

Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

The Church and Bible Inerrancy.

THAT dullest of the dully orthodox organs of the Church, the *Guardian*, has recently made a new departure. Perhaps the move is attributable to the change of editorship which took place a little time ago, or it may be due to a consciousness of inability to any longer resist the weight of modern criticism and opinion. Anyhow, it has ventured upon an advance from its old orthodox position, and—significant fact!—it is now enjoying the approval of the *Church Gazette*. That circumstance may give it pause, but *facilis descensus Avernii*; there is no knowing now where the staid old clerical organ may stop. The *Church Gazette* hails this change of front with the reflection that "mature opinion seems at last to be gaining the courage to speak out, and this with quite a surprising rapidity." And with undisguised satisfaction it points to the fact that the *Guardian*, in a leader on "The Bible and Modern Criticism," goes practically to the length of announcing its general acceptance of the well-ascertained results of genuine investigation during recent decades. But this is not all, for the article is the outcome of a lively discussion to which the *Guardian* had opened its columns on the literal truth of the Jonah narrative, Dr. Mivart's recent controversy, and Dr. Bell's paper on Old Testament teaching in schools. It says:—

"Three main questions are raised by our correspondents—that of the general infallibility of the Scriptures, that of Biblical miracles, and, lastly, the appeal to the words of our Lord as decisive, at any rate, of certain details of Old Testament history and criticism."

The *Guardian* does not consider that it is one of its functions to decide modern questions, or to resolve modern difficulties concerning the nature or corollaries of Biblical inspiration; but it welcomes, as far as space allows, the freest discussion of all such questions and difficulties. That is, at any rate, something gained—a concession never before made in the history of the paper, and a distinct encouragement to those within the Church who desire to aid in the promulgation of saner and sounder views as to the Bible and its authority. The *Church Gazette* anticipates that the *Guardian's* present attitude may "occasion much surprise, and possibly not a little expostulation"; but it welcomes the unexpected announcement as symptomatic and satisfactory.

True, the *Guardian* is still far from outspoken on the issues raised by its correspondents. Its own views are halting, hazy, and hesitating. Its comments are marked, as the *Church Gazette* observes, with "a good deal of self-restraint and consideration for the weak brother." It admits that it is no longer possible to resist the conclusion as to the immense antiquity of the human race, or possible to deny that this conclusion conflicts with the literal statements of Scripture as to the generations anterior to the time of Abraham; further, that if these statements are to be taken as accurate, the whole body of scientific evidence from anthology and geology, the genealogical relations of languages, the history of the earliest known civilisations, and so forth, must be worthless. Then it observes:—

"If these considerations have any weight—and we think their weight is considerable—the position that the Bible contains no history that is not literally true is no longer intact; we may still be resolved to maintain it wherever we can reasonably do so; but it is no longer a universal axiom, cutting away the ground from critical

investigation, or committing it to a prejudged conclusion."

A beautifully roundabout way of saying that the Bible contains error! Of course it does—and an immense lot of it too. Where has the *Guardian* been all these years to have, apparently, only just awakened up to the fact? Or is it that it has only just brought itself to admitting what it has known all along?

"If it is not admissible," says the *Guardian*, "to treat as axiomatic the absolute inerrancy of every fact stated in the Bible, the question reduces itself to one of evidence." The *Guardian* doesn't seem quite certain whether, for instance, there is, or is not, sufficient evidence for the history of Jonah. It thinks it may be hasty and unwarranted to say there is not. But is the *Guardian* at liberty to entertain any doubt after the distinct endorsement by Jesus Christ of the literal truth of that narrative?

Here both the *Church Gazette* and the *Guardian* are very disingenuous. They attempt to evade "the appeal to the words of our Lord as decisive of certain details of Old Testament history." The former says, with an ultra-sanctimonious air that ill-becomes it: "Reverent persons have a reluctance, with ourselves, to be dragged to a strife on holy ground where 'angels fear to tread,' and where, too, no one can ever know enough to speak with any certainty." What does the latter part of this sentence mean? Does it mean that we have no certainty that Christ ever did use the words which convey acceptance and endorsement, if they convey any meaning at all? The *Guardian* says: "Frankly, we regret much of the debate on this subject on both sides." But why is it regrettable, except that to believers in the inerrancy of Jesus it presents an insuperable obstacle to the casting away of that which they would gladly be rid of as absurd and incredible? It may be an unfortunate circumstance that the Gospels represent Jesus as receiving without question as to their historical truth certain Old Testament narratives. But where is the use of shirking the discussion, from that point of view, by pretending that it is regrettable and irreverent?

As we have no compunction about treading on the "holy ground" where the *Church Gazette* is too "reverent" to follow, let us take one instance of Christ's endorsement of Old Testament narrative. The one to which allusion has already been made—namely, the story of Jonah, will serve. Now, can it be honestly held that Jesus did not accept that narrative as plain matter of fact—just as nearly all Christians accepted it up till comparatively modern times? These are the words attributed to Jesus: "For as Jonas was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of Man be to this generation.....The men of Nineveh shall rise up in the judgment with this generation and shall condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonas, and behold a greater than Jonas is here" (Luke xi. 29-32). "For as Jonas was three days and nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matthew xii. 40). Now, in the first place, is it not clear that Jesus regarded Jonah as a prophet who had an actual historical existence? We learn from 2 Kings xiv. 25 that Jonah, son of Amittai and prophet, existed in the reign of Jeroboam II., King of Israel. And Jesus says, "Behold, a greater than Jonas is here." Would he have so compared himself to an imaginary person? Assuredly not. How could he have suggested that the imaginary people who repented at the preaching of an imaginary prophet would rise up and condemn the actual penitent of his

(Christ's) actual hearers of that day? Jesus believed in the existence of Jonah and in his preaching to the Ninevites, and must, therefore, have believed in the actual sojourn in the belly of the whale, for both are parts of the same story. Those whom he addressed accepted the whole story as serious fact. What is there to show that he regarded it as otherwise? As a divine teacher, it was incumbent upon him to avoid the use of such language as might seem to after ages to imply his own belief in an erroneous view. The *Church Gazette* and *Guardian* are naturally reluctant to discuss the bearing of Christ's utterances upon this and other Old Testament narratives. For them it is not only "holy," but dangerous ground. It serves, however, to show that, when once the old doctrine of inspiration is, even in part, abandoned, serious consequences to the whole scriptural fabric may be anticipated.

