

THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

VOL. XIX.—No. 51.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 17, 1899.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

God's Mother.

ONLY one person in human records—or rather in Christian records—was an absolute orphan. This was Adam. He was an orphan from birth—if we may say so of one who was not even born. He had no father and no mother; in which respect he was resembled by Melchizedek, only that gentleman, at least as referred to in the New Testament, must have been both a mythical and a mystical character, for he was also without beginning or end of days. Poor old Adam had no childhood. He missed the most delightful part, certainly the happiest, of human existence. No father told him things or had a game with him. No mother hugged and kissed him and prattled delicious nonsense in his ears. His life had no spring. It began, so to speak, in the summer, and soon passed into the winter. Eve herself was less unfortunate, for she was not made of clay. Her father was a warm rib, and she had a live companion at the outset of her career. One's heart goes out in pity towards the first man. Considering all he lost by the very fact of his being the first, it was hard that he should be punished so terribly for his first slip. There was no First Offenders' Act then; he got penal servitude for life for his first transgression. No wonder, therefore, that the second person of the Trinity decided to be only half an orphan. Jesus Christ had no father—at least, they say so. True, it is stated that the Holy Ghost stood towards him in that capacity. But this is only one of the little comedies of the Christian faith; for the Holy Ghost was the third person of the Trinity, and the Trinity is one and indivisible, so that the Holy Ghost was Jesus Christ too, and Jesus Christ was the Holy Ghost, and both of them were God the Father. Which things, as Paul says, are a mystery. But be that as it may, it is certain that Jesus Christ avoided the melancholy fate of Adam. He dispensed with a father, but preferred to have a mother; and the artists picture him a handsome, happy baby, nestling in her loving arms, or clasped to her devoted bosom. Herein, at any rate, he displayed some good taste and natural feeling. Poor, indeed, is the man who has no recollection of his mother. We do wrong to sneer at the Frenchman who is melted and smitten to his knees by the magic of "Ma Mère." He bends before the deepest and holiest fact of life; for maternity lies at the bottom of all intellectual culture and moral discipline. It is the first sacred fount of disinterested love. So it was right on the part of Jesus to have a mother, and the world would never have worshipped him without.

The mother of Jesus Christ was Mary of Nazareth; and if he at his birth was "the Infant-God," as Milton terms him in the Ode on the Nativity, she was the mother of God.

A great many Protestants will call this blasphemous. But that only shows their ignorance. The expression "Mother of God" has been used by several Protestant poets, even in Puritan England. Amongst the Catholics it is quite classic. The "Ave Maria" says: "Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for us sinners now, and in the hour of death. Amen." Another Catholic prayer runs: "We fly to thy patronage, O Holy Mother of God; despise not our petitions in our necessities, but deliver us from all dangers, O ever glorious and Blessed Virgin." We might give a thousand corroborative extracts from Catholic writers; but, instead of doing so, we will cite the language of a Pope, which should

be conclusive. Pius the Ninth, in an Encyclical Letter, dated 1846, wrote as follows:—

"In order that our most merciful God may the more readily incline his ear to our prayers, and may grant that which we implore, let us ever have recourse to the intercession of the most holy mother of God, the immaculate Virgin Mary."

So far from having any hesitation on this point, Catholics have revelled in emphasising it. St. Ligouri said that "All is subject unto Mary, even God himself." This must be on the principle of once a mother always a mother, and once a son always a son. So the Catholics pray more to Mary than they do to Christ. St. Bernard beheld two ladders extending from earth to heaven. Christ was at the top of one, Mary at the top of the other. Those who climbed up his ladder fell back, but those who climbed up hers succeeded, for she stretched out her hands and helped them. Moral: pray to Mary instead of Jesus; make friends with the mother and leave the son alone.

What will those who regard the expression "Mother of God" as blasphemous think of a worse expression that was employed by St. Jerome, one of the greatest Fathers of the Church, who is the author of the Vulgate (Latin) Bible? This saint was so enamored of virginity that he became a monk and persuaded his sweetheart to become a nun; and writing to her mother, as Jortin says, he "calls Eustochium the nun, *His Lady*, because she was the *spouse* of his *Lord*, and reminds the mother of this lady that she has the honor to be *God's mother-in-law*." It seems impossible to go beyond that.

Now, if Mary was indeed the Mother of God, their relationship was a frightfully mixed affair. She was the wife of her own father, daughter of her own husband, sister of her own son, and mother of her own brother. The brain reels under this awful mystery. One can only exclaim with Othello that "Chaos is come again."

Let us see how this wonder was effected; how Mary became the mother of God, and got into that monstrous muddle of relationship with her offspring.

The fulness of time had come for God—that is to say, the Christian God, the God of the Bible—to make a bold stroke for the world's salvation. He had been four thousand years thinking about it, and now he meant business. Indeed, it appears that he had resolved upon it immediately after, or even before, the fall of Adam. But the mills of God grind slowly, at the rate of one revolution in several millenniums. It was four thousand years from Adam to Christ, and it is nearly two thousand years from Christ to the present time. Forty centuries were required to make a beginning, and nineteen centuries to get very little further; so that the world will hardly be saved before this planet becomes too cold for human habitation; and the last remnants of our race will almost be glad to miss salvation in order to make sure of warmth hereafter.

God had made many minor, abortive attempts at salvation. He had drowned all mankind except eight persons, who stocked it afresh. He had called Abraham to be the father of his chosen people, the Jews. He had worked a vast variety of miracles, which ought to have converted everybody. He had sent prophets, and inspired a number of writers, and even written certain commandments with his own "finger." But all these attempts were vitiated, and therefore frustrated, by one essential drawback. All the instruments of God, from Noah downwards, had been infected with original sin; and this mistake was now to be rectified. A new messenger was to be sent from heaven without

a trace of that infection; and as he was not to be dropped down full-grown, but to begin his career on earth to all appearance like other men, it was necessary that his generation should be miraculous. He was, therefore, brought into the world without the assistance of a father. His mother was supernaturally impregnated by the Holy Ghost, and in due time the sinless Savior appeared.

Mary of Nazareth was selected as the vehicle of his introduction. She was a young woman engaged to be married to a carpenter called Joseph. Had they been tied up by a Rabbi, the Holy Ghost might have been too late. It was necessary, therefore, to be prompt and even "previous." And this is how it was managed. According to Luke, the only evangelist in the secret—and how he learnt it the Lord only knows—the angel Gabriel was sent from heaven to tell Mary that she was to become a mother without the co-operation of Joseph. The conversation between the lady and the angel is fully reported by Luke, but the language is too crude for reproduction. Suffice it to say that the lady was naturally sceptical, but her doubts were removed, and when the angel "departed" she was satisfied that she would give birth to the Son of God.

It is generally agreed, at least by Catholic writers, that the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary in human form; some say as a handsome young man of twenty-five; which seems to render the miracle more intelligible. According to Bonaventure, in the Rev. Dr. Oakeley's translation, Gabriel was the "faithful proxy" of the Trinity. He accepted the embassy with a "beaming countenance":—

"Then, rising on the wings of joy, he quits the heavenly courts, and is instantly present, in human shape, before the Virgin Mary, whom he discovers in the innermost retreat of her lowly dwelling. Yet not so rapid was his flight, but that the Blessed Trinity, preventing their ambassador, was in the dwelling before him."

This seems to show that the Trinity mistrusted the faithful proxy.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be concluded.)

Christian Revolutions.

(Concluded from page 787.)

IN our article under the above heading, which appeared in these columns last week, we promised to endeavor to demonstrate that the facts adduced by Mr. Mallock in his contribution to the *Nineteenth Century* for November refuted certain alleged truths of the Christian religion. These supposed truths are, that the Bible is an adequate guide for man, and that it definitely sets forth the nature and import of certain doctrines which are said to be necessary to the eternal welfare of the human race.

Mr. Mallock clearly shows that science has effected an entire change in the intellectual conceptions of the Bible. The belief that it contains "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth," has been completely annihilated, and, in its place, "science has forced on us the recognition that, whatever truths the Biblical books may contain, these truths are embedded in a mass of error in legends pretending to be history, in reminiscences pretending to be prophecies, and in the frequent inculcation of conduct not only immoral, but monstrous." This revolutionary process has resulted in the teachings of the Bible being judged, not by the standpoint of an imaginary "divine authority," but by their adaptability to human needs. In other words, the Jewish and Christian Scriptures are now estimated upon precisely the same principle as are any other writings.

That this revolution is a reality Mr. Mallock proves by referring to such prominent Christian Apologists as Canon Gore, the Dean of Canterbury, and Professor Harnack. Canon Gore really admits "that science has so revolutionised our conception of what the Bible is as to force us to defend its inspiration on practically new grounds." In justification of this new departure he quotes the Bishop of Oxford, who, in a recent charge, declared that "the Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament are now going through a process of analytical criticism" which "is effecting a change in our conception of what the Bible is, which, if not greater, is certainly not less than 'the changes involved

in the acceptance of heliocentric astronomy.'" Dean Farrar avows "that the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, is a mixture of truth and error; that the view, so prevalent formerly, according to which it was a book demanding in all its facts our credence, or even our respect, would, if not abandoned by Christians, reduce their religion to an absurdity; and that the foremost duty of the modern Christian Apologist is to show the sceptic and the infidel that Christians are concerned to defend, not the book as a whole, but select passages only." And Professor Harnack says: "The most decisive step of all [in religious thought] was taken when it was agreed that the understanding and exposition of the Old and New Testaments were neither to be regulated by any 'creed,' nor be allowed, out of regard to the sacredness of the text, to make use of other methods than those universally recognised in the spheres of philology and history. The application of this rule to theology has produced a revolution which still vibrates through the whole of its domain."

Thus we have, upon the testimony of three of the most prominent Bible exponents of modern times, frank admissions that the Bible is no longer regarded as the infallible guide it was once supposed to be. This is an important advance in Freethought, inasmuch as it destroys the notion of Bible supremacy, which has always been an impediment to the progress of mental freedom. It is true that these Christian Apologists contend that portions of the Bible are inspired; but this applies, as the Dean of Canterbury admits, to "select passages only." We are informed that "all the rest—and the rest is a large portion of it—we may abandon, as unconcernedly as we might abandon the books of Livy, to the secular critic, who may destroy or spare it as he pleases." The damaging point here to the Christian position is, Who shall decide what is "inspired" and what is not? The materials for such a decision are not furnished by the Bible itself. It must, therefore, be left to the readers of the book to say what is the word of God and what is the word of man. But conclusions so arrived at will rest solely upon personal opinions, which are as varied as they are liable to be erroneous. We therefore agree with Mr. Mallock that logically but one conclusion can be arrived at. "That conclusion is this: That the Bible, taken by itself, is no guide to true Christianity [whatever that term means], and affords no proof that such-and-such doctrines are true."

So much for the Bible itself when it is confronted with modern criticism. It will not be difficult to show that the teachings which Protestants allege are based upon the Bible are equally defective as a guide, and that they are so indefinite in their nature, and so varied in their influence, that it seems almost impossible for the numerous Christian sects to discover that there is any harmonious meaning attached to them. This is so evident that the Rev. G. F. Terry says: "The great problem which confronts the religious world of to-day may be briefly stated thus: How shall the Church preserve her own past, and yet, at the same time, meet the wants of the present? How can she hold the faith delivered to the saints of bygone ages, and, at the same time, find room for the faith delivered to the saints of to-day? We feel that the two contrary elements of fixity and change must be harmonised in order to fit the religion of Jesus for future needs. How this is to be done is not yet apparent. Of one thing only can we be certain—that history and not authority, fact and not fiction, will determine the form of Christianity in the future" (*Church Gazette*, November 25). No, it is not "yet apparent" how the changes produced by scientific investigation can be brought into harmony with a faith which is said to be the same "yesterday, to-day, and for ever." And herein lies the folly of trying to regulate human affairs at the present time by rules claimed to have been fixed two thousand years ago. As Dr. Magee once said, "It is impossible to run a State on the principle of the Sermon on the Mount." It is also impossible to base the required personal conduct of the nineteenth century upon the teachings of the New Testament.

The oft-repeated boast of professed Christians, that, notwithstanding their differences upon doctrines, etc., they have an authority to which all can appeal, is entirely fallacious. And, so far as Protestants are

concerned, Mr. Mallock proves this up to the hilt. We have already seen that the Bible does not furnish such an authority. Where, then, is it to be found? Not in the Articles of the Church of England, for Nonconformists will not accept them as being of any authoritative value. Not in Councils, for Protestants, as a rule, will not admit that they are infallible. Not in what the Dean of Canterbury terms "the verifying faculty of the Christian consciousness," for, as the Dean admits, "the most grotesquely opposite conclusions" are drawn from individual study. In the absence of any definite authority it is not surprising to find, as Professor Harnack grants, that scientific criticism has destroyed the "belief in three things—the miraculous birth of Christ, his resurrection, and his ascension." Well might Mr. Mallock exclaim: "What shall we say, then, of the claim that any living authority is present with the Protestant Church which preserves Christian doctrine intact amid the critical storm, when the very men who are most eager to put this authority forward are found to be contradicting each other with regard to the very rudiments of the faith which this authority imposes upon them, and cannot agree that it imposes on them even a belief in the resurrection of their Lord?"

