capable of moving material bodies, emitting sounds, and otherwise affecting matters.

"I see additional proof that the phenomena so far ascribed to the dead really emanate from psychic force projected by the living. In fact, the so-called revelations always are confined to things known, suspected, or desired by somebody present. Likewise, when music is heard, it is always a strain previously stored in the brain-cells of some person present at the experiment. It is clearly the floating exteriorized spirit of that person repeating impressions.

"For example, when the name of Galileo was pronounced by me, evidently my exteriorized spirit was reflecting expectation, and when scientific problems were solved, I now realise it was only according to my own vague latent inductions.

"It is impossible to develop new theories in the limits of a cable despatch; but I am writing a book giving conclusive proofs that the spirits of the dead never mingle with the living in this world, and that Spiritualism is a delusion when not mere jugglery."

The Christian Way.

Look carefully over the list of dead
Of every age and clime,
And note each man who did or said
Things noble and sublime;
No matter if he was a Turk or Jew,
Atheist, Pagan, or Hindoo,
Whether his god was concrete as you,
Or only a vague and misty un;
No matter if he was a Chinese dog
Or Central African nigger,
Stick his name in the catalogue
Where eminent Christians figure;
Blazon his virtues far and wide
And hoist him up to the Savior's side;
Scoop him in,
With an inward grin,
And blithely ticket him "Christian."
Carefully sort the Christian dead—
The men who doubted not
That Christ looked down from overhead,
And that Hell was piping hot;
To whom the Incarnation scheme
Was real as life, and not a dream,
Their greatest joy, their constant theme—
No allegorical fable;
Oust each murdering, plundering bloke,
And him too fond of the ladies,
And him who burned dissenting folk
To save their friends from Hades;
Persuade the folks of weakly ken
That these rascals were not Christian men;
To do the trick,
On each scoundrel stick
An "Atheistical" label.
"Christian" is an elastic term,
No genius can define it.
The definition will be infirm,
However one may design it.
Of "Christian" Jews there's quite a throng,
The "Christian" Pagan ranks are strong,
The "Christian" Atheist's coming along—
O Christ! what a contradiction!

"Heads we win, tails you lose"

Is the wily Christian's motto.

"Stick to sheep, all goats refuse,
Whether they're Christ's or not, O."

No longer like the granite rock;

The Church defies the tempest's shock;

A sinking cause,

She grasps at straws

As she drowns in her floods of fiction.

CHARLES D. STEPHENS.

Correspondence.

A MEAN CLERIC.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—The correspondence recently opened up by aged persons in New Zealand with a view to obtain copies of certificates of birth or baptismal registration, as evidence of age, with which to establish a claim to an old-age pension, has brought to light the record mean cleric.

A miner here, who applied to a country rector in the West of England for a certified copy of baptismal registration, enclosing twopence-halfpenny in English postage stamps for reply, received in return a meagre scrap of dingy paper, intimating that a remittance of five shillings and one penny, legal fees, would facilitate business. This sum being sent, also stamp as before, drew from the parson a postcard carrying one penny halfpenny in stamps (a penny saved is a penny earned), on which he expressed a wish to know what it was all about. Fresh instructions being mailed, with stamps as usual, brought the desired certificate set out upon a full sheet of notepaper. The worthy pastor was, however, equal to the occasion, and recouped himself for this unwonted extravagance in stationery by neglecting to affix any stamp to his letter, which was delivered with a collect postage-docket attached. "And of such are the kingdom of heaven!" The awful calligraphy of this frugal preacher was as Sanscrit to the aged miner; fortunately, it came under the eye of this scribe, who had in early life considerable experience in deciphering the hieroglyphics of "Stonehenge," Editor Canine Department of the *London Field*, and all was made plain.

W. AITCHISON.

A WORD FOR THE "CLARION."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Re the *Clarion* and Freethought, as an ardent Socialist, as well as an ardent Freethinker, I have been sorry to note a recent and somewhat disparaging remark of your own concerning the *Clarion*, and also a comment of one of your correspondents in last week's *Freethinker* concerning our friend "Nunquam," the editor of the *Clarion*. It behoves us, above all things, to be just and reasonable. The *Clarion* is devoted to one phase of reform, the *Freethinker* to another. Therefore it was not to be expected that the *Clarion* should devote as much space to our great apostle Ingersoll's death as a paper devoted to the ideas which Ingersoll advocated so ably. I therefore fail to see the reasonableness of your correspondent talking of "Nunquam" as a man with a "kink in his brain." As for his "column devoted to a pair of jackdaws," maybe your correspondent is not sufficiently acquainted with "Nunquam's" style to fully appreciate the merit of some of his semi-humorous articles, and perhaps he is unaware that "Nunquam" has more than once given expression to views which could quite fittingly be put into the *Freethinker*. Again I say, let us be just, and not be too ready to jump on a man because he does not do exactly as we would wish.