The concluding remark of the *Church Gazette* on the *Guardian's* "outspoken article" we may easily agree with: "When the leading organ of conservative Church thought begins to entertain convictions in this direction, it is hard to know what next to look for; but one thing seems certain—namely, that the moral glacial period of bygone crystallisation of thought and opinion is now breaking up into a rapid thaw."

FRANCIS NEALE.

Presidential Notes.

BEFORE saying anything further about the present position and immediate future of the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, I pause to deal with the affairs of the Secular Society, Limited. It will be remembered that I devised, formed, and established this Society as (so to speak) the legal fortress of the Freethought movement. It cost me a great deal of time and thought, for the project was entirely a new one, and there was absolutely nothing to guide me except my own judgment. Now that the model is framed it is, of course, easy enough of imitation. "All may grow the flower, for all have got the seed." Not that this is, or would be, any reason for complaint; on the contrary, I am glad to know that I have found out a sure and safe direction for the advance of all sections of the advanced army of progress; and I venture to think that some day, perhaps when I am dead, or enjoying an Old Age Pension in the workhouse or somewhere, and all rivalries and animosities are forgotten, I may now and then be remembered gratefully for this bit of constructive work. Frankly, I believe this Incorporated Society is going to transform the organisation, and therefore the efficiency, of our movement. It may still be possible, though not very probable, that the Blasphemy Laws will find another victim before they are repealed. But active persecution always brings some compensation to the persecuted cause. It gives publicity, and evokes sympathy. No sort of compensation, however, attended the disabling effect of the Blasphemy Laws upon Secularism. They stood in the way of our receiving any kind of endowment, and they deprived us of all legal security for our funds. In this way we were kept in a state of poverty. But that is ended now; at least, the instrument for ending it exists, and has only to be used with skill and resolution. Those who have any donations to make, or any bequests to leave by will, can now do either, or both, with the most perfect assurance that their money will be, and indeed *must be*, devoted to the objects set forth in this Society's Memorandum of Association, and under the stringent safeguards of its Articles.

It has already been stated that several Freethinkers have provided in their wills for legacies to the Secular Society, Limited. One of the latest is Mr. S. Hartmann, the honorary treasurer of the National Secular Society: The very latest—that is to say, the latest known to me—is a gentleman in the North of England. These legacies amount in the aggregate to thousands of pounds, and in the natural course of things they will accrue to the Society one by one as the testators decrease. Personally, I wish all of these testators as long a life as they could wish themselves, for their

generosity is entitled to a reasonable reward. But when they do die—and all of us are mortal—they will be remembered gratefully by those who are carrying on the work of the movement they loved and benefited.

Provision by will for a legacy to the Secular Society, Limited, is a very simple matter. There is no need whatever for a long legal rigmorole. Our solicitors—Messrs. Harper and Battcock, of 23 Rood-lane, Fenchurch-street, E.C.—have drawn up a form which, though very brief, is entirely adequate. It has been printed in the *Freethinker* before, and reproduced in the *Secular Almanack*, but there is no harm in printing it again. Here it is:—

"I give and bequeath to the Secular Society, Limited, the sum of _____ free from Legacy Duty, and I direct that a receipt signed by two members of the Board of the said Society and the Secretary thereof shall be a good discharge to my Executors for the said Legacy."

This is all that is necessary. But testators must please see that the word "Limited" is not omitted. That is part of the Society's registered title, and the omission of it would render the legacy null and void. It looks a small matter, but it is vastly important. Nor is it advisable to trust solicitors too absolutely in such a matter. They make mistakes at times like other people. Indeed, I have a case in mind as I write, in which the omission of the word "Limited" was the work of the legal gentleman who prepared the will. Testators should therefore see to such points themselves. Carefulness is never a fault, and it always pays.

Two members of the Secular Society, Limited, died last year, and both of them made bequests to the Society. The first was Mr. E. Lawson, of Aberdeen, who had been a liberal subscriber for three or four years to Secular objects. This gentleman left the Society £100, contingently on the death of two other persons, and of course this bequest has yet to be realised. The second was Mr. W. J. Birch, of Liverpool. This gentleman left several legacies to personal friends, and thirteen legacies of £100 each to various benevolent institutions. The residue of his estate was devised to the Secular Society, Limited. At first we thought it would realise over £1,000. It has, however, realised a little under £800. This amount has been duly paid over to the Society by Mr. Birch's executors, and deposited in the Society's account at the London City and Midland Bank.

In neither case was any sort of objection raised by executors or beneficiaries. There is, indeed, no possible room for such objection. While the registration of the Society stands, no one can go behind it in order to intercept a legacy, or for any other object. This may be regarded as absolutely certain. I am aware that some anonymous or pseudonymous persons, claiming to wish well to Freethought, have thrown doubts upon the legality of this Society. But they don't know what they are talking about—unless, perhaps, in one or two cases, they know it too well. Their criticism is founded upon an obsolete state of the law. The starting-point of the new departure was Lord Coleridge's judgment on the occasion of my trial for Blasphemy in the Court of Queen's Bench. He sat there as Lord Chief Justice, and he laid it down that the Common Law of Blasphemy, under which all past prosecutions were initiated, had changed with the progress of opinion and sentiment. If Christianity had ever been part and parcel of the law of the land, it was so no longer, since Jews could be judges, and Jews and Freethinkers could sit in the Legislature. As the Common Law now stands, Lord Coleridge said, the fundamentals of religion could be openly assailed, provided it was done in a proper manner and with a due regard to the public peace. Well now, I defy anyone to point out anything *improper* in the Memorandum of Association of the Secular Society, Limited, or anything calculated to provoke a *breach of the peace*. Counsel's opinion was taken before the Society was registered, and the course of events is

proving the utter groundlessness of the real or affected apprehensions of certain critics.