The view taken by Mr. Mallock, that, admitting the credibility of the Christian religion, the position of the Roman Catholic Church is the consistent one, is, we think, sound. As Mr. Edward Clodd states: "By those who accept it [Revelation], the fact should not be blinked that there is no logical standpoint short of entering her communion." But as we do not grant the credibility claimed, we are opposed to the assumptions of both Catholic and Protestant, and look upon each as attempts to pander to human credulity, and to perpetuate theological errors at the sacrifice of reason and common sense.

CHARLES WATTS.

The Rev. Dr. Horton and Unbelief.

NARROWED down to fundamental differences, the issue between Secularism and Religion in all its forms admits of very brief statement. Whatever may be the best form of government, the most desirable type of society, or the correct theory of human progress, Secularism does not dogmatically pronounce; but it does emphatically assert that all the essentials of right living, all that makes existence pleasurable now and holds out hopes of development in the future, are to be found within the known or knowable universe, are to be discovered by human wisdom, applied by human skill, and valued in terms of pain and pleasure endured this side of the grave. The distinctive feature of religious systems is, on the contrary, the insistence that some form of belief in the supernatural, some belief in God and a future life, is indispensable if life is to be enjoyable to any or bearable by all. Secularism does not stand or fall by any particular theory of sociology or ethics, nor do religious claims rest ultimately upon any particular theory of the supernatural; the vital distinction between the two lies in the positions stated.

But this plain issue is now so seldom raised that it was with something like pleasure that I waded through a charmingly ignorant and abusive sermon recently preached by the Rev. Mr. R. F. Horton, of Lyndhurst-road Congregational Church. The sermon was delivered to artisans, and, while the issue between Naturalism and Supernaturalism is fairly raised therein, it is phrased in a manner such as even most educated Christian preachers would now blush to adopt. Mr. Horton gives his sermon the title, "What Then?" and the query, he explains, "does not refer to the coming century.....about which we know nothing [although, in a recent booklet on *The Age of the New Century*, he has discussed its probable nature], but it refers to the life after death, about which, though we know little, we know enough for all practical purposes." After this brilliant opening, in which, as is usual with clergymen, ignorance is confessed concerning a world of which something may be known, and knowledge claimed concerning a world of which nothing can be known, one is fully prepared for all that is to follow.

If I were asked to describe the opening of a sermon on Immortality without seeing the effusion, I should say unhesitatingly that it commenced by dwelling upon the circumstance that a large number of people declare that they could not get along without it. Mr. Horton does not disturb one's expectations in this direction, nor does it seem to strike him that generations of gentlemen of his profession, operating upon the people, are themselves largely responsible for the present existence of the feeling they cite as evidence. But in support of this argument he drags in a curiously misleading reference to John Stuart Mill which deserves a little attention as illustrative of pulpit methods.

"How necessary it is," says Mr. Horton, "for us to live by the expectation of the future was shown very strikingly by a passage in John Stuart Mill's Autobiography, where, at the age of eighteen, he tells us that he fell into a serious condition of despondency..... The idea occurred to him, Now, supposing all these reforms were effected, and the great object I have in view were secured, what then? He felt that, if all were realised, so much would still be left unrealised, and so little indeed realised, that the whole of life for himself and the world lost its savor.....And then he tells us that he recovered himself and underwent a kind of conversion by reading the poetry of Wordsworth, that poet of immortality."

I have given this passage in full because it is a most admirable example of the clerical *suggestio falsi*. In the first place, Mill's concern for the future was not for the *future life*, but the fear that if all reforms were carried out, and "every person in the community free and in a state of physical comfort, the pleasures of life, being no longer kept up by struggle and privation, would no longer be pleasures" (Autobiography, p. 146). He himself describes this feeling as akin to the fear that the sun may be burnt out (p. 145). Next, the phrase that, if all reforms were carried, so little would be realised, is placed in Mill's mouth by Mr. Horton for obvious purposes, and is a serious misrepresentation of the former's views, as can be seen by the above quotation from Mill. That Mill underwent a "kind of conversion" is again a deliberate attempt to put religious language into his mouth; it is a phrase nowhere used by him. The reference to Wordsworth is again misleading. One would imagine from the sermon that it was Wordsworth's teaching on immortality that had something to do with Mill's recovery. As a matter of fact, he distinctly describes the "Intimations of Immortality" as containing "bad philosophy," and ascribes his recovery to the pictures of rural beauty wrought by the poet. And, finally, Mill distinctly points out that he was "in a dull state of nerves," following on too exclusive devotion to purely intellectual matters, and that Wordsworth supplied the natural antidote by the cultivation of the æsthetic side of his nature. I might say more upon this head, but probably enough has been stated to show how very misleading Mr. Horton's references are.

I remarked above that Mr. Horton's sermon was both ignorant and abusive, and I think both epithets are justified by the following expressions. He is lamenting that a number of people are living "under the obvious impression that all that is to be expected is here.....And when men begin to live on those lines they quickly degenerate. No man, no woman, can live on that theory and remain in any true sense great or noble." This, however, is mild to the following:—

"Men who do not believe in their immortality.....are a public nuisance. They bestialise life, they lower the tone of everything, they make this world a huge graveyard, where the only thought is to eat and drink.....I would mark them all and avoid them, and if they cannot change their mind they should be ostracised from a human society which depends for all vitality and for all progress upon a great and permanent belief in the immortality of man."

Perhaps the most fitting way to deal with such an insane tirade would be to pass it by in contemptuous silence. Mr. Horton is only saying, however, in crude, brutal language, what others say in a more refined manner, and, therefore, I would simply ask decent Christians to read the above expressions carefully, and then ask themselves whether any possible justification can be found for such language? The bandying of great names is usually an unprofitable process, but let us, instead of putting such a statement in vague genera-

terms, take definite individuals and see how it reads. Charles Darwin, John Stuart Mill, Professor Huxley, Herbert Spencer, were, or are, men none of whom believed in immortality. Therefore they "bestialise life, lower the tone of everything, make the world a huge graveyard"; they should be marked, avoided, ostracised from human society. If Mr. Horton means anything, he means all that I have just written. If he does not mean that, his remarks are only the ignorant tirade of an abusive pulpiteer, and I seriously ask all decent Christians what they think of one of their prominent metropolitan mouthpieces?

Mr. Horton says, substantially, that all the ordinary objects of life are but poor things:—

"The poem of life is at that point which we call death.The poem of your existence is at that point where the materialist imagines that you cease to be."

And again:—

"No problem about the fate of the world is of any great moment to you or me; the problem that is of moment, the problem that the Scripture forces home upon us, is, For yourself, what then?"

Well, I do not want to use any hard language; I will simply say that the man who can go through the world, sharing all the joys and sorrows of existence, and then say that the poetry of life only commences with the grave, must be as blind as a bat, as deaf as an adder, and as stupid as—Mr. Horton. No poetry in life but the grave; this is the message of a Christian minister who sets himself up as a teacher of his fellows. I will not use expressions concerning the treatment of Mr. Horton such as he has used concerning unbelievers, but I do say that such men are socially dangerous and radiate an influence that, in the long run, must be far from beneficial. For, put into plain language, Mr. Horton declares that whatever poetry or beauty or goodness exists is absolutely dependent upon our belief in a future life. No other consideration would cause men to respect truth, beauty, goodness, or purity in ourselves or others. It is a complete denial of the possibility of human morality, as such. We have heard much of the demoralising influences of Secularism; did it ever preach anything so demoralising as this? Mr. Horton has written extensively concerning the evil teaching of Rome. Did that Church ever teach anything more intrinsically vile than this?

Let us look at the subject from another point of view. We can understand the man who says that life may be made better by the belief in a God who watches every action, and will call us to account in a future state. The view is poor enough. It converts God into an almighty policeman, and man into a confirmed criminal, only to be kept from evil doing by the fear of detection; but such a position is, at least, decently arguable. But here is a man who lays down the ridiculous position that it is only the future life that makes this one of any value.

Imagine a man entering a shop and purchasing a dozen eggs. He returns the next day with the complaint that they are all bad. "Sorry, sir," says the shopkeeper; "there is a box full in the corner; help yourself to as many as you please; they are all alike." The absurdity is apparent, and Mr. Horton is arguing as I have imagined the shopkeeper to have acted. Life is bad, he says, but if it is prolonged beyond the grave it becomes good. The reply is obvious. The *quality* of life cannot be altered by any increase in the quantity. It is either good or bad, and a continuation of it beyond the grave does not intensify it one way or the other.

How does Mr. Horton know that life on the other side of the grave will be any better than life on this side? I put on one side the puerile statements that "The source of authority upon this subject is the Bible" and "All that can be known is in the Bible," and ask, How does Mr. Horton know? Even from the religious standpoint, all that he can logically judge God by is the world he has produced. If he has not made life worth living here, on what grounds does he believe him to have made life better elsewhere? If, on the contrary, life is worth living here, his whole argument falls to pieces. Surely Mr. Horton believes God is in this world as well as in the next, and upon that assumption one is warranted in concluding that, whatever be the proportion between justice and injustice here, we have no grounds for believing that the ratio will be any different elsewhere.

I have one word to say in conclusion. I have dealt with Mr. Horton because he is one of the leading Nonconformist ministers of London—one of the mouthpieces of that horrible concoction, "The Nonconformist Conscience." He has been busy of late professing interest in social matters; we can now see his capability for sound sociological studies. "No problem about the fate of the world is of any great interest to you or me" is his teaching. The great thing is, look after your own soul. Self, self, self, is the beginning and end of his message; and the message is not less selfish or less repulsive because it is dressed up in a religious garb. In a short time we shall be having in London a School Board election. Mr. Horton will doubtless be as busy as of yore dwelling upon the necessity of religious instruction; and I seriously ask all parents and voters to reflect upon the type of mind disclosed by the quotations I have given, upon the lack of mental charity, the intellectual weakness and moral decadence indicated by them, and then say whether this man and men of his class are fit custodians of the future of the race.

C. COHEN.

War, Charity, and Common Sense.

THE British lion just now seems in danger of losing his head. At any rate, he appears to be getting very hot, angry, and unnecessarily savage. If it were possible to administer to him a cold *douche* or a little cooling medicine, it would certainly be to the national and to international advantage. Apart from any question as to the justice of the war—its avoidability not after, but long before, the Boers' ultimatum—there are features arising and multiplying themselves in connection with the hostilities which are anything but pleasant to contemplate. The loss of life is terrible; but, in addition to the sacrifice of blood, there is imminent danger of the loss of cool-headedness and common sense in circumstances where their preservation is of the highest importance. For this perilous position of affairs we are, in the first place, indebted to that section of the press which is making enormous profits out of the conflict; and, in the next place, to the ill-advised utterances of prominent politicians, who may hope, in time, to rank as statesmen, but who at present only succeed in exhibiting their disqualifications for any such status.

Recently we had the painful spectacle of a Secretary of State flouting our great neighbor across the Channel for irresponsible and over-estimated antagonism that might well have been treated with dignified indifference. Even if it were necessary to honor it with notice, the duty might have been delegated to some less responsible person. The Colonial Secretary has now learnt the opinion of Lord Rosebery on his "undiplomatic frankness." Stinging words are remembered, in spite of any solace that may be afterwards applied. "Long after the words that we utter in the hurry of the moment are buried in oblivion, they are cherished and brought up against us by the nations that they offend." The rebuke was well deserved; the need for it is very much to be regretted.

That incident has passed; but, at the present time, we have around us manifestations of a tone and temper which are very much to be deplored. Our troops are doing their duty with the courage and sagacity that might be expected of them. Meanwhile the people at home for whom they are fighting are exhibiting a kind of excitement which is hardly rational or creditable, though, alas, little likely to be subdued. The *Christian World*, in an excellent leader in its latest issue, points out that the "tone of general talk is not that of a people who are compelled by grim necessity to undertake a horrid task. That necessity we ourselves have acknowledged. But that the war should be regarded as an honor and glory, adding fresh lustre to the British flag, seems to us repugnant to common sense and right feeling."

Yet that is the boastful, bellicose spirit—utterly beneath the dignity of Great Britain—with which, from day to day, the conflict is presented to the public by a portion of the press that seems mainly bent on drawing in the "ha'pence." Their headlines and contents—bill-

are often such as to disgust decent, right-minded people. Usually they have very little news to convey, but what little they have is presented in the most brutal fashion possible. This sort of thing seems to appeal to a considerable portion of the British public, and it is humiliating to have to make that admission. Right-feeling people, on the other hand, are too much distressed at what is going forward to enter into this hideous exultation. Besides, it is altogether out of proportion. The end is so inevitable. Victory can carry with it no laurels. Our traditions should lift us above any petty boastfulness as against a small Republic such as that of the Boers. We are not, as the *Christian World* puts it, to "assume the heroic attitude of a little Switzerland rising against an Austrian tyrant."

We have now forced upon us the task of crushing these poor, misguided people. Let us do it solemnly and silently. There is no bluster or bombast on the part of those who are actually engaged in the work. In paying a tribute to the rank and file, the *Christian World* mentions that it has been shown extracts from private letters "written amidst the silence of the dead and the groans of the wounded, and they show a boyish simplicity and straightforwardness, a heroic indifference to privation, a love of comrades, and a loyalty of heart which touches us profoundly. How much nobler is the character thus suggested than that of the drunken, raving, plundering brutes glorified in Kipling's rhymes!" This reference to Kipling is one with which I cordially agree. I know I am with a very small minority in holding the opinion which has gradually been forced upon me that the British soldier owes less to Kipling than Kipling owes to him; and one of the things that Kipling owes to him is an apology. I say this in spite of anything that may be realised by the "poem" which is now being so extensively recited. I cannot but think that the public would have responded equally as well to a poetic composition less vulgar and coarse.