HAROLD ELLIOT.

Obituary.

I HAVE to record the death, at the age of seventy-eight, of Joseph Holland, of Deptford. Holland, although a very poor man, was a most intelligent and well-read one. He was the first Secularist that I debated with in my pre-Secular days at Deptford Broadway in 1860. He was also one of the seven that founded the first Deptford Secular Society in 1862, of which our late treasurer, Mr. Le Lubez, was president, and I the secretary. The only survivor of the seven, besides myself, is Mr. J. Knight, of Deptford, who was present at the funeral. Amongst many others were Mr. and Mrs. Killick, T. Pay, W. H. Reynolds, Field, Oaks, Hicks, Brattle, and Nudd. He was buried in Brockley Cemetery on Thursday, August 10, Mr. Ramsey officiating.—R. FORDER.

It is with deep sorrow that I record the sudden death of Mr. John Drury, of Birkdale, Southport, while listening to a lecture on the sands. He burst a blood vessel on the brain, and was taken home, and died without recovering consciousness. Deceased was a thorough Secularist, and was for several years a supporter of the N. S. S. He was a good husband, a kind father, and a brave man, having while at sea risked his own life for those of others. He was never afraid of his opinions, and often took part in the debates on the sands, frequently putting questions to his opponents which they could not possibly answer.—WILLIAM SMITH.

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.): Closed during August.

BRADLAUGH CLUB AND INSTITUTE (36 Newington Green-road, Ball's Pond): 8.30, A Concert.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, A lecture.

BROCKWELL PARK (near Herne-hill Gates): 3.15, A. B. Moss; 6, C. Cohen.

CAMBERWELL (Station-road): 11.30, R. P. Edwards.

EDMONTON (corner of Angel-road): 7, R. P. Edwards.

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): Lectures every week evening at 8. Sunday, at 11.30, A lecture.

KINGSLAND (Ridley-road): 11.30, C. Cohen.

MILE END WASTE: 11.30, E. Pack; 7, A lecture.

PECKHAM RYE: 3.15, C. Cohen.

S. L. E. S. (Peckham Rye): 11.15, A lecture. (Brockwell Park): 3.15, A lecture.

STRATFORD (The Grove): Excursion to Stanford Rivers by brakes.

VICTORIA PARK (near the Fountain): 3.15, R. P. Edwards; 6.30, F. A. Davies.

WESTMINSTER (Grosvenor Embankment): 11.30, R. P. Edwards.

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms): 6.30, Members' Annual Meeting.

DERBY (Market-place): H. Percy Ward—11, "The Gospel of Secularism"; 7, "Is the Bible a Revelation from God?"

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): The hall will be closed during August.

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): Closed for Summer Season.

GREAT YARMOUTH FREETHINKERS' ASSOCIATION (Freethinkers' Hall, bottom of Broad-row): 7, Violin Selections by Professors Elliott and Ray; 7.15, A. H. Smith, "Priestcraft."

PORTH BRANCH (Tonyandy, 100 Primrose-street): 6, W. Moore, "Is God Just and Merciful?"

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): Excursion to Stratford-on-Avon. Members and friends meet in front of Victoria Station at 7.10 a.m.; train leave at 7.25.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation Schools, Market-place): 7.30, Final arrangements for lectures.

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—August 27, m., Ridley-road; a., Peckham; e., Brockwell Park. 29, Limehouse. 30, Mile End.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon-road, London, S.E.—August 27, m., Newington Reform Club; a., Brockwell Park. September 3, m., Clerkenwell. 10, m., Edmonton. 17, m., Battersea; e., Stratford. 24, m., Mile End; e., Stratford.

R. P. EDWARDS, 52 Bramley-road, Notting-hill.—August 27, m., Station-road, Camberwell.

E. PACK, 10 Henstridge-place, Ordnance-road, St. John's Wood.—August 27, Mile End.

H. PERCY WARD, 5 Alexandra-road, Edgbaston, Birmingham.—August 27, Derby. September 10, Glasgow.

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Books to Read.

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