Let me now say that the Board of the Secular Society do not mean to spend the Birch bequest rashly ; at the same time, they do not mean to hoard it. It was intended to promote the Society's objects, and to that purpose it will be devoted. Mr. Watts and Mr. Cohen have already delivered some thirty lectures at the Society's expense in various parts of the country, and they and others will deliver more. A grant of £50 has been made to the N. S. S. Executive, and two smaller grants to hardworking Branches. Other things are in contemplation, and will be announced when they are decided upon. Meanwhile I beg to assure the party that, as far as I am concerned, this Society's affairs shall be managed with a view to the best interest of the movement ; and I also beg to assure them that they can equally rely upon the other members of the Board.

Next week I shall recur to the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited. It is never well to be too sanguine, but I hope to be able to make a gratifying statement with regard to this enterprise. Other matters will have to be referred to in connection with it, some of which are *not* pleasant. But if the main prospect is bright, we can afford to shrug our shoulders at the rest.

G. W. FOOTE.

The Power of Knowledge.

FRANCIS BACON's phrase, "Knowledge is power," is quite true ; but, in order that the power should be an advantage to the human race, it is necessary that it should be properly exercised. Some of the greatest crimes have been committed, and the worst forms of wrong have been perpetrated, through the injudicious and unjust wielding of power. To this cause may be attributed the horrors of slavery, religious despotism, political serfdom, and social ostracism. It is the recognition of this fact that induces Secularists to blend the use of power with a sense of equity. Had professed Christians always done this when they had almost supreme authority, Freethinkers would not have been such victims to theological persecution. As, therefore, power can be employed in such a manner as to be disastrous in its results, so it is with knowledge when it is not duly governed by a well-trained mental and moral force. The neglect of the observance of this important truth will account, in a great measure, for the prevalence of crime existing among persons who are supposed to be well educated. The fact is, such individuals are not educated at all in the highest meaning of that term. They may, indeed, know much ; but true education does not consist simply in the possession of knowledge, but rather in the ability and habit of using such knowledge for the benefit of the general community.

Many and varied definitions have been given to the term knowledge. Perhaps one of the most ancient was the following given by Confucius : " When we know a thing, to hold that we know it ; and when we do not know a thing, to allow that we do not know it : this is knowledge." Professor Huxley maintained that knowledge implies that we should confine ourselves to what we have scientific grounds for believing. Personally, I have a preference for the old-fashioned definition of knowledge, which is, that it consists in having a clear and certain perception of existing things, and of the relations that obtain between those things and ideas. Some philosophers have referred all knowledge to sensation ; while others have regarded it as that of which we are conscious. But the immediate knowledge we have of any object of consciousness has been called intuition, which is a sensation or an idea of the mind. If by intuition is meant the Intuitive Philosophy, there is one fact to be remembered, which is, that this philosophy, like all others, has to be learnt by those ordinary faculties which are found in all pupils. If there is a difference between knowledge based on consciousness and that based on inferences, two separate names are

essential ; that, however, really does not apply to the knowledge, but only to the mode of obtaining it. Buckle, in referring to this subject, maintains that all truth is that which necessarily follows from the operation of our consciousness. He gives a translation of Descartes's famous aphorism in the words, " I am a thing that thinks," and which is generally rendered, " I think, therefore I am." This appears to me to be arguing in a circle, inasmuch as it is an attempt to prove a thing by presupposing the thing itself. How would this apply to existence which is self-evident ? The perception of my own existence was to me one of my earliest, and quite as evident as any. Why, therefore, should an attempt be made to prove this by an appeal to the mental operation called thinking ? I am as conscious that I feel as I am that I think ; and many other animal existences evidently feel, whether they think or not.

The injunction, " Man, know thyself," is a valuable one, which we should all do well to observe. Self-knowledge is, indeed, priceless. A man who thoroughly knows himself, and also what is the best for himself, is better enabled to know others. He sees the way before him which he should pursue ; he understands what his aim in life should be, and what are the best means to adopt to secure that aim. The man who lacks this knowledge may have many accomplishments, but he is ignorant of the principal necessity of existence. It is curious that man, who prides himself because he is the only animal having the special faculty of reflections, and is therefore best able to know himself, is generally less informed upon that subject than upon any other. A man looks around on his neighbors and sees their many deficiencies, mental, moral, and physical, but he seldom looks upon himself as an example of their defective qualities ; and if he habituates himself to serious self-examination, he knows better than anyone else his own nature, motives, and desires. He cannot impose upon himself, however much he may endeavor to do so upon his friends. True, there have been instances where persons have suffered from self-delusions. Such, for instance, as the miser seeking happiness in his greedy love of gold, or the hypocrite who, having through his habit of lying and deception escaped detection, comes to estimate himself as a paragon of virtue. Still, such cases are fortunately rare, and no doubt Burns was right in thus indicating one advantage of self-knowledge :—

O wad some power the giftie gie us
To see oursel as ithers see us,
It wad frae monie a blunder free us.