Then, is it befitting the dignity of a nation such as ours to have indulged in so much abuse and caricature of Kruger, who is probably ignorant and obstinate, but may, with equal probability, be regarded as honest and sincere? Chamberlain seems to be terribly sensitive about French slurs on Queen Victoria—almost to the extent of losing his head. After all, we have discovered that the Boers are not to be despised.

The truth is we are exhibiting just now a savagery of which in time to come we shall be heartily ashamed, if the memory of it survives.

FRANCIS NEALE.

Algernon Charles Swinburne.

"Yet, Freedom! yet, thy banner torn, but flying,
Streams, like the thunderstorm, against the wind."
—BYRON.

So long ago as 1857, that "unsubduable old Roman," Walter Savage Landor, discerning, with true insight, the power of a new poet, prophesied his rise. Landor was, latterly, somewhat too ready of praise, but he made no mistake in the case of Algernon Charles Swinburne, who is to-day, with all due respect to Mr. Kipling and the *Daily Mail*, our greatest living poet.

An aristocrat, and educated at Balliol College, Oxford—not a natural nursery for the growth of Freethought—one wonders when and where the ideas Swinburne embodies in his verse so boldly and effectively, first found entrance to his mind. Were they a legacy from grand old Landor, or altogether inherent, as in the case of Byron?

Swinburne especially distinguished himself at Oxford, and in a way to make that University remember him and be proud of him, but not in the common way. While thoroughly conversant with classic lore, at the most classic college in the world he disdained any honor Alma Mater could confer, and left without taking a degree.

Even while at Oxford Swinburne produced some magnificent verse and prose. He contributed freely to the college magazines, but his best known work at Oxford was afterwards embodied in *Poems and Ballads*. That beautiful dramatic poem, *Atalanta in Calydon*,

may have been commenced at Oxford, but more probably whilst he was with Landor in Italy. The publication of *Atalanta in Calydon* made his reputation. The critics at once recognised a new and most powerful writer. Here, at least, was a poet. The word rarely applies, but, when it does, it needs no emphasis. Such lines as the following were appreciated by all true judges of literature:—

But ye, keep ye on earth
Your lips from over-speech,
Loud words and longing are so little worth;
And the end is hard to reach,
For silence after grievous things is good,
And reverence, and the fear that makes men whole,
And shame and righteous governance of blood,
And lordship of the soul.
But from sharp words and wits men pluck no fruit,
And gathering thorns they shake the tree at root,
For words divide and rend;
But silence is most noble to the end.

Swinburne did not stop here. The appearance of *Poems and Ballads* fluttered the dovescotes of respectability, and aroused as much excitement in literary circles as Byron's *Don Juan* had in a previous generation.

Later came *Songs before Sunrise*, which roused men like a trumpet-blast. Throughout this volume rings out boldly and musically the cry of liberty, the utter abhorrence of tyranny of every kind, in every shape. Swinburne writes too sternly to admit of a doubt as to his real opinions.

No poet, since Shelley, sings more loftily, or with stronger passion, or with finer thought, than Swinburne when he is arraigning clericalism before the bar of humanity and truth.

In his superb *Hymn to Man* he treats the priests with fearful derision. He represents them as calling on their deity, and he says: "Cry aloud, for the people blaspheme." Then he concludes with deadly irony:—

Shall God then die as the beasts die? Who is it hath broken his rod?
O God, Lord God of thy priests, rise up now and show thyself God.
They cry out, thine elect, thine aspirants to heavenward, whose faith is as flame;
O, thou the Lord God of our tyrants, they call thee, their God by thy name.
By thy name that in hell-fire was written, and burned at the point of the sword,
Thou art smitten, thou God; thou art smitten; thy death is upon thee, O Lord;
And the Love song of Earth as thou diest resounds through the wind of her wings—
Glory to man in the highest! for man is the master of things.
In his lines apostrophising Christ on the Cross he says:—

Thy blood the priests make poison of,
And in gold shekels coin thy love.

His splendid energy and terrible scorn draw no distinction between the priests and their deity. The following lines, addressed to Jesus, in the same poem, are really the quintessence of satire:—

Thou had'st let children come to thee;
What children now but curses come?
What manhood in that God can be
Who sees their worship and is dumb?
No soul that lived, loved, wrought, and died,
Is this their carrion crucified.

Swinburne often sneers at prayer. In the following lines he gives full vent to his scorn:—

Behold, there is no grief like this;
The barren blossom of thy prayer,
Thou shalt find out how sweet it is.
O fools and blind, what seek ye there,
High up in the air?
Ye must have gods, the friends of men,
Merciful gods, compassionate,
And these shall answer you again.
Will ye beat always at the gate,
Ye fools of fate?
Ye fools and blind; for this is sure,
That all ye shall not live, but die.
Lo, what thing have ye found endure?
Or what thing have ye found on high
Past the blind sky?

In the *Hymn to Proserpine* he says:—

O, ghastly glories of saints, dead limbs of gibbeted Gods!
Though all men abase them before you in spirit, and all knees bend,
I kneel not, neither adore you, but standing, look to the end.

Swinburne is a perfect master of rhyme. Every cadence of which our language is capable haunts his ear. So natural and instinctive is the music of his

verse that it often seems the voice which nature speaks : at one time like the mighty rush of the avalanche, and at another as plaintive as reeds sighing in eventide ; now blithe as the singing of birds or the laughter of children, and, anon, as unutterably sad as the moaning of a midnight sea.

Swinburne possesses other powers than these. He is a rare critic, and an accomplished scholar. Observe his splendid essays on Shakespeare and the Elizabethan writers, and his beautiful renderings of Victor Hugo, Baudelaire, and Villon. No other English poet has clothed them in a dress of such truthfulness and music. He can write a very lively northern song, with the perfume of the heather clinging to it. He can lower his high cadences to the ear of little children without loss of the never-absent beauty of his incomparable style. All this Swinburne has done for us. He has also tried dramatic writing. In a number of volumes he has brought before us the very face, form, and life of the unhappy Mary, Queen of Scots, with all her immortal beauty, recklessness, and misfortune. We have all felt its magnetism. Under the magic of Swinburne's muse more young men have sighed at the feet of the beautiful Queen than in the brief years in which her dainty feet walked this earth.

Throughout the whole work of this poet rings out clearly the challenge of Freethought. A superb dreamer of dreams, he has given us something more than merely beautiful utterances. He has taught us soldiers of Freethought that it is good to act during life, and not to lie down and sulk. The call to arms vibrates through the magnificent poetry of Swinburne, as in that of Shelley, and not without result. As we march to battle against the hosts of superstition we are nerved to fresh endeavor by hearing the glorious music of a great poet.

MIMNERMUS.

Atheism.

I do not believe in the idea of creation, and therefore "a creator," outside of and above his creation, is unthinkable to me. I do not call myself an Atheist, but an Agnostic, not only as to a "God," but Agnostic as to any continuity of existence, in personal form, beyond this life. This is to say : If I lived before I was born, I do not have the slightest evidence of it, and if I am to live after I die, I am equally without evidence of this. Therefore, as to these speculations, I am Agnostic, with what seems to me a preponderance of logical evidence against any future continuity of conscious, personal existence. If there is an "over-ruling power" other than mere, motiveless, natural law, I have not sufficient evidence of that fact. It is unthinkable to me, and yet I do not know, any more than I know whether I shall live again after, or whether I ever lived before, this life. I am Agnostic again. I do not know.

If, to be an Atheist, one is to say, "I know that there is no God and no other life than this," I should be Agnostic to the Atheist's position, because I know that I do not know anything of other worlds' beings or existences than those in "Nature's camp." Concerning these speculations I am equally opposed to the dogmatism of the Atheist as to that of the Theist. I do not know, and therefore cannot believe ; but I am content with either theory, for, if true, it is inevitable.

I do not see the least use or place for a God, such as the religious theories have created. He, it, or they seem to me of no importance, even as they have been of no use to mankind.

We do not spend mind, body, nerve, soul, trying to find what we did and where we were before we were born ; why, then, after we are dead ? If, as the dreamers dream, life—continuity of conscious, personal existence—is eternal, then, logically, I have existed, always, in the past ; but if I do not know it, I do not care ; if I am not in the least conscious of this past existence, cannot be influenced by its experience, it is to me as if it had not been. Similarly, if I am to exist always, in the future, and have no more consciousness of it than of the past, I do not care.

Concerning these theories I am Agnostic, with a tendency to disbelief, from lack of evidence.

HELEN H. GARDENER.

Testimonial to Mr. John Fagan.

The following further amounts have been received :—Horatio Bottomley, £2 2s. ; Priddle, 1s. ; A. Drake, 1s. ; G. Greenfield, 1s. ; J. Chick, 5s. ; H. M. Ridgway, 2s. 6d.—GEORGE WRIGHT, Treasurer, Bradlaugh Club, 36 Newington Green-road, N.

Acid Drops.

GERMANY is going to double her navy, all in the interest of peace ! Count Von Bülow, the State Secretary for Foreign Affairs, explained to the Reichstag that the world-cake was being cut up, that England, France, and Russia were getting big slices, and that Germany also had a strong appetite which ought to be satisfied. His remarks were loudly cheered from all parts of the House, so we presume the Emperor will have his way, and become the Admiral-in-Chief of a considerable fleet of battleships. Perhaps the Bill will go through the Reichstag by Christmas. It will be a grand and characteristic celebration of the birth of the Prince of Peace.

Christmas out in South Africa will be spent, we presume, in mutual slaughter by rival Christians. It is not likely that a "truce of God" will be proclaimed during the holy season. It is even possible that heavy fighting may take place on Christmas Day. In that case, Jesus Christ ought to look down from his seat at his Father's right hand (we suppose the Ghost is on the left) and feel proud of his followers. Equal pride should swell his bosom at the thought of how magnificently he has succeeded with his Gospel. After nearly two thousand years of it, his disciples are as fond as ever of quarrelling ; indeed, in one of his lucid intervals, he seems to have foreseen the mess that would follow his teaching, for he plainly said that he came not to send peace, but a sword. That was the truest thing he ever uttered. He was all abroad in most of his prophecies, but that one has been fulfilled to the letter.

The Anglican Bishop of Pretoria, who has consulted his own safety by skedaddling off to Durban, writes a long letter to the Lord Mayor of London asking for a special sum to be set aside for the relief of the clergy who have been upset by the war in South Africa. The Lord Mayor replies that the distribution of the Mansion House Fund must be left to the High Commissioner and those associated with him in the examination of claims. In other words, the clergy must take pot-luck with their fellow subjects. What they appear to want is the best of the next life and the best of this one too.

This Bishop of Pretoria places on record the melancholy fact that church collections in the Transvaal metropolis had "fallen from an average of £10 and £12 a week to £2 and £5." No doubt this is a lamentably small figure for the necessities of the average man of God. But millions of other men have to make both ends meet on a good deal less. Besides, it is just as well that the clergy should feel the pinch of want now and then. It brings them nearer heaven, which, as Jesus taught, is exclusively for the poor.

One may read a hundred sermons without meeting with a truth. We are glad to note one, however, in the *Daily News* report of a sermon preached last Sunday morning by the Rev. W. Hardy Harwood at Union Chapel, Islington. "Trust in the living God," the reverend gentleman said, "would not give a large brain." We thoroughly agree with him. And the reverse is equally true. A large brain does not give much trust in the living God.

Rev. J. A. Betts, lecturing on "Matter, Mind, and Spirit" at Rotherhithe Free Library, said that man alone had spirit. This is quite true. No animal but man is ever found full of whiskey.

The Rev. John K. Wain and Mr. Thomas Manning, members of the congregation of a meeting-house in Saviourgate, York, applied in the Chancery Division last week for an injunction to restrain the trustees and committee from permitting the said house to be used for the propagation of Agnostic or Atheistic principles or doctrines. Mr. Justice Kekewich was of opinion that the preaching of Agnosticism in the chapel was contrary to the trusts of the deed, but the evidence did not show that the trustees or the committee had sanctioned it. Therefore, there could be no injunction against them. He would, however, make a declaration that the chapel must be used in accordance with the terms of the trust deed.

When a judge delivers his opinions on extra-legal matters, he is open to common criticism. Mr. Justice Kekewich, for instance, during the hearing of this St. Saviourgate Chapel case, remarked that "All Christians believe in immortality quite apart from the teachings of Christ." This only shows how little he knows the subject. The observation is hardly true even of the late Mr. Gladstone. It is utterly untrue of the Christadelphians and the Conditional Immortality people. Bishops of the Church of England have held the opposite view ; namely, that there is no such thing as natural immortality, which in all cases is a supernatural gift through Christ from God.