The utility and purpose of knowledge are seen in its application, for the benefit of the general community, in striving to remove the errors and misfortunes which sorely afflict mankind. The kind of knowledge which tends to promote our own well-being naturally leads to the inducement to advance it by promoting that of our fellow creatures. Even the selfish man will find his demands best satisfied by raising the standard of knowledge among others, for with the possession of the greatest amount of knowledge our tranquillity will be disturbed every day of our lives, if we are surrounded by ignorance and its attendant consequences. Nothing is more invigorating to the well-informed mind than to carry light to those who sit in mental darkness, in expelling from the world error and misery, and in diffusing among all members of the community that knowledge which experience has taught us tends to the elevation of their physical and intellectual nature. Well-informed and properly regulated minds know full well that knowledge opens up sources of endless and refined enjoyment, to which those who are ignorant and undisciplined are strangers. Being impressed with the significance of this fact, Secularists have always been consistent friends of education, which the Church from its inception has opposed. And, when Christians were compelled to recognise the educational force, they did their best to deprive it of its legitimate function, by making it a medium of inculcating into youthful minds creeds and dogmas which have been more injurious to mental development than the densest ignorance that ever blighted the progress of the human race.

The power of knowledge, when wisely exercised, renders us less dependent upon those influences which simply satisfy the sensuous desires. It has the tendency

to absorb the mind in contemplation of the true and beautiful which exist outside of the common walks of life. A general knowledge of mankind and the world reveals the wants of humanity, and suggests how those wants can be efficiently and judiciously gratified. No truly wise man can fail to observe that among his gifts to the community none is more inestimable than a good example. Even "religion," says Samuel Johnson, "of which the rewards are distant, and which is animated only by faith and hope, will glide by degrees out of the mind, unless it be invigorated and reimpresed by the salutary influence of example." It has been aptly observed that "character is one of the greatest motive powers in the world." Secularists know this, and, acting upon the knowledge, they place character above belief or any theological faith. Now, while precept is a potent factor in the formation of character, example is still greater. It impresses the child and it influences the adult. Hence, it should be the aim of all to set such an example in every condition of life in which they move that would be worthy of emulation. Secularism teaches that we live for others as well as for ourselves; therefore, to present to the world a useful example is the duty of one and all.

It is gratifying to witness the fact that every year human knowledge increases. It bids fair to cover the land "as the waters cover the sea," and its advantages are untold. There is, of course, a limit to each man's intelligence, but none to the possible discoveries of the race. We are now living in the presence of new ideas. The secrets formerly hidden as to the nature of mind and matter, and their relation to each other, have been more fully revealed than they were in the past. Knowledge has been shown to be, not for one age, but for all time.

CHARLES WATTS.

Missionary Jottings.

It is a considerable time since I penned any account of my wanderings under the above heading. But, although I have not written of late any systematic account of my lecturing experiences, readers of the *Freethinker* will be well aware that my silence betokens anything but an absence of activity. I have been as busy as ever, and with, taking all things into consideration, fair results. A propagandist movement such as ours necessarily has its ebbs and flows even when depending upon paid assistance; but when the help is purely voluntary, it is particularly at the mercy of every wave of excitement or depression that stirs the face of society. Still, on the whole, the outlook is far from unhealthy. If one place is resting awhile, others are pushing ahead rapidly; and in many new places visited I have succeeded rather better than I had anticipated.

I will commence with a brief glance at the old places visited by me during this season. In Lancashire I have visited Manchester, Liverpool, Blackburn, Darwen, and Preston. At Manchester I opened the winter's season for the Branch, lectured there on two Sundays, and had pretty good audiences. The Manchester audiences usually maintain a good level both as to quantity and quality; but there is not as much new blood being introduced into the meetings as I should like to see. This might be done in two ways—by more extensive advertisement, and by carrying the propaganda into other parts of the city. The latter method would, perhaps, be the more efficacious. Manchester is far too large a place to be reached properly by one hall, and it is only by making our lectures easily accessible to all that we can hope to succeed. Unfortunately, the Committee finds itself hampered considerably by want of funds, and has lately found itself compelled to economise in several directions. Were the necessary financial help forthcoming, this method of propaganda might be easily adopted, and, I am sure, with profitable results.

Liverpool is at present suffering from a wave of depression that seems to have affected all advanced movements in that city. Probably a great deal of this is due to the South African war, and is, therefore, only of a temporary character. A falling back of advanced movements is the historic price that is paid for all wars,

and from this general influence we cannot hope to be exempt. Human energy, like everything else, is strictly limited, and, with the general thought of the country concentrated upon war, reason and common sense are sure to be relegated to a subordinate place. By-and-bye the reaction will come, and then, if we are wise, we ought to be prepared to take full advantage of it.

At Blackburn I had two very good meetings, and at Darwen a moderate one. The meetings at these places were chiefly remarkable in providing me with a couple of opponents who believed in literally imitating Jesus—minus the crucifixion. They assured me that they carried no money, gave their services to all that asked, asked for nothing in return, accepted all the teachings of Jesus as literally accurate, and somehow managed to live and escape the lunatic asylum. Well, I suppose society can always tolerate two or three of this description, and there will always be found enough people to look upon their eccentricities with enough good humor to provide them with enough to live. What would occur if society generally adopted such an attitude it is not hard to foresee. At Preston I also had a good meeting, although it is one of the most Catholic towns in the country. Further north I visited Huddersfield, Stockton-on-Tees, Stanley, South Shields, and Gateshead. At Huddersfield Mr. Spivey, with one or two helpers, is still carrying on a stubborn fight. At Stockton-on-Tees the meetings were about on the usual scale. At Stanley the meetings would doubtless have been much better than usual had not the terrible snowstorms of February 10 and 11 interfered. It was the most terrible weather I have had during my whole ten years on the platform. The snow lay in Stanley nearly twenty-four inches deep, and many of her roads round about were actually impassable. Under such conditions large meetings were impossible. About forty turned up to the evening meeting, and I am told that that equalled the congregation of any three churches or chapels in the locality.

The Gateshead lectures were under the management of the Newcastle Branch, and were among the best I have held there. At Shields, where the movement has languished, owing entirely to want of halls, the Branch secured the large Assembly Hall at a high rental for two Sundays. I occupied one Sunday, and Mr. Foote the other. The success of the meetings was much greater than the members had anticipated, and this illustrated one point which has a vital bearing on the success of our work. In many places, owing to want of means, we are compelled to meet in small out-of-the-way halls, even where large and well-known ones are available. This is obviously bad policy. A large well-known hall is in itself an advertisement, and one can count upon an audience. To occupy a small one is to simply lend a hand towards hiding ourselves from public notice. Even though the extra income at the lectures did not meet the extra outlay on the place of meeting, it would be far more profitable to the movement to lose five pounds in addressing an audience of a thousand than to lose a sovereign in addressing an audience of two hundred.

In Scotland I found the Glasgow branch as active as ever, and much stronger than ever. It is the only branch in the country that finds its financial resources increasing. Not that the society is anxious to save. It is only anxious to spend every penny it possesses in propaganda in and around Glasgow. It is responsible for lectures all over the district, and is always opening up new places. I visited Paisley, Law Junction, and paid a first visit to Cambuslang. The meeting, although not of gigantic dimensions, was evidently interested in what I had to say; there was a remarkably good sale of literature, and a brief report in the local paper appeared a day or two following my visit. At Dundee I also had good meetings, and a report in the local paper. Although not an ideal ground for Freethought, the movement there is going ahead, and the members contemplate a sustained effort during the winter of 1900-1.

From Dundee I "trekked" north to make my first acquaintance with Aberdeen. I had been told much about the hardness and coldness of the Aberdonians, but from experience I am inclined to put the warning upon the same level as the oft-quoted statement concerning a surgical operation and a Scot's sense of

humor. I had a most hearty welcome, and a cordial invitation to come again—an invitation I mean to accept at the earliest opportunity. I lectured there on two evenings to good audiences. The different portions of the lectures were warmly applauded, and the opposition was—as usual.

Another place visited for the first time was Middlesborough. Many years ago this town was a strong centre of Freethought activity, but for reasons unknown to me it has since declined. I had secured a hall there for two evenings; but, unfortunately, the meetings were seriously damaged by the prevailing bad weather. Telegraph wires were all down, traffic was suspended, and a coating of melting snow about a foot deep covered the roads. Still, I was able to hold a small meeting, and to make some arrangements towards a return visit, which I hope will be free from climatic interferences.

During the winter I have paid two visits to South Wales, lecturing and debating each time on what was practically new ground. I visited New Tredegar, Pontypridd, and Cardiff, debating and lecturing at the two former places, and at Cardiff lecturing only. At both Pontypridd and New Tredegar the most admirable order was maintained throughout the debates and the lectures. Pontypridd audiences not only listened quietly, but displayed a most sympathetic spirit, so much that I had to say—far more so than I had dared to anticipate. There was a good sale of literature at the meetings, and my visit had the effect of rousing among the local supporters of the movement the determination to push it forward with renewed energy in the future.

At Cardiff I lectured three times to good audiences on March 11. I have only visited Cardiff on one previous occasion, about three years ago, and my two visits have convinced me that it will form an excellent field for working if proper attention is paid to it. It could not only be made a strong centre, but a point from which a good deal of the surrounding country might be worked. Indeed, the whole of the South-West and West of England deserves, and should have, serious attention paid to it. There is an enormous field ripe for work if only the means for working it are forthcoming. As it is, from London to Plymouth the propaganda is simply neglected.

The opposition at my meetings, taking them right through, was scanty in quantity and indifferent as to quality. It is extremely rare to get an able opponent. Opponents there are of a class, but their usual effect is to make the listeners laugh at or feel disgusted with their stupidity. Never by any chance do they come within reasonable distance of the subject dealt with. The opposition seems to get poorer every year, the only interesting feature about it being the question of what is the lowest point it is possible for it to reach.

One matter requiring serious attention in the future is that of literature at meetings. At all meetings there should be a good supply for sale. It is impossible for a lecturer travelling from place to place to drag huge bundles with him. This will have to be done either by the Society, by the Freethought Publishing Company, or by both jointly sending down parcels to some responsible person in the town in which the lectures are to be delivered, and having the unsold remainder returned. Probably this will receive attention in the near future.

On looking back over the past winter, I find that if I have nothing startling to record in the way of advance made, there is at least a cheering account of work done, and, bearing in mind the conditions under which it is done, we may well be content. At a time of retrogression and depression we are holding our own. That is, at least, something. And there is a strong promise of success in the future. The financial outlook is better than it has been for years. And, with increased finances, there will come increased activity and improved organisation. All that is required is for each individual to do his or her best. Whether the best be little or much, it will tell; only let us see that it is our best, that it is done with a will, and that it is done in time.

C. COHEN.

The first creator of gods in the world was tear.—*Petronius.*

The Plutocrat to the Parson.

"The rich run the Churches, and the man who controls a dozen stock corporations, because he owns the majority of the shares, doesn't see why he shouldn't own a parish because he pays the most money for its support."

"MORE subscriptions! Now, by thunder!
If you wish to share the plunder,
You must share the toil:

Not your rôle to scheme and make it,
Though your fingers itch to take it,
Trade your hands would soil.

"But, sir priest, I would remind you
That our partnership doth bind you
To uphold my rule.

You must quell the rabble's riot;
Keep the starving workers quiet
Whilst I scoop the pool!

"Once, when you were poor and holy,
Preaching in chapel lowly,
Men came there to pray.

Now you're rich, with church and steeple,
All the beastly, common people
Sneer, and keep away.

"Every year they're growing bolder.
Since your power began to moulder
Theirs commenced to swell.

You—to please the upper classes—
Lost your hold upon the masses
When you preached no Hell.

"Now, you fear to mention Hades—
Lest you lose the few old ladies
Who still own your sway;

While my workmen, steeped in evil,
Fearing neither God nor devil,
Strike for higher pay.