Mr. L. Portet writes to *Reynolds' Newspaper* on the persecution of Freethinkers by the Spanish clerical and military authorities, especially in the Canary Islands. He says: "Two months ago the editor of a Freethinking weekly paper, *La Luz* (the Light), was put in a dark, dirty dungeon of the military fortress, Paso Alto, Isle of Teneriffe, for the only reason that he is a Freemason, and has published in his paper some very sensible articles against the Inquisition. He is there, almost starving with hunger and thirst, without knowing the day of his release. Another Freethinker and editor of a newspaper of Orotava has been imprisoned during eighteen months at the same fortress for having reproduced from the peninsular paper, *La Conciencia Libre*, an article against the tortures of Montjuich."

Some of the "seasonable" poetry which is now appearing in the Christmas numbers of religious weeklies is rather curious reading at the present time. Take the following example:—

"Peace upon Earth!" O warring souls,
Cease from your toil and strife,
And time with songs of love and peace
The golden harp of life.
And now, when Christmas bells peal forth
News of a Savior's birth,
May we the angels' love-song join,
And peace reign on the earth!

It is very satisfactory to learn that the past season at Guernsey has been pathetically poor. This is the island where every place of refreshment is rigorously closed during the whole of Sunday, and where excursionists, if they do not bring their provender with them, have to roam about without the possibility of a bite or a drink. No wonder tourists keep away.

The *Catholic Times* says: "Our prayers should be for blessings in general, for God knows best what is good for us." This would rather limit the supplications addressed to heaven.

The editor of the *Freethinker* has been favored at his private address with an elaborate begging letter from the Secretary of the Watercress and Flower Girls' Christian Mission. It seems that funds are urgently needed, and subscriptions are asked for in the usual pressing fashion. No doubt it is a good thing to help the poor girls who hawk things in the streets—that is, if they are helped wisely. But it is just as well to glance at the Balance Sheet before sending anything to this institution. According to this printed document, the Mission's income for the year ending April 30, 1899, was £9,401 9s. 8d. This is a good deal of money; and how was it spent? Wages figure as £1,156 11s. 9d. Then we have Office Expenses, Clerks' Salaries, etc., £314 0s. 2d. A further sum of £438 6s. is down for Missionaries, Deaconesses, and Caretakers. There is £268 19s. 6d. for Rent, Gas, etc., of Branches in London; while the bill for Housekeeping, Orphanage, Holiday Homes, and Cottage Hospital amounts to £2,306 1s. 1d. There is also a large item of £915 12s. 11d. for Alterations, Additions, and Repairs. These sums make a tremendous hole in the total income from all sources, and one begins to wonder how much really goes to the Watercress and Flower Girls.

Under the head of Special Relief Cases there is the sum of £45 9s. 6d., and Bibles, Tracts, Hymn Books, etc., cost £4 10s. 2d.; which, considering that this is a *Christian Mission*, reminds one of Jack Falstaff's halfp'orth of bread to all that intolerable quantity of sack.

Some items in the Balance Sheet of this Mission are calculated to take one's breath away. Printing comes to £442 3s. 2d., Stationery to £230 6s. 8d., and Postage to £218 13s. 6d. Here is a total of nearly £900, and there must have been some ingenuity displayed in running up such a bill. Perhaps a little light upon this point is thrown by the fact with which we started; namely, that a packet of printed matter relating to the Mission was sent (by post) to the editor of the *Freethinker*. No doubt the whole street, and probably the whole district, received the same kind attention; and this generous way of doing business may account for the vast size of the Printing, Stationery, and Postage bill.

We very much fear that this Christian Mission is like a good many others—a nice source of income to a number of pious persons who might not be so well provided for otherwise. The secretary is Mr. John A. Groom, of 8 Sekford-street, Clerkenwell, to whom subscriptions are to be sent; indeed, an addressed envelope is included in the packet so lavishly distributed by post, presumably in order that subscriptions may not find their way elsewhere. Now it would be interesting to know what is Mr. Groom's salary; or, to put it more comprehensively, how much a year his connection with this Mission is worth to him. Unfortunately, he

does not give this information in the Balance Sheet, and we suppose the omission must be credited to his modesty.

Someone has been trying to answer the question, Do people read religious books? Returns have been obtained from various free libraries in the kingdom. There is—alas! for the pious—a striking unanimity as to religious books being generally unsought for and ignored. From Birmingham and Manchester, Aberdeen and Bristol, the East End and the West End, it is the same. Only two or three per cent. of the books borrowed from these libraries are classed as theological. In other words, three borrowers are content to read one religious book per year between them.

A religious weekly mentions that among the early Christians the preacher generally delivered his exhortation in a sitting posture, while the congregation heard him standing. It is related even of Constantine the Great that he did not resume his seat during a long sermon by Eusebius, and that all the assembly followed his example. There are not many church or chapel goers to-day who would submit to such an infliction.

A New York journal states that Kipling's Recessional Ode is not to be read in the day-schools of Chicago "because among the city's taxpayers are Atheists who might object to the poem as being religious. Thus does the late President of Brown University and the present superintendent of Chicago schools guard the feelings of the minority." The New York paper says it is not only very much surprised at this step, but rather inclined to be indignant. But why? The feelings of the minority surely have a right to be respected.

Carrying a Bible in the Transvaal seems likely to lead to unpleasant consequences. The Hon. George Peel was presented, by an old Boer, with a Bible. As he was examining it, he was seized as a Boer spy by two guardsmen, who seem to have based their delusion on the fact of Mr. Peel's possession of this copy of the Scriptures.

Complaints have been made, says the *Christian World*, at a meeting of the Shifnal Parish Council that the whole of the recipients of a parochial charity of Priorslee went to the parish church, or their children to the Church Sunday-school, and that other persons were excluded from the distribution. It was decided that in future the charity should be distributed by the trustees themselves, instead of by the vicar and churchwardens.

The Lord Chief Justice, who is a Roman Catholic, is very much concerned at the careless and indifferent fashion in which the oath is taken in court. The other day he said he had frequently to admonish doctors, solicitors, and other professional men, upon their want of decorum in this matter. The Lord Chief Justice need not look far for an explanation of the way in which the oath is hurried over. Most folks regard it as a mere formality, which might just as well be dispensed with.

The late Mr. Isaac Butt, Q.C., M.P., was fond of relating two stories of replies given by children when asked, before being sworn, whether they understood the nature of an oath and the consequences of perjury. In a case in which he was defending a prisoner, an Orangeman, on a charge of being concerned in a party riot, a little boy was called as a witness for the defence. "If you do not tell the truth," said the judge, "where will you go when you die?" "Where the Papists go, sir," was the prompt reply. In another case, tried at Limerick, a little girl was asked what would happen to her if she told a lie in her evidence. "I suppose, sir," she replied, "I wouldn't get my expinses."

Mr. Alfred Harmsworth has been boasting of the influence of his two "ha'penny" journals, one of which will be readily recognised from the description applied to it: "written by office boys for office boys." He says these two journals can control most of the Parliamentary elections in the metropolis. We don't believe it. The *Church Gazette* caustically observes that it is now "abundantly clear that all Church or anti-Church movements, which look for the least prospect of success, must make friends with Mr. Alfred Harmsworth." It urges the *Church Times* to see what it can do by way of currying favor, and adds: "For our own part, we will see about it—perhaps."

An ex-verger of Chester Cathedral has been sent to prison for two months for "annexing" a gold watch and chain belonging to a merchant in that city. An ex-churchwarden of Camberwell is committed for trial on a charge of obtaining money by false pretences.

The Convent of the Good Shepherd of Angers must be a happy home for friendless orphans. Little girls of twelve are said to be beaten mercilessly in case they fail to complete three shirts per day. They are fed with "a little potato

soup," and "a pail of water has to serve for drinking purposes among one hundred and fifty of them."

Free Church Councils are advised by the *Christian World* to watch the administration of the portion of the Lord Mayor's Fund entrusted to the Soldiers' and Sailors' Families' Association. It is more than hinted that, in ordinary times, the agency of administration is practically exclusively Church of England. The relief is dispensed by ladies, and it is said that they insist on recipients going to church. This restriction, we can be sure, has never been contemplated by the donors.

We were aware, says the *Church Gazette*, that Dr. Talmage is a wonderful man, but we did not know he was so wonderfully constituted as to be able to make two and two into anything but four; nevertheless, in last week's *Christian Budget* he is reported as having said: "I am one of those few benighted mortals in this day who take the whole Bible." It is not, we would remark, true that their number is few, though few enough of them but have the pretext of ignorance, which Dr. Talmage has not. Again, it is not a question of being "benighted," but a question of being able to believe what is against all evidence. He proceeds, taking up the line of the objector: "'What! you do not believe everything in it?' Everything! Absolutely everything! 'What! that about the serpent in Eden? and the sun standing still? and the whale swallowing Jonah?' Everything! I believe it all as much as I do in my own existence." This simply brings us back to the *credo quia impossibile* standpoint.

A laughable example of Oxford propriety will be found in the University Calendar, which includes a list of celebrated men who have attended that seat of learning. In this list Dr. Dodd is included. He is stated to be the author of *Thoughts in Prison*, but no mention it made of the fact that he was hanged for forgery. Paterfamilias might send his son to Cambridge if he realised this result of Oxford training.

A paragraph is going the round of the religious press about Thomas Edison and his Theism. The great electrician is represented as finding a proof that the universe is governed by intelligence in the fact that ice is lighter than water, and floats on the top instead of sinking to the bottom. It is well known that ice is an exception to the general law of contraction through cold, as well as an exception to the general law of crystallisation. In this exception Edison is reported as seeing the hand of Providence. "If ice sank," he is made to say, "to the bottom of rivers, lakes, and oceans as fast as it froze, those places would be frozen up, and there would be no water left. This is only one example out of thousands that to me prove beyond the possibility of a doubt that some vast Intelligence is governing this and other planets."

Now there are no writers more ignorant than religious journalists. Here they are parading this argument as though it were one of Edison's inventions. But it is an old argument, and it proves just nothing. Anyone who exercises his common sense will see that the condition of things in this world must, on the whole, be favorable to man's existence, or man would not be here at all. This does not prove, however, that the conditions were arranged for man's benefit. On this point, indeed, Edison is no greater authority than the first man you meet in the street.

This also must be said, that Edison's argument, even if it had any force, only applies to a portion of this planet. The sea does not freeze over until we reach a very northern or southern latitude; and the freezing of water at all, except high up on mountains, is a phenomenon which is unknown over a very considerable part of the earth's surface. Of course, there is much more to be said from a purely scientific point of view, but the discussion would be too technical for our columns. But we have said enough to show the inconclusiveness, and even the feebleness, of this Edisonian aid to Theism.

The Church Missionary Society prints and circulates a "Tiny Letter for Tiny People," by Emily Symons. It is an epistle to little children about their money-boxes, which they are implored to turn into Missionary-boxes, because "the servants of Jesus want ever so much money for their work." Yes, they do; they always did, and always will. But they needn't stoop so low in the cadging line as to fleece "kids." A child had better spend a penny on a bit of good chocolate than give it to a nice, fat man of God to enable him to live while he is converting "heathen" to a religion they don't understand, and acting as a meddling advance-agent for traders and filibusters.

On a little child's tombstone in South Australia the text was cut, "Suffer little children to come unto me." This was followed by the name of the undertaker.

The Rev. S. J. S. Le Maistre, rector of Everingham, has been acquitted at Market Weighton Petty Sessions on the charge of cruelty to a number of lads placed under his care by the Waifs and Strays' Society. The bench thought there had

been "a little severity," but "not more than was necessary." Well, we should hardly have thought it necessary for this man of God to sit on a boy's head while he was being birched—which was admitted in cross-examination. Mrs. Masson, who had been housekeeper at the "Home" and left in disgust, testified that she had seen marks on the boys' backs, from which the blood trickled; and the groom had pushed the boys' faces into horse-dung. Moreover, she had complained to the rector about the insufficiency of food, and had bought food for the boys and herself out of her wages. Dr. Leadman testified that all the boys he had examined had bruises, most of them of recent date; in his opinion immoderate violence had been used, and there must have been considerable pain and suffering. Corroborative evidence was given by Dr. Reynolds, but Dr. Ramsey stated for the defence that the scars might have been caused by other means than flogging. On the whole, it seems that Parson Le Maistre has had rather a narrow escape.

"The Relation of Co-operation to Christianity" seems very remote. However, it was discussed the other day at Huddersfield, and a Mr. Pinder pointed out that Co-operation was in accord with the teachings of Jesus Christ. No doubt we shall hear in due course that the Twelve Apostles opened the first Co-operative store, with Mr. Judas as cashier.

Bishop Moorhouse, of Manchester, has been telling a congregation in his Cathedral that Buddhism is not a religion, because it does not worship God and has no sense of sin. He says it is "merely an ethical philosophy." Well, it is none the worse for that; and perhaps, on the whole, it is better. Buddha taught as good morality as Christ, and did not clog it with superstitions about heaven and hell, and salvation by faith, and similar impossibilities or absurdities. But it is precisely these superstitions that Bishop Moorhouse regards as religion, and holds up to the supreme reverence of his countrymen.

The Dean of Ripon, preaching in Westminster Abbey, admired the calm attitude of the British public over the South African trouble, and called it a Christian confidence that God was working out his own purposes. Indeed! Then God is working them out with artillery and rifles, with lances and bayonets, with what the Prayer Book calls "battle, murder, and sudden death." Surely this is the rankest blasphemy. It is high time that God, if there be a God, should vindicate his character against the slanders of his own priests.