"You must liven up your patter;
Swells may like your soothing chatter—
Men of dollars don't.

Teach the poor you've ruled for ages;
Heaven's for those who take low wages—
Hell's for those who won't.

"Teach of wealth the irksome duties—
Teach the poor man's chaster beauties
Which the rich can't share.

Tell them that the love of Mammon
(Course we know it's only gammon)
Leadeth to despair.

"Not but they'll reject your teaching
If your practice and your preaching
Keep so wide apart;

And the day the poor don't heed you
Work you *must*—for we won't need you
When our troubles start.

"Here's your cheque, and if you'd earn it,
Take this parable and learn it
And the moral mark—

*Little sprats are hard to dish
When the lazy pilot-fish
Hunts too near the shark."*

—*Sydney Bulletin.*

CRIPPS CLARK.

Mixed.

Almighty God, with Tommy's help,
Helped Tommy to defeat
The men who helped Almighty God
To help them to retreat.

Lord "Bobs" has helped the Lord to help
Lord "Bobs," in sundry jobs;
The Lord has helped Lord "Bobs" to help
The Lord to help Lord "Bobs."

G. L. MACKENZIE.

A certain Tommy adjusted a bent pin to his grandfather's chair, with the logical results. As a punishment his grandmother locked him up in the guest chamber. "It won't do any good," growled the grandfather, still smarting under the injury; "the youngster ought to be soundly thrashed." "Not at all," returned the grandmother, who doesn't believe in corporal punishment. "Solitary meditation upon his crime is the true way to bring him to a realisation of it. I shouldn't be surprised if Tommy were this minute down upon his knees praying that he might be forgiven." In order to test it the two grandparents sneaked to the guest-chamber door, and unblushingly put their ears to the keyhole. "What did I tell you?" stage-whispered the grandmother, as through the keyhole came the words: "O Lord, please forgive me for putting that pin on grandpa's chair. But, O Lord, you ought to have seen him jump."

Acid Drops.

"Bobs" and God and Tommy Atkins are evidently in partnership. This is the new Trinity, the Son and the Holy Ghost having retired for the present. We have the authority of Lord Roberts himself for it. "By the help of God," he telegraphed home, "and by the bravery of Her Majesty's soldiers, the troops under my command have taken possession of Bloemfontein." Presidents Kruger and Steyn had just previously assured their burghers that "the triune God" was on their side. But they did not calculate on General Roberts's "slimness." He has cleverly got the second and third persons of the Trinity out of the way, and put himself and Mr. Atkins in their places. This makes it two to one when the vote is taken, so the first person of the Trinity has now got to fight for the Britishers. Yes, it is quite true; Lord Roberts is a master of strategy.

The gallant little Field Marshal might tell us, when he has leisure to do so, *how much* help was rendered by God. We know how much was rendered by Mr. Atkins, and it is not difficult to appreciate "Bobs'" share in the business. Some of us don't quite see where God comes in. Indeed, the capture of Bloemfontein was remarkably like the relief of Ladysmith. There was no perceptible miracle in either case; in fact, the natural causes were as plain as daylight, and quite sufficient to account for the total result. To quote our own words on the first occasion, Nothing was left for the Lord to do—and he did it.

Serious critics will perhaps say that Lord Roberts's telegram was meant to tickle the ears of British orthodoxy. They may be right, but there is another possible explanation. "All wise men," said Bacon, "to decline the envy of their own virtues, used to ascribe them to Providence and Fortune; for so they may the better assume them; and, besides, it is greatness in a man to be the care of the higher powers." Bacon's wealth of illustration is always great; so he proceeds to furnish positive instances in Cæsar and Sylla, and a negative instance in Timotheus. May we not, then, take Bacon's "tip," and surmise that God's share in the capture of Bloemfontein was really Lord Roberts's; only he laid it on God—who is a handy sort of clothes-horse—because he couldn't very well take the credit for it himself. Which would be another bit of "Bobs'" strategy.

President Kruger does not seem to be at all convinced that God is helping General Roberts. "We are in God's hands," he says, and "with God's aid we can prevail." No doubt. But the Boers don't appear to be getting it. On the whole, it is a very pretty game that both sides are playing with the name of the Lord. Probably, after all, the God of Christendom is just like the deities of Olympus, who reclined on their couches high up on the mountain while their worshippers raged and suffered below. No moan of sorrow mounted to mar their sacred everlasting calm—and none appears to disturb his.

President Kruger and President Steyn brought God several times into their absurd telegram to Lord Salisbury. They have not yet, however, replied to Lord Roberts's plain message to them about the Boer abuse of the white flag and use of expanding bullets. Those who talk so much about God are just the men to "stagger humanity" when they cannot get their own way. The non-reply of the two Boer Presidents to Lord Roberts's direct challenge throws a good deal of light upon the piety of these devout students of the Old Testament. 'Tis true, 'tis pity, and pity 'tis 'tis true.

It is perfectly idle for the friends of the Boers, like Mr. Courtney, to pooh-pooh these allegations. They are not made by newspaper correspondents, but by responsible chiefs of the British Army, who must know what they are talking about. Nor is it of any use to say that England stood out at the Hague Conference for the use of the Dum-Dum bullet, for it was distinctly stated that this bullet was not to be used in fighting with civilised troops, but only in fighting with hordes of savages, whose onrush in overwhelming numbers could not be stopped by any other means. Mr. Courtney's letter on this point does him very little credit.

According to a Capetown telegram, the Government have issued a circular prohibiting demonstrations unless they are officially sanctioned. Mr. Schreiner is the head of the Government there, and another Mr. Schreiner is trying to hold "Stop-the-War" meetings here. Would it not be well for them to come to some common understanding as to the right of public meeting? It seems to us, at least, that what the one Mr. Schreiner claims in England the other Mr. Schreiner ought not to prohibit in Cape Colony.

"Professor" Wells, whose case we referred to last week,

has been found guilty and sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment. He is an old man, or at least very elderly, and his punishment will be a severe trial. We have not seen the physiological books he sold, but we are informed by persons who have that it is absurd to call them obscene. Some of his answers to questions after his lectures do not appear to have been in the best of taste, but he denied having used the expressions ascribed to him by the police, and a good many reformers know what police evidence is worth in such cases. It should also be borne in mind that Mr. Wells's lectures were delivered to "men only." Now it is not pretended that he tried to stimulate their passions in any way. His crime was simply one of too plain speaking. But that was surely no *real* crime before an audience of adult males. There may have been—we think there was—a want of tact on Mr. Wells's part; but tact, after all, is not a very common gift, and if it is made an offence punishable with imprisonment, our goals will have to be terribly multiplied if the law is carried out with impartiality.

We have seen plenty of religious meetings advertised for "men only," and the only possible justification of such meetings is that the speakers intend to deal freely with certain vices that cannot well be handled before a mixed congregation. For our part, then, we are unable to see why Mr. Wells should not enjoy the same freedom as is commonly exercised by a certain class of religious orators—for instance, Evangelist Henry Varley, who has been allowed to harangue "men only" at Exeter Hall. Our friend and colleague, the late J. M. Wheeler, went to hear Varley once, and told us that he spoke in the most downright fashion on sexual vices. We do not think the worse of him for that, for these vices cannot be corrected without plain speaking; only we don't quite see that what is all right in Varley is all wrong in Wells, or that what brings the one honor and emolument should bring the other disgrace and imprisonment.

Mr. Wells lectured principally, we understand, as a Phrenologist and a Malthusian. It was natural, therefore, that the Malthusian League—or rather its Council, for there doesn't appear to be much League—should be asked to come to this man's assistance. The Secretary, Mr. W. H. Reynolds, was desired to convene a meeting of the Council to consider the matter. In his great wisdom he thought the ordinary meeting was "quite soon enough," so the matter was allowed to stand over till then, and the result was that the Council met on the very evening of the day of Mr. Wells's trial, and while it was discussing the matter he was already sentenced. Not, indeed, that it made any particular difference. Mr. W. H. Reynolds and Mr. George Standing very decidedly opposed the idea of doing anything whatever for Mr. Wells, and these two gentlemen are practically the Council of the Malthusian League; Dr. Drysdale being now old and infirm, and Dr. Alice Vickery not being built to cope with the opposition of the *working* majority. In these circumstances, it is unlikely that much of the League's money—it had a legacy of £800 the other day—will be spent on anything but printing, unless it be publishing.

"It will be scandalous," says *Reynolds's Newspaper*, "if the Malthusian League do not agitate for a remission of the cruel sentence of a year's imprisonment for lecturing on physiology." But the League will probably put up with the scandal. We are far too busy, in all sorts of ways, just at present to be able to take the initiative in this matter ourselves; still, we will gladly render what assistance we can to others who may be more fortunately situated.

Mr. Justice Darling, by the way, who presided at Mr. Wells's trial, and sentenced him in that draconian manner, warned the press against reporting the details of the case, and promised that if his warning were defied he would see that the law was put in operation against the offenders. This strikes us as a piece of impertinence on his part, for it is no part of a judge's business to put the law in motion. Other persons are entrusted with that duty. Nevertheless, we do not quite agree with *Reynolds's* in thinking that "the fair report of any trial is permissible"—speaking legally. As the law now stands, we believe, reports are not privileged. Those who publish them have to take the risk. We believe there is no doubt whatever about this in the case of "obscenity."

We quite agree, however, with the following remark of our outspoken contemporary: "What a humbug of a religion it is when what is called 'God's handiwork' is considered a subject so obscene and indecent to talk about that the person who dares to do so is sent to herd with criminals. Poor God!"

We do not think, though, that any member of parliament will be found to raise a question in the House of Commons, either as to Mr. Wells's sentence or as to Mr. Justice Darling's

utterance on the subject of reporting. It is not exactly "good business" to meddle with such things.

The question of introducing "religious profession" in the next census was finally decided in Parliament the day after we went to press last week. Lord Hugh Cecil moved that the census should be thus extended, but apparently only made the proposal in order to say some nasty things about Nonconformists. Having fired these off, and heard some equally nasty retorts, he allowed his amendment to be negatived without a division. So that, as far as England is concerned, there will be no religious census after all.

Mr. Lloyd George very truly observed that the residue of the population would always label themselves as being attached to the religion of the State, and the same thing applied to workhouses and lunatic asylums. When, however, Mr. W. Jones said that Agnostics, too, would enter themselves as of the Church of England, he was merely indulging in wild talk. The Agnostic who would thus give even a nominal support to the Establishment would be made of very poor stuff, and we can't believe that any such cripple exists.

According to the *Daily News*, a religious census in an Indian Province elicited these two items: "Animal Worshipers, Nine Millions; Agnostics, Nine." Our contemporary remarks, sarcastically enough, that in this country the nine millions and the nine would alike include themselves in the Church of England.

Rev. C. F. Aked, of Liverpool, who probably hasn't much money to invest himself, recently made a great fuss at the Free Church Congress because bishops, deans, canons, rectors, and vicars of the Established Church held so many shares in breweries. But why should they not? Jesus Christ was a kind of brewer himself, and they only follow him. He manufactured some seventy-five gallons of wine on one occasion, and no doubt he often repeated the performance.

"God alone can comfort you, and will give everlasting life to those who believe on Him. The will of the Lord be done." Such is a portion of a pathetic letter left by a young woman at Beccles who drowned herself after suffering intolerable pain from neuralgia following upon influenza. She preceded these pious utterances by saying that she "felt her mind would never be all right again." That was sufficiently explanatory in her case. The wonder is that such phrases can be used by people who are reputed to be sane. How, by the way, did she come to think that the Lord would comfort her relatives, when he afforded so little comfort to her?