President Kruger is just as certain as the Dean of Ripon that God is working out his own purposes in South Africa. But perhaps if these two gentlemen were to meet under the rose they would laugh at each other. The joke is so splitting.

"A correspondent," the *Daily News* says, "has lived to see a small boy making cigarettes in St. Paul's, while he pretended to be engaged in devotion. His hat was his workshop, and contained the materials; and, when the cigarette was ready for licking, he bent forward as though in an access of fervor. Having finished his supply for the occasion, the poor lost soul went out and lit up." Sad, no doubt; but burning a cigarette—even one made in St. Paul's—is not so sad as burning a heretic; a sport in which the clergy themselves used to indulge not far off at Smithfield.

The Dutch in the Venterstad district, who have joined the Orange Free State commando, are full of enthusiasm, and have taken God as their guide. He will probably lead them into a devil of a mess.

Mrs. Ormiston Chant has had another shock. Speaking the other day at a Redhill temperance meeting, she said that she had recently attended a bazaar connected with a place of worship, where bottles of spirit were raffled for, and drinks were sold by young ladies who appeared to enjoy playing at barmaids. Mrs. Chant said it was "shocking," and perhaps it was. But it was not exactly surprising. Bible Christians are not obliged to be teetotalers; on the contrary, they can drink deep, and quote Scripture to justify the practice. Nor is it wonderful that tight-reined young ladies should enjoy kicking over the traces under the sanction of the Church.

How to Help Us.

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

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, December 17, Athenæum Hall, London, W.: 7.30.
"The Baby God of Bethlehem."

To Correspondents.

- MR. C. WATTS'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—December 17, Manchester. January 14, Leicester. February 4, Sheffield; 25, Glasgow.—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.
- MAJOR G. O. WARREN takes five Shares in the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, and writes: "I think that this Company will be of great service in promoting the only true gospel—that of Freedom in thinking."
- G. J. WARREN, 20 Rhodeswell-road, E., thanks Annie Embleton for the parcel of clothing for "distribution amongst our poorer folk."
- C. W. PALMER.—Pleased to hear from you, and glad to hear that your conversion to Freethought is due to your having listened impartially to the National Secular Society's lecturers and the Christian Evidence Society's lecturers in Victoria Park. Thanks for the printed enclosures. See "Acid Drops." With regard to the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, no doubt there are many, like yourself, who wish they could take Shares, but have not the wherewithal. In such cases we cheerfully take the will for the deed.
- M. H. TRUELOVE.—Advertisement inserted as desired, and you are very welcome to it; but we cannot guarantee a special position.
- W. COX.—See paragraphs. Mr. Foote is forwarding you subjects.
- JAMES BOWMAN.—Under consideration.
- W. FRENCH.—George Eliot was a Positivist. She had no shred of theological belief. All the morality of her novels is naturalistic. She was also the translator of Strauss's *Life of Jesus* and Feuerbach's *Essence of Christianity*, the former written by a Freethinker and the latter by a pronounced Atheist.
- D. M.—The George III. Act you refer to has not been repealed by parliament, but it is practically repealed by Mr. Justice Collins's judgment, wherein it is laid down that the Act is not contravened if there are some free seats, no matter how many more are paid for. This old Act was not really aimed at Sunday concerts, which were not then contemplated; but, as the preamble shows, against Sunday meetings of working men for the purpose of discussing religion. Bishop Porteus was the author of the Act.
- T. ROBERTSON.—Mr. Foote is writing you with regard to a date for lectures. We are delighted to hear of your success and fine prospects at Glasgow. Much is due, we are sure, to your own devotion and constant efforts. Pleased to hear that you admired our articles on the Transvaal question. Some persons have criticised them hostilely, but not one of them had read them carefully. They were simply on the look out for stray sentences to "answer," without any regard to the context. On the whole, seeing how rampant passion was at the time, we determined to have no more on the subject from anybody. This is fair all round. By-and-bye, perhaps, we may have something to say, and allow discussion too, on the settlement that should be made in South Africa.
- W. SIMONS.—Received and inserted.
- J. A. CLARKE.—Apply direct to Mr. Forder, 28 Stonecutter-street, E.C., for a catalogue of Freethought works. We cannot attend to such matters personally. Zola's *Fécondité* is not yet (we believe) published in English. The French edition is published at 3½ francs.
- PAPERS RECEIVED.—Southwark Recorder—Liberator—Huddersfield Examiner—Sydney Bulletin—Truthseeker (New York)—People's Newspaper—Secular Thought—Freidenker—Ethical World—Progressive Thinker—Crescent—Leeds Daily News—Isle of Man Times—Public Opinion—Hawick Express—Home Links—Postal Record—El Libre Pensamiento—Two Worlds—Der Vrije Gedachte—Edinburgh Evening News.
- LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 28 Stonecutter-street, London, E.C.
- 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.
- LECTURE NOTICES must reach 28 Stonecutter-street by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.
- SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS:—Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*:—One inch, 4s. 6d.; half column, £1 2s. 6d.; column, £2 5s. Special terms for repetitions.

Sugar Plums.

THERE was a good audience at the Athenæum Hall on Sunday evening, when Mr. Foote lectured on "The Mother of God." Mr. Thurlow occupied the chair, and one gentleman offered some rather irrelevant opposition. This evening (Dec. 17) Mr. Foote continues his treatment of the first Christmas story in the Gospels by lecturing on "The Baby God of Bethlehem."

London Freethinkers, and perhaps some country Freethinkers too, will note that the Annual Dinner is fixed for Monday, January 8, at the Holborn Restaurant. The tickets are four shillings each, as usual. Mr. Foote will preside, and will be supported by leading members of the National Secular Society. Visitors may expect a good dinner, good company, good music, and good speeches. We may add that tickets can be obtained from Miss Vance, 377 Strand, W.C.; from Mr. Forder, 28 Stonecutter-street, E.C.; or from any London Branch secretary.

The attention of Freethinkers is once more directed to the Freethought Publishing Company's advertisement on our back page. We are approaching the festive Christmas time, during which, or rather before it, Freethinkers ought to ask themselves what gift they can afford to make to the good old cause. They cannot do better than take up some Shares in this fine enterprise, which has already obtained a large measure of support, and which will do wonders for the Freethought movement if it is only supported a little more.

Mr. Charles Watts had three good meetings last Sunday in Manchester. Friends were present from the surrounding districts. Two gentlemen came from Leeds, and the audiences were very enthusiastic, particularly in the evening, when Mr. Watts lectured on "Colonel Ingersoll as I Knew Him." Several questions were asked after each lecture. Mr. Watts is lecturing during the week at Bolton and Stockton, and to-day, Sunday, December 17, he again lectures three times in Manchester.

We are always glad to be of assistance to our contemporaries. Last week's *Reynolds' Newspaper* placed at the top of its "Democratic Show" column four very telling extracts from Karl Pearson, Nietzsche, Shakespeare, and Petronius. They were taken, of course, from the eighth page of the *Secular Almanack*, where they may be found in precisely the same order.

The Malthusian League held its annual public meeting at South-place Institute on Wednesday evening, December 6. There was a fair attendance. Dr. Drysdale, the President of the League, occupied the chair; but, as age is telling upon him, his address was read by Dr. Alice Vickery. Speeches were delivered by Messrs. G. W. Foote, A. B. Moss, H. Hember, C. H. Seyler, A. P. Busch, G. Standing, and Mrs. Bonner. The proceedings closed with a vote of thanks to the chairman, who responded in an impressive little speech. Dr. Drysdale said that he was old, and belonged to the past. "It is for you," he added, "to carry on the work of progress, and to see that the world is made better worth living in."

We understand that the Malthusian League came into a legacy of £800 on the death of Mr. Bonsor. Perhaps this will enable the League to adopt a bolder and more popular propaganda.

Mr. Foote's letter to the American Secular Congress at Boston is printed in the New York *Truthseeker*, from which we reproduce it: "LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—I have been asked to send you a word of greeting and encouragement across the Atlantic, and I write you this poor letter, which is all I have time for in my present overwhelming stress of a business. You meet in a hall dedicated to the memory of a great Englishman who found the first field for the exercise of his powers in America. Thomas Paine is a connecting link between the Freethought parties of two progressive nations. His name stands for mental freedom and moral courage. And it is to your credit that you have done him more honor than he has received from the land of his birth. It is in America that one must seek his visible memorials, and it is an American who has written his life and edited a standard edition of his writings. In this respect the old country takes a very back seat. But it must be remembered that Paine helped to establish your glorious Republic, while he has been hated in England by the clergy and the privileged classes not merely for attacking Christianity, but also, and perhaps more, for assailing political injustice, spoliation, and oppression. You meet also under the shadow of a great loss. The death of Colonel Ingersoll was a great calamity. Such men do not often appear on this planet, and their disappearance

is one of those fatalities which emphasize our helplessness before the unswerving forces of nature. You admired him, you loved him; to most of you his death was a personal bereavement. But we also admired and loved him, and the Freethinkers of this country share your sorrow. They clasp hands with you in saluting the memory of your noble dead. He was a hero without cruelty, a saint without Pharisaism, a giant without disdain, a king of men who looked with contempt on sceptres and crowns, a pharos in the world's welter of selfishness and mediocrity. Yes, your loss is great—incalculable. But you must not, you will not, throw up your hands in despair. Stretch out your hands to the Free-thought standard. Uphold it. Keep the flag flying bravely. Carry on the old war against superstition and priestcraft. Fight the Black Army banded together against liberty and progress. Your work is before you—to dispel the darkness and shed abroad the light, to break the fetters of mental slavery, to check the impudence of clerical usurpation, to substitute humanity for theology, to wean the women from the folds of faith, to save the children from the curse of religion, and to effect a lasting alliance between morality and reason. On, then, American brothers and sisters, with your splendid task! And we will give you all we have to give—our loving sympathy and our earnest hopes for your success. Yours most sincerely, G. W. FOOTE."

As sovereigns go, the Emperor of Austria is one of the best. On Monday he received Dr. Alexander Kirsch, the Rabbi of the Jewish community at Prague. Dr. Kirsch said that at present his race had hard times to go through, and the Emperor replied: "Yes, your brothers in the Jewish faith in Bohemia have had hard times to go through, and I will say that I am indignant at so much brutality." The Rabbi asked if he might repeat these words of sympathy. "Yes," the Emperor answered, "I specially request you to do so."

The Glasgow Branch is going well and strong. This season's audiences at special lectures have been capital, and the income from ordinary sources is better than it was this time last year; in addition to which the Branch has just received a handsome Christmas Box in the shape of a donation of £100 from an anonymous friend. It is hardly necessary to say that the Branch will push forward its propagandist work in Glasgow and the surrounding district with more vigor than ever—and that will mean with more success than ever.

Mr. Baxter, who looks after the sale of Freethought literature in Glasgow, is gradually increasing his business. Amongst other things, he has sold 200 copies of the *Age of Reason* during the last fourteen months. He received a visit recently from Mr. David Strauss, a nephew of the great Strauss, the famous German Freethinker. This gentleman, who bought some books of Mr. Baxter, said that he had been directed there by a lady whom he had observed reading the *Age of Reason* at St. Enoch's Hotel.

Mr. Joseph McCabe visits Liverpool to-day (Dec. 17) and delivers lectures for the local N.S.S. Branch. Particulars will be found amongst Lecture Notices in another column. No doubt the Liverpool Freethinkers will give Mr. McCabe a very hearty reception.

Mr. Hammond, of the Liverpool Branch, will read a paper on "A Sceptic's View of Spiritualism" before the Eclectic Society in the Masonic Hall, Merton-road, Bootle, on Friday evening (Dec. 15), at 8 o'clock. Some of the local "saints" will probably like to hear him.

Mr. John Maddy lectures at the Camberwell Secular Hall this evening (Dec. 17) on "Bradlaugh's Great Struggles." The secretary describes him as one of Bradlaugh's lieutenants at Northampton. The Camberwell Secular Hall will be closed next Sunday (Christmas Eve), but will reopen with a social party, including dancing, on New Year's Eve.

Colonel Ingersoll's complete works will be published in complete form some time in January. There will be twelve volumes in all, including more than a thousand pages of hitherto unpublished speeches, lectures, and interviews. The contents will be political and legal as well as religious.

Secular Thought (Toronto) reproduces "Kruger's Dream," by Mr. Foote, and calls special attention to it in an editorial note, adding a too flattering tribute to the writer. "No one who knows Mr. Foote," our Canadian contemporary says, "can fail to recognise in him a man of wide culture and a judicial mind, a bright and clever writer, and a keen critic. In our view, he is the ablest of what may be termed the practical advocates of Freethought and Secularism in England."

Freethought in Cromwell's Time.

(BY THE LATE J. M. WHEELER.)

(Concluded from page 795.)

JOHN BIDDLE, the father of English Unitarianism, whom Carlyle characterises as "a poor Gloucester school-master once, now a very conspicuous Heresiarch, apparently of mild but entirely obstinate manners," had been imprisoned at Gloucester, but, even while petitioning Parliament to consider his case, published a pamphlet denying the personality of the Holy Spirit, which was ordered by the House of Commons to be called in and publicly burnt. After a long imprisonment he was released by the Act of Oblivion 1652, but two years afterwards published a *Two-fold Catechism*, in which he denied the doctrines of the Trinity, the Atonement, and Eternal Punishment. It was ordered to be burned, and Biddle was again committed to prison for six months. A Bill was ordered to be brought into the House of Commons for punishing Biddle, January 16, 1654, but Cromwell dissolved the Parliament, reproaching it for its persecuting spirit. Biddle, released, enters into a public disputation with the Rev. John Giffen, which brings him into fresh trouble. He is apprehended by warrant from the Lord Mayor, and committed to Newgate, on a charge of blasphemy, preferred against him by his reverend antagonist, who, we suspect, came off second best in the disputation. Cromwell settles the case by sending Biddle to the Scilly Islands, assigning him an annual subsidy of a hundred crowns. He returned to London before the Protector's death, only to get in further trouble after the Restoration, when he was apprehended for conducting divine worship in his own lodgings in the presence of a few friends, fined £100, and his friends £20 each, and condemned to lie in prison till the fine was paid. There, for want of air and exercise, poor John Biddle contracted a disease of which he died in 1662, in the forty-seventh year of his age.

The fate of Paul Best was possibly similar. In 1645 he was charged with heresy for having certain manuscripts in his possession which denied the Trinity, speaking of it as the mystery of iniquity, a three-headed Cerberus, and so forth. For this he was committed to the Gatehouse, Westminster, and the House of Commons was asked to bring in an ordinance punishing him with death. Presbyterian Baillie, who was at this time taking part in the Westminster Assembly, tells us: "My Lord Fairfax sent up the last week a horrible Antitriastian; the whole Assemblée went in a body to the House to complain of his blasphemies. It was the will of Cromwell, in the letter of his vicar, to desyre the House not to discourage these who had ventured their life for them, and to come out expressly with their much-desyred libertie of conscience." Thanks to this intimation from our "chief of men," Parliament appointed certain divines to confer with Best. Indeed, he put forward a pamphlet indicating hopes of his conversion, "if he be not untimely starved to death before-hand." In 1647 he put forward another pamphlet in explanation of his view, entitled *Mysteries Discovered*, dated from the Gatehouse, where he had been a close prisoner since February 14, 1645. This pamphlet was ordered to be burnt and the printer to be punished. What became of Best is unknown. The ordinance against Best was so slow in passing that the Assembly of Divines, in their proceedings against Biddle, found it necessary to "solicite the Parliament, and procure a Draconick Ordinance" for inflicting the punishment of death upon all who denied the fundamentals of Christianity. In February, 1647, the House ordered a general fast to beseech God to stop the growth of heresy and blasphemy. This Hallam calls "a Presbyterian artifice to alarm the nation." On May 2, 1648, the draconic ordinance was passed after some opposition, especially by Whitelock, who represented Cromwell's views. This ordinance declared the denial of God, or the Trinity, or the deity of Christ, or the Holy Ghost, or that Christ's manhood was not unspotted of sin, or of the atonement, or the canonical books of scripture, or the resurrection of the dead and final judgment, capital crimes, for which the perpetrator "shall suffer the paines of death, as in case of Felony, without benefit of clergie"; while for

minor offences, such as belief in purgatory, universal salvation, "or that man is bound to believe no more than by his reason he can comprehend," etc., he shall be committed to prison until he shall find two sufficient sureties that he shall not maintain his errors any more. A sufficient indication of the toleration to be expected from Presbyterianism.

A Parliamentary supporter of Biddle and Best was Colonel John Fry, a Dorsetshire gentleman, who sat in Parliament at the time of the trial of Charles I. He was accused of blasphemy by one Colonel Downs, and published the *Accuser Sham'd*: or a pair of Bellows to blow off that dust cast upon John Fry, a Member of Parliament, by Colonel John Downs, likewise a Member of Parliament, who, by the Confederacy and Instigation of some, charged the said John Fry of Blasphemy and Error to the Honorable House of Commons. Whereunto is annexed a word to the Priests, Lawyers, Royalists, Self-seekers, and Rigid Presbyterians. Also a brief Ventilation of the chaffie and absurd opinion of Three Persons or Subsistences as the Godhead, by the accused John Fry, 16 Feb., 1648 [*i.e.*, 1649]. [This he followed by another pamphlet on *The Clergy in their Colors*, in which he attacked their hypocrisy, and declared himself a Rationalist. "If Mr. Parson," he says, "be put hard to it, he will tell you 'tis a thing above reason, and yet you must believe what the received opinion of it is. I must confess I have heard much of believing things above reason, and the time was when I swallowed this pill; but I may say as St. Paul, 'When I was a child I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man I put away childish things.'" Parliament took cognizance of both these works, and, finding that certain passages in them were "erroneous, profane, and highly scandalous," his book was ordered to be burnt, and he was declared disabled to sit in Parliament.

Among other Antitrinitarian heretics of this period were John Webberley, an Oxford man, also imprisoned; Thomas Webb, minister of Langley, Burhill; Wilts, who preached blasphemy in the west; the Rev. William Erberry, a Socinian and believer in Universal Redemption, who had a public dispute with Cheynell, and who was accused of blasphemy, March, 1653, but recanted; and John Knowles, controverted by Eaton of Dunkinfield.

Erberry, like many others of the time, was inclined to mysticism. Jacob Boehme was not without followers among the Seekers, that interesting sect who kept on the look out for a decent religion. Familists, Seekers, and Behmenists seem to have been absorbed by the new sect of Quakers, who, when their movement was a living one, were very much less orthodox than at present. Their denunciation of hireling ministers, their rejection of all sacraments, and their making the Bible subordinate to the inner light of the spirit by which the heathen might be saved, gathered in the Quaker camp much of the Freethought element, and rendered them still more obnoxious to the orthodox than their love of peace and refusal of oaths.

The Rev. Laurence Claxton, first of the Church of England, then a Seeker, and finally a Muggletonian, may also be mentioned as a denier of the personality of the Devil. His first publication was entitled *Look about you for the Devil that you fear he is in you*. This was followed by *The Right Devil Discovered in his Descent, Form, Education, Quality, Place, and Nature of Torment* (1659). His doctrine—that the Devil was human reason—may be considered the antithesis of Freethought. We notice it on account of its familiarity of expression. "The only Devil," says he, "that ever was, is, or shall be, is for the most part as comely a creature as walks in London streets; and hath as neat a foot and a hand as any lady in the land."

It is one of the many merits of Oliver Cromwell that his intense religious fervor did not override his practical sagacity nor overthrow his toleration. He embarked on the stormy sea of politics in the cause of religious liberty. Nor did he desert the good old cause. "Sir, the State, in choosing men to serve it, takes no notice of their opinions; if they be willing, faithful to serve it, that satisfies," he wrote in 1644. "Assist not with the sword or money of the Commonwealth any sect or person in particular, that you may not hinder the truth from manifesting itself by its own power," wrote his

private chaplain in a pseudonymous address to the Protector and Parliament in 1659, which was, as Ranke observes, "not so much addressed to Cromwell as addressed by a friend of Cromwell's to the public." The country was not prepared for a complete separation of religion and state. To see that the nation enjoyed the greatest liberty compatible with order was Cromwell's aim. And he was largely successful. While he ruled there was more religious freedom than at any period previous to the Revolution. He evinced his toleration by his patronage of the learned Episcopalian, Usher and Pockocke, no less than by his protection of the Unitarians and his friendship for Fox when once assured the Quakers meditated no designs against the Commonwealth. Brian Walton's Polyglot Bible, which laid the foundations of Biblical criticism, was issued under his patronage, and the paper for that great work was imported duty free by his command. The publication was fiercely attacked by the leading Independent, John Owen, Vice-Chancellor of Oxford, as calculated to shatter belief in the inspiration of the scriptures.

We have seen how the Presbyterians acted in the matter of toleration. The so-called Independents were but little better. When Parliament declared that all shall be tolerated who profess the "fundamentals" of Christianity, the divines defined the "fundamentals" so as to exclude Papists and Unitarians. To satisfy Cromwell, the House of Commons had resolved that to Bills touching liberty of conscience the Protector should have a negative, but not to Bills for the suppression of heresies. When, however, after spending much time over the "blasphemy" of poor James Nayler—the Quaker who had ridden into Bristol and been saluted as the Son of David and the Prince of Peace, whom they barbarously ordered to be put in the pillory, to be whipped from Westminster to the Exchange, there reset in the pillory and have his tongue bored through with a red-hot iron, and to be branded on the forehead to the skull with the letter B—Cromwell peremptorily demanded "that the House will let Us know the grounds and reasons whereupon they have proceeded." With the death of Cromwell the flag of the good old cause fell to the ground. Puritanism had never gained the mass of the people. Presbyterians, disappointed in their hopes of supremacy, welcomed the Restoration—to be rewarded with the Act of Uniformity, the Conventicle Act, the Five Mile Act, the Test Act, and by his Protestant Majesty Charles II. sending for priest Hudleston on his death-bed to reconcile himself to Rome.

Christianity Reconsidered.

(Concluded from page 790.)

HAVING shown briefly that the book which is looked upon as the foundation of the Christian system—the book upon which its authority is presumed to rest—having shown that this book, or collection of books, cannot be regarded as infallible or inspired, we proceed to the examination of those special doctrines which are the backbone, so to speak, of Christianity, and which differentiate it from other systems of religion; and I shall endeavor to show that, for men who do their own thinking, it is impossible to accept those doctrines, on account of their inherent unreasonableness. They are so opposed to reason and common sense, and even to true conceptions of morality and justice, that it is indeed surprising that sane men and women have for so long continued to put their faith in them and regard them as an ultimate divine revelation of sublime and absolute truth. Belief in a god of some kind may be taken as the first important item in the creed of a believer, and for this reason it may be well taken first in our examination of the dogmas of Christianity.

We are told that the universe was created by God, who is a personality, a thinking, conscious Being, yet who has not parts or passions like unto us mortals; that he is infinite, all-powerful, ever-present, all-knowing; that he is a loving father who cares for us, his children, on earth. The idea of a god or gods has been handed down to us from the generations of the past, and it speaks to us of the ignorance of our forefathers. The savage or primitive man had his gods for every element, for almost every law of nature, and every phenomenon around him. The "gods" have gradually been reduced in number with the advance of science and of knowledge. When man learnt to understand the laws of nature, he ceased to call them gods. And so the number has been reduced until we find in the Christianity of to-day only one God, or, at most, three. The doctrine of the Trinity is an

unthinkable muddle, and the creed which endeavors to put this doctrine into form is not only also an unthinkable muddle, but is, in addition, a reflection of the cruel savagery of the Dark Ages. But, putting this metaphysical puzzle on one side with just this passing remark, let us consider the God of the Unitarian or the Theist. This is also an unthinkable and unimaginable hypothesis. God is a "person," we are told. Can we think of a person or personality apart from the ordinary limitation of personality? God is almighty and infinite, we are also told. But can we conceive of an infinite person? And, when we look about for a definition of the idea of God for proof of his existence, what do we find? Clever metaphysical dissertations such as Armstrong's *God and the Soul*, or semi-scientific works such as Keeling's *Quæro*—books which are very interesting reading, very cleverly written in certain respects, but which, after all, do not take one much "forrader," as it were. As a matter of fact, the question of the existence of a supreme being is one which is absolutely beyond the human mind to grapple with. We are absolutely in the dark, as we always were on this question, and all the creeds and expressions of belief are but the expressions of man's ignorance now, as they were in the ages past. But, of course, we are progressing, improving, evolving, and developing. The gods of the ancients have been cast down in the onward march of knowledge and liberty, and we in England, at least, have only one God (or at most three) thrust upon us to-day.

The "Fall" is a very important doctrine in the Christian system of religion, for on it depend the doctrines of the Incarnation and of Salvation. We are told that man was made in original innocence and purity, without spot or blemish, "in the image of God"; that, owing to the sin of our "first parents," the whole human race has inherited the taint of sin, which can only be purged by the belief in Jesus Christ as a savior. This is the idea which we gather from the Bible, and it is included in the creeds of the Churches. And though some "advanced" Christians endeavor to explain it away and square it with modern ideas, their efforts to do away with the fact that it is a doctrine of Christianity, as it is stated above, were of no avail. But what does science, what does true knowledge, teach us? Does it not point to man as a being evolved from lower forms of life? Does it not show us that he has gradually, slowly, step by step, advanced from a state of animalism and primitive savagery to the state in which we find him at his best to-day, with faculties for still further development? This is the revelation of modern science, the latest utterance from the book of nature. What are we to say, then? Shall we accept the latest revelation of recent science, or shall we reject it in favor of a creed and of unverifiable statements found in an ancient document written by no one knows who? And, furthermore, the morality implied in the "Fall" story is such as must condemn it at once in the eyes of all who really think the question out for themselves. It is grossly unjust, frightfully immoral, to suppose that, because of the "sin" of our "first parents," untold millions of men and women should be condemned to everlasting damnation for no sins of their own. Surely, to a rational, thinking mind, the mere statement of such a theory is a sufficient condemnation.

Closely allied to the doctrine of the Fall is the theory of the "incarnation," and the implied or definitely stated doctrine of the Deity or divinity of Jesus; for, "as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive"—as the old book puts it in one passage. We are told that Jesus was more than man—that he was divine; in fact, that he was no less than God, the creator and sustainer of all things, incarnate in the form of a man; and this truly unthinkable doctrine is put in the most absurd and unthinkable form it is possible to imagine in the Athanasian Creed—a piece of work which makes one pause in amazement and wonder when one realises the fact that there are men even to-day who say they believe this admixture of absurdity and self-contradiction to be divine truth. There is not the slightest proof whatever to be found in the Four "Gospels" that Jesus himself claimed to be God, or to be the equal of God, and as the believers are professedly those who are supposed to base their beliefs on the Bible, the absurdity becomes more glaring still; while, on the other hand, there is everything in the words and life of Jesus, as far as we are able to gather from the meagre and self-contradictory records, to prove how impossible is this doctrine when the said records are read with the open eyes of common sense. If Jesus was God, to whom did he pray, and to whom did he say: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" If he was God, of whom did he say: "My father is greater than I"? These are questions which have often been put to Christians, but I have never seen or heard them answered by any believer in a straightforward, lucid manner. Again, there is no internal evidence in the story of the life of Jesus which would lead one to suppose that he was other than an ordinary human being. True, his "miracles" are recorded of him, as, indeed, they are also recorded of other religious teachers of the past; but, apart from these excrescences, apart from these wonders which have undoubtedly been put into the story, and which cannot at all be reckoned as evidence of anything but the credulity and superstition of the time—apart from these fairy tales,

what is there which would lead one to suppose that Jesus was different from other reformers as far as his nature was concerned? He walks and talks, sleeps, eats, and drinks, laughs, weeps, is happy, is depressed, is well, is indisposed, is pleased, is angry; in fact, he performs all the functions natural to ordinary men. The idea of an incarnation of a god in some form or other is found in most religious systems, and there is as much foundation for one as another—and as little.

The doctrine of "salvation" is, of course, closely allied to the doctrines of the "fall" and the "incarnation" theory. Man having fallen, and Jesus having been incarnated in order that men might be saved, the doctrine of salvation tells us that those who believe in the incarnation of Jesus, etc., may be saved. This doctrine of salvation has been styled by many as immoral; and, indeed, that term is by no means too harsh a one to use towards such an idea, for it prostitutes our noblest conception of justice and moral order in a most flagrant manner. The logic of the doctrine has been pointed out by advanced thinkers again and again. Take two men; one is an Atheist, say. He lives a pure, noble life, doing his best to uplift his fellow men, to propagate such principles as will tend to the higher evolution of the race. Take another man. He shall be a Christian. He goes to his place of worship regularly, attends prayer meetings and all that sort of thing, is very anxious about the salvation of his own soul, and he becomes "saved." Or, should he become a criminal, a murderer, a thief, it doesn't matter in the long run. If he but "repents" on his death-bed and believes, he is saved from the consequences of his evil doing, and goes to heaven, while the Atheist aforementioned goes to the other place. Does not such a doctrine as this contradict all the highest conceptions of life, of existence, and of morality within us?

Finally, touching the doctrine of a future life and the immortality of the human soul, almost all, if not quite all, the arguments in favor of man's immortality could, with equal logic and reason, be applied to the other animals; and, if we teach the immortality of human souls, we should, by a parity of reasoning, also include the immortality of the souls of our cats and dogs. But will our Christian friends go to the full extent of the logic of their theory? The question of immortality is akin to the question of the existence of a God, in that it is beyond the human intellect and is incapable of proof. In this case (and it is admitted even by some who still love to cling to the worst stories of the old faith) is it not the wisest plan to devote one's energies to the cleansing and purifying of men's lives in the life which we know of, instead of wasting time in speculations and futile preparation for a life that we know nothing whatever about? A great deal is sometimes made of the persistence of the personality in the individual man. But it is quite logical to think that as at death the physical personality, composed as it is of particles of matter, becomes disintegrated and is lost, so the "soul" or mental personality, being composed of mental forces, at death these mental forces become also disintegrated and go back into the great sea of forces from which they were for a time differentiated.

Possibly some of our Christian friends who may happen to read this article will say, Oh! but you have been attacking *orthodoxy*, and not what I conceive to be Christianity at all. To which I would reply that I have dealt with those doctrines which distinguish the Christian system of religion from others, and should any reader find he agrees with anything that has been said against that system he is to that extent *un-Christian*, and we would say to him, Why do you not be honest and come out and join the ranks of those who think for themselves?

HAROLD ELLIOT.

The Christian Alphabet.

A was an Author, a spirit or spook;
 B is the Bible, the name of his book.
 C was the Curse of this curious ghost;
 D is the Devil who'll "have you on toast."
 E stands for Eve who was made from a rib;
 F stands for Faith and for Fable and Fib.
 G was the Gore that was tapped from a ghost;
 H stands for Hell where the *righteous* will roast.
 I was the Ignorance Jesus displayed;
 J was the Joiner befooled by a jade.
 K stands for Killing the Author of Life;
 L is the "Love" that has cursed us with strife.
 M stands for Mary, God's mistress and ma;
 N was the Noodle, His putative pa.
 O is Old Nick to whom clergymen cling;
 P is the "Peace" which the Lord *didn't* bring.
 Q are the Quarrels of saints since the Flood;
 R are the Rivers of Biblical blood.
 S is the "Sword" which the "Savior" has brought;
 T are the Things that pray'rs *don't* do, but *ought*.
 U were the Uterine kin of "I AM";
 V was the Virgin, His concubine-dam.
 W stands for the Wane of the creeds;
 X stands for Christ whom the Church never heeds.
 Y is the Yawning, though sermons are brief;
 Z stands for Zero, and *there* stands "Belief."
 G. L. MACKENZIE.

Freedom of Faith.

"HERE is another account of American missionaries mobbed and killed in your country," said a fellow guest to Mr. Wong at the Hotel Manhattan yesterday.

"Indeed, I am sorry to hear that," replied Mr. Wong, a Chinaman of noble family, educated at Cornell and Heidelberg, who pays New York a visit once in three years for reasons which he never talks about. "But then, religious intolerance is not confined to the Chinese. I will not speak of the occasional mobbings of Mormon missionaries in your country, but will only remind you that Christianity is as repugnant to some of our people as Mormonism is to most of yours."

"I will say, however, that religious equality has been the policy in China for many centuries, while it is only a growth of the past few generations in America. Indeed, I declare that religious equality is not absolute here now."

"You are joking," remonstrated an American friend.

"When the Jesuits first preached in China," replied Mr. Wong, "they were welcomed by the Emperor himself. St. Francis Xavier was one of them, if I mistake not. At all events, a year before the granting of the liberal charter of Rhode Island, the Emperor of China had proclaimed the complete enfranchisement of Christianity. Let me tell you what religious laws were in force in the colonies of America at that time."

"But," expostulated the American, "freedom of worship is the very inspiration of the foundation of the American colonies."

"So you have been taught," said Mr. Wong. "Your school histories, unintentionally perhaps, deceive you. Many Americans read no other history in after years. I will begin with New York, settled by the Dutch, who had a better idea of what religious equality meant than any other people. Yet New York passed a law of perpetual imprisonment for all 'Popish priests' remaining in the colony after a given date, and prescribed death for any who might escape and be recaptured."

EVEN IN PENN'S STATE.

"New Jersey excepted 'Baptists' from its liberty of conscience law. Pennsylvania—"

"Hold on! William Penn, the Quaker, never allowed persecution for religion," interrupted the American.

"No, but that colony made only persons who 'possessed faith in Jesus Christ' eligible to office, and its laws did not protect from persecution any but persons who believed in only 'one Almighty God.' That would have made myself and the late Robert G. Ingersoll legal outcasts and Citlanders in William Penn's day."

"In the colony of New Haven the Scriptures were the code of laws, and were administered strictly against every one who disagreed with the interpretation placed upon them by the ruling cult, the Brownists or Separatists of England, whom we of later days are prone to confound with the Puritans. The Puritans, strictly speaking, had nothing to do with the settlement of your colonies. Connecticut banished or imprisoned Quakers and 'other notorious heretics,' and required all persons to attend the meetings of the Established Church."

"The 'Pilgrim Fathers'—more Brownists, mind, and not Puritans, as their descendants like to miscall them—made heresy a statutory crime. It has been said that they 'left England in order to worship God as they pleased, and decreed that all others must worship God as they (the Pilgrims) pleased.' They fixed a death penalty for 'any one who, having had the knowledge of the true Lord, worshipped any other than the Lord God.' They even forbade any public meetings, whether religious or not, without the approval of the General Court. That is getting away from Anglo-Saxon liberty for you! Their Government passed upon the orthodoxy of preachers, and their religion was essentially a State establishment."

DEATH FOR QUAKERS.

"They punished Quakers with whippings, mutilations, and death, and punished any who might harbor Quakers. Arthur Howland, a brother of John Howland, one of the Mayflower pilgrims, lost his ears because he 'harbored' certain Quakers, and his descendants have been Quakers even to the present generation."

"New Hampshire decreed liberty of conscience to Protestants only. Massachusetts punished heretics with banishment or death, and enforced attendance upon established public worship. Even Rhode Island, after Roger Williams's liberal charter, excluded 'Papists' from civic equality."

"Maryland, founded by the Roman Catholic, Lord Baltimore, made Christianity the law of the land, without preference to members of any sect; but it later made death the penalty for all who might 'blaspheme God or use any reproachful speeches concerning the Holy Trinity,' which would be bad for the Rev. Minot J. Savage and other modern Unitarians. In fact, Unitarians were not eligible to office in Maryland until 1825."

"Virginia, as a colony, established the Church of England by statute. 'Indifference to religion' was triable by courts-martial—not ecclesiastical—and the penalty was the lash."

Infidelity was punished with death. In 1658 Virginia banished all Quakers.

"Georgia granted religious liberty to all but 'Papists. North Carolina 'indulged' only 'Protestant' dissenters. South Carolina drew the line at denial of the Trinity."

SOME LAWS OF TO-DAY.

"Only five States now by their Constitutions prohibit the establishment of a State religion, and New York is not one of them. There is nothing in the Constitution of the United States to prevent New York from making Bishop Potter Primate of All New York, and from supporting the Church he represents, nor to forbid Utah from establishing the Mormon hierarchy in all the powers enjoyed by the Church of England. To hold office in Pennsylvania to-day a man must believe in God and a state of future rewards and punishments."

"I would like to know where you, a Chinaman, get your authority for all these allegations," said his listener a little hotly.

"From such good American authority as *Story on the Constitution*, and Bancroft's *History of the United States*, also from a pamphlet entitled *The Legal Sunday*, written by James T. Ringgold, a lawyer of Baltimore, who cites Story, Bancroft, and other authorities, for every fact I have mentioned."

—New York Journal.

Book Chat.

The Evolution of Man, by Dr. W. W. Hardwicke (Watts & Co.), is a work of very ambitious scope. It is an attempt to cover almost everything, from Time and Space up to Marriage. Of course, this cannot be done satisfactorily in three hundred pages. Still, it must be allowed that Dr. Hardwicke has crammed a vast deal of information into the present volume, which is particularly valuable in its treatment of Pagan and Christian religion from the evolutionary standpoint. It must also be admitted that Dr. Hardwicke is refreshingly outspoken. Bumble and Grundy have no terrors for him. We do not hesitate to commend this work to the attention of Freethinkers. The instruction it conveys has been gathered over wide fields of research, and is presented in an interesting manner.

* * *

The present issue of the *Secular Almanack* is the thirty-first. The National Secular Society should, like Charles II., apologise for being so unconscionable a time in dying.

* * *

The sale of the cheap edition of Fitzgerald's version of *Omar Khayyam* has been phenomenal. As the poem is as full of blasphemy as an egg is full of meat, this is very gratifying.

* * *

The Rev. Dr. Alexander a short time since published in the *Times* a poem on the war. In polished verse the reverend gentleman professed to look through the horrors of bloodshed to the heaven beyond. We have no doubt that war seems less dreadful to a right reverend follower of "The Prince of Peace" from a cosy armchair in his study than to a correspondent on the battlefield.

Correspondence.

TO FREETHINKERS IN SHOREDITCH DISTRICT.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—May I awaken our colleagues in the district of Hoxton, Haggerston, and other contiguous parishes, to the fact that their Public Libraries do not contain that number of modern popular Freethought writings which justice demands? I have had some difficulty in securing the introduction and circulation of G. J. Holyoake's *Trial of Theism*; but, after suggesting works of such like value, those who represent us on the Library Committee have officially refused to comply with our rightful requests.

Considering the proportion of Secular ratepayers to the total inhabitants in the district, and the number of religious books in our libraries, it is an unjust act on the part of those responsible to so snub Freethinkers. To see that some fairness shall be meted out to us is now my aim, and I seek the co-operation of our friends to bring about this. I think the gentlemen on the committee will give way if a sufficient stir is made, which may be partly accomplished by Freethinkers noting down in the "Suggestion Book," kept for that purpose in the circulating lending libraries, particulars of books which to them appear necessary for the proper promulgation and understanding of our history, aims, and principles, when perused. May I, then, implore those to see to this who are convinced of its importance? United force is better than separate confused shots, when attacking a stronghold; likewise joint effort is superior to single aims in a matter of this character.

H. WRIGHT.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

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

LONDON.

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "The Baby God of Bethlehem."
BRADLAUGH CLUB AND INSTITUTE (36 Newington Green-road, Ball's Pond): 8.30, A Concert.

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, John Maddy, "Bradlaugh's Great Struggles."

NORTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Leighton Hall, Leighton-crescent, Kentish Town): 7, H. Snell, "Zola and Religion."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road): 7, J. Allanson Picton, "The Polychrome Bible."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Empress Rooms, Royal Palace Hotel, High-street, Kensington, W.): 11, Miss Margaret McMillan, "The After Effects of the War."

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms): H. P. Ward—11, "Christianity before Christ"; 7, "Jesus Christ: God, Man, or Myth."

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday School; 7, F. A. Davies, "Faith and Finance."

DERBY (Central Hotel, Market-place): 7, Mrs. Wright, "Comparative Psychology."

GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): 12, Discussion Class; 6.30, J. F. Turnbull.

HULL (Friendly Societies Hall, No. 2 Room): F. W. Booth, "Harry Lowerison's 'Sprays of Sweet Briar.'" (An appreciation.)

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Humberstone-gate): 6.30, C. Cohen, "The Aims of Secularism."

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): Joseph McCabe—11, "A Dream of Immortality"; 3, "Materialism and Morals"; 7, "The Origin of Life."

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): Charles Watts—11, "Why I Cannot be a Christian"; 3, "War and Peace: From a Secular Standpoint"; 7, "The Defeat of the Cross." Tea at 5.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, W. Dyson, "The Transvaal: Why I am Not a Little Englander."

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation Schools, Market-place): 6.30, "Liberty and Necessity: A Chapter from Mill."

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—December 17, Leicester; 31, Birmingham.

H. PERCY WARD, 2 Leamington-place, George-street, Balsall Heath, Birmingham.—December 17, Birmingham.

POSITIVISM.

"Reorganisation, without god or king, by the systematic worship of Humanity."

Information and publications on the Religion of Humanity may be obtained free on application to the Church of Humanity, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

Ingersoll's Last Lecture.

"WHAT IS RELIGION?"

An Address delivered before the American Free Religious Association, at Boston, June 2, 1899.

Freethinkers should keep a copy of this Lecture always by them. It was Ingersoll's last utterance on the subject of religion. It shows him to have been a "rank Atheist" to the very end. Moreover, it is a summary of his life's teaching, and embalms his ripest thought.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

London: The Freethought Publishing Company, Limited.
Agent: R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter-street, E.C.

Edward Truelove's Freethought Library.

A Catalogue of Books, Pamphlets, Tracts, etc., chiefly Political and Controversial, from the Library of the late Edward Truelove, relating to Chartism, Communism, Co-operation, Robert Owen and his Philosophy, Political Agitations, and Freethought, by Richard Carlile, Henry Hetherington, William Hone, William Cobbett, Thomas Paine, and many others, and now on sale by his Executors, will be ready shortly, and will be sent on receipt of two stamps by Miss H. TRUELOVE, 17 Alexandra-road, Hornsey, N.

London Freethinkers' Annual Dinner

(Under the Auspices of the National Secular Society), at the Holborn Restaurant, London (Caledonian Salon).

On MONDAY, JANUARY 8, 1900.

Chairman - - - - G. W. FOOTE.

Dinner 7.30 sharp. Tickets 4s. each.
EDITH M. VANCE, Secretary, 377 Strand, W.C.

THE BEST BOOK

ON NEO-MALTHUSIANISM IS, I BELIEVE, TRUE MORALITY, OR THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF NEO-MALTHUSIANISM.

By J. R. HOLMES, M.M.L., M.V.S., M.N.S.S.

160 pages, with portrait and autograph, bound in cloth, gilt lettered.
Price 1s. post free.

In order to bring the information within the reach of the poor, the most important parts of the book are issued in a pamphlet of 112 pages at ONE PENNY, post free 2d. Copies of the pamphlet for distribution 1s. a dozen post free.

The *National Reformer* of September 4, 1892, says: "Mr. Holmes' pamphlet.....is an almost unexceptional statement of the Neo-Malthusian theory and practice.....and throughout appeals to moral feeling.....The special value of Mr. Holmes' service to the Neo-Malthusian cause and to human well-being generally is just his combination in his pamphlet of a plain statement of the physical and moral need for family limitation with a plain account of the means by which it can be secured, and an offer to all concerned of the requisites at the lowest possible prices."

The Council of the Malthusian League, Dr. Drysdale, Dr. Allbutt, and others, have also spoken of it in very high terms.

The trade supplied by R. FORDER, 28 Stonecutter-street, London, E.C. Other orders should be sent to the author,

J. R. HOLMES, HANNEY, WANTAGE, BERKS.

W. J. Rendell's "Wife's Friend"

Recommended by Mrs. Besant in *Law of Population*, p. 32, and Dr. Allbutt in *Wife's Handbook*, p. 51. Made ONLY at No. 15 Chadwell-street, Clerkenwell; 2s. per doz., post free (reduction in larger quantities). For particulars send stamped envelope.

Important Caution.

BEWARE of useless imitations substituted by some dealers and chemists, the words "Rendell & Co," and "J. W. Rendell," etc. being speciously and plausibly introduced to deceive the public.

LOOK FOR AUTOGRAPH REGISTERED TRADE MARK.

W. J. Rendell
No. 182,688.

In Red INK ON EACH BOX, WITHOUT WHICH NONE ARE GENUINE.

Higginson's Syringe, with Vertical and Reverse Current, 3s. 6d., 4s. 6d., and 5s. 3d. Dr. Palfrey's Powder, 1s. 2d. Quinine Compound, 1s. 2d. Dr. Allbutt's Quinine Powders, 3s. per doz. All prices post free.

Thwaites' Liver Pills.

The Best Family Medicine in the World. Will cure Liver, Kidney, and all Stomach Diseases effectually.

Good for Heart Troubles and Cardiac Complaints, Female Ailments, Anæmia, etc. 1s. 1½d. and 2s. 9d. per box. Post free, 14 or 33 stamps. Directions with each box.

G. THWAITES, Herbalist, Stockton-on-Tees.

STANTON, the People's Dentist, 335 Strand (opposite Somerset House).—TEETH on VULCANITE, 2s. 6d. each; upper or lower set, £1. Best Quality, 4s. each; upper or lower, £2. Completed in four hours when required; repairing or alterations in two hours. If you pay more than the above, they are fancy charges. Teeth on platinum, 7s. 6d. each; on 18 ct. gold, 15s.; stopping, 2s. 6d.; extraction, 1s.; painless by gas, 5s.

LARGE-SIZED MUSICAL BOX. Very Handsome. Plays ten tunes. Bell accompaniment. Equal to new. Cost £10 for 45s. Approval allowed.—H., 10 All Saints-road, Westbourne park, London, W.

CHRISTMAS.

I want to distribute 100 Fat Geese and 100 Fine Turkeys at Christmas, and I offer a choice of the two to the sender of every tenth order I receive for my marvellous **Lot 11**, which includes 1 Pair of All-Wool Blankets, 1 Pair Large Bed Sheets, 1 Beautiful Flowered Quilt, 1 White Tablecloth, 1lb. of Free Clothing Tea. This Parcel is well worth 30s. I offer it for 21s., carriage paid, to any address, and, as previously stated, I give a Goose or a Turkey to the sender of every tenth order I receive up to December 23. Money returned for every Parcel that fails to give satisfaction.

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

NOW READY.

THE SECULAR ALMANACK FOR 1900.

ISSUED BY THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY, AND EDITED BY
G. W. FOOTE.

Containing a Freethought Calendar, full particulars of the National Secular Society and its Branches, as well as of other Freethought Organizations, and a number of Special Articles by G. W. Foote, Charles Watts, C. Cohen, Francis Neale, Mimnermus, and others.

PRICE THREEPENCE.

LONDON: R. FORDER, 28 STONECUTTER-STREET, E.C.

Now Ready.

REPLY TO GLADSTONE.

By COLONEL INGERSOLL.

A New Edition. Handsomely Printed.

This is one of Ingersoll's masterpieces. The encounter with Gladstone drew forth all his powers. In logic, wit, illustration, and controversial dexterity, this pamphlet is almost, if not quite, unrivalled. It also contains some passages of superb poetry. Freethinkers should read it frequently. It will furnish them with hints and points in their friendly discussions with Christians. They should likewise lend it to their orthodox friends whenever they have an opportunity.

PRICE FOURPENCE.

LONDON: THE FREETHOUGHT PUBLISHING COMPANY, LIMITED.
AGENT: R. FORDER, 28 STONECUTTER-STREET, E.C.

THE FREETHOUGHT PUBLISHING COMPANY, LTD.

Registered under the Companies' Acts 1862 to 1890.

Capital £5,000 in Shares of £1 each. Ordinary Shares, £4,000. Deferred Shares, £1,000.

The Ordinary Shares are Offered for Subscription, and are Payable as follows:—

- 2s. 6d. per Share on Application.
- 5s. od. " " " Allotment.
- 2s. 6d. " " " December 31, 1899.
- 10s. od. " " " in Subsequent Calls, at one month's notice, as may be required.

DIRECTORS.

GEORGE ANDERSON, 35a Great George-street, Westminster, S.W.	CHARLES WATTS, 24 Carminia-road, Balham, S.W.
SAMUEL HARTMANN, 21 Australian Avenue, E.C.	ROBERT FORDER, 28 Stonecutter-street, E.C.
	G. W. FOOTE, 28 Stonecutter-street, E.C.

Temporary Office—377 Strand, London, W.C.

Secretary—E. M. VANCE (Miss).

Abbreviated Prospectus.

THE Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, has been formed to acquire and take over the copyright of the weekly newspaper called the *Freethinker*, together with the stock of books and pamphlets connected therewith, and the goodwill of the business; and to continue publishing the said newspaper, and selling the said books and pamphlets, and issuing fresh publications of a similar character; and also to engage in any other business which may be convenient and beneficial to the Company

[The Full Prospectus has been printed many times in the FREETHINKER, and the contents are well known to its readers.]

APPLICATION FORM FOR ORDINARY SHARES.

TO THE DIRECTORS OF THE FREETHOUGHT PUBLISHING COMPANY, Limited.

GENTLEMEN,—Having paid to the Company's Secretary the sum of £....., being a deposit of 2s. 6d. per Share on application for..... Shares of £1 each in the above-named Company, I request you to allot me that number of Shares, and I agree to accept the same or any smaller number that may be allotted to me, subject to the Memorandum and Articles of Association, and upon the terms of the Company's Prospectus; and I authorise you to place my name on the Register of Members in respect of the Shares so allotted to me, and I agree to pay the further instalments upon such allotted Shares as the same shall become due, as required by the said Prospectus. In the event of my not receiving an allotment, the amount to be returned in full.

Name (in full).....

Address

Description..... Date.....

All Cheques, etc., to be made payable to the Company, and crossed.

NEW & IMPORTANT WORK BY DR. W. W. HARDWICKE.

Now ready, cloth, 304 pp., with numerous Illustrations.
Price 5s., post free.

THE EVOLUTION OF MAN: HIS RELIGIOUS SYSTEMS AND SOCIAL CUSTOMS.

An Encyclopædia of Information Concerning Evolution—The Universe and Some of its More Common Phenomena—The Supernatural—Ghosts, Spirits, Gods, Worship, Sorcery, Witchcraft, Heresy—Dancing and Prayer—Biblical Promises—Fetichism—Totemism—Phallic Worship—Sacred Prostitution—Theories of Soul and Future Life—The Gods of the Ancients—The Legend of Creation—Inspired Revelation—The Christian Scheme of Salvation—The Bible—An Analysis of the Old and New Testaments—Inspired Contradictions—The First Christians—Evolution of Christianity—The Teachings of Jesus Not Original—Fabricated "Prophecies"—Miracles—Ancient Pagan Symbols—Fruits of Christianity—Persecution of Freethinkers—An Ethical Code—Blasphemy and Heresy—Relation of the Sexes, etc., etc.

London: Watts & Co., 17 Johnson's-court, Fleet-street, E.C.

NON-POISONOUS PAINTS.

Resist all Atmospheric Influences. Samples Free. J. Greevz Fisher, 78 Chapel Allerton, Leeds.

Now Ready.

THE HOUSE OF DEATH.

Being Funeral Orations, Addresses, etc.

By COLONEL INGERSOLL.

Beautifully Printed on Fine Thick Paper and Handsomely Bound.

Contents:—Speech at Walt Whitman's Burial—Tribute to Henry Ward Beecher—Tribute to Courtlandt Palmer—Tribute to Roscoe Conklin—In Memory of Abraham Lincoln—Tribute to Elizur Wright—Address at Horace Seaver's Grave—Mrs. Mary H. Fiske—Tribute to Richard H. Whiting—Mrs. Ida Whiting Knowles—At the Grave of Benjamin W. Parker—Tribute to Rev. Alexander Clark—Death of John G. Mills—At the Grave of Ebon C. Ingersoll—Death of Thomas Paine—Death of Voltaire—At the Tomb of Napoleon—Heroes of the American War—At a Child's Grave—Through Life to Death—Death of the Aged—If Death Ends All.

PRICE ONE SHILLING.

Published for the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, by R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter-street, London, E.C.

Published for the FREETHOUGHT PUBLISHING COMPANY, Limited, by R. FORDER, 28 Stone cutter-street, London, E.C.