The *Family Churchman* has a leading article on "Unbelief." The editor probably regards the leader as an achievement, and so it is—in the way of ignorance and defective logic. "One of the perplexing features of modern unbelief," says the writer, "is that unbelievers class themselves under such diverse labels." This, of course, does not apply to Christians, who are divided into 310 different sects that have registered places of worship, and goodness knows how many there are that are not so registered. They all have diverse labels, which is really a "perplexing" fact, when it presents itself in connection with an alleged divinely-revealed religion. On the other hand, unbelief might be excused a little diversity, seeing that it does not pretend to be more than the outcome of independent and unassisted human thought.

The *Family Churchman* continues: "Mr. Bradlaugh, e.g., called himself an Atheist, whilst another man, whose views are undistinguishable from Mr. Bradlaugh's, insists upon being called a Theist." Now, who is this other man? Let the *Family Churchman* supply his name, otherwise we shall believe that that religious print is dreaming or romancing—not to use a harsher term. How could any man in his senses hold Mr. Bradlaugh's views, and insist upon calling himself a Theist? The thing is impossible. We say "in his senses" because this Atheistic-Theist may be a lunatic and known to the *Family Churchman*. We have no knowledge of him.

"Apply pressure," says the *Family Churchman*, "to these unbelievers, and they shelter themselves behind the bulwarks of Agnosticism." This is very rich. Picture the *Family Churchman* in the act of "applying pressure"—bringing all its remorseless and irresistible force to bear upon the poor unbelievers! No wonder they rush off like the Boers and ensconce themselves behind the kopjes of Agnosticism. "Bulwarks" the *Family Churchman* calls them, but it doesn't mean it, for it immediately proceeds to assert that Agnosticism is without any defences at all. It says: "We must deal with Agnosticism. And how may Agnosticism be best dealt with? Only by an appeal to the facts which may reasonably justify positive knowledge." These facts, it seems, are to be found in the life and example of Jesus Christ

—that is to say, we must look for evidences of the existence of God in a book which, from beginning to end, assumes the existence of God.

Then the *Family Churchman* says: "That nowadays unbelief is in the air there can be no reasonable question. The best way to meet it is not so much by argument as influence." Quite so; argument is no use. Witness the effort of the *Family Churchman*. As to "influence," that too has been tried. It used to be in the form of the rack, the dungeon, the *auto da fé*; in modern times, in the form of fine and imprisonment and social ostracism. That has miserably failed. What other means are there of establishing the existence of the "living God"?

Jaakoff Prelooker, editor of the little sheet called *The Anglo-Russian*, relates the following incident as illustrative of the amount of sympathy which persecuted foreigners may expect from English church-people: "Some time ago we spoke at a meeting for an hour and a-half on the iniquities and persecutions of the Russian State Church and its numerous victims. An English High Church woman present was asked how she liked the lecture. 'Oh,' she replied, with a self-complacent smile, 'it was very amusing!'"

The *Tongues of Fire* quotes the following advertisement from a religious paper: "Sermons, preachable, original, sure to please; 7d. each from the author." Not an excessive price, it is true, but probably quite as much as they are worth. The *Guardian*, by the way, inserts a letter exposing the supply of ready-made sermons to idle or incompetent clerics. A shorthand writer was observed to be constantly following about a fashionable and popular preacher, and taking a verbatim note of all his sermons. Asked, at length, what paper he represented, he admitted that he was in the dark as to the use to which the sermons were put, but said he was engaged at a high fee by an agency. Further inquiries revealed the fact that the reported sermons were retailed for use in country pulpits. The shorthand writer, being a man of honor, declined to be any further employed as an instrument of fraud.

A peculiar case of religious mania comes from West Middleton, Indiana. Mrs. Lydia Cox, from childhood a member of the Society of Friends, and an exceptionally devout woman, adopted the faith of the Holiness Church. A short time ago she announced that she had received a call from the Lord to enter upon a season of fasting, and to abstain from food until such a time as he should make known to her that she was sanctified. Accordingly, she has taken no food for weeks, neither has she spoken a word or opened her eyes. The physicians say the fast will result in death.

Sabbatarians, as we know, can trot out some silly arguments in favor of their proposals—some of them absurd enough to make a cat laugh. For pious nonsense of this kind, however, the Rev. Dr. Porter, vicar of All Saints', Southport, assuredly takes the cake. It seems that he presented a memorial against Sunday traffic to the Midland Railway shareholders' meeting at Derby. And this is how he supported it in a speech. He said the chairman had noted the fact that their dividends had been reduced owing to the prevalence of fog on a portion of their lines. Now over fogs the ablest directors and the most efficient staff had little control. That was a matter for the "clerk of the weather," or, if he might be permitted to put it reverently, the success of their undertaking depended finally on the blessing of the Almighty. He humbly pleaded, therefore, that they should not wilfully and needlessly flout defiance of the Divine law of the Sabbath in the face of the Being who could wrap their lines in fog from one end to the other, and from one end of the year to the other. He asked them on that ground to put a stop to Sunday trains.

Fancy addressing such tommy-rot to a meeting of business men! If you run Sunday trains, the lines may be enveloped in fog. If you don't, the Lord may keep off the fogs, and your dividends will be larger. Yes, but minus the profit on the Sunday traffic, and there must be some profit, or the traffic would be speedily discontinued. Naturally, the shareholders decided to chance the fogs. They could hardly have much more of them, unless there was some phenomenally violent interference with the atmosphere. And they didn't believe that they would have less, if they stopped the trains on both the Jewish and the Gentile Sabbath. But what a befogged state of mind this poor man, Dr. Porter, must have got into, prior to talking such utter bosh.

The *Harrovian* publishes a delightful selection of school-boy mistakes taken from examination papers. Here are several: "The man Moses was very meek. He occasionally got into a violent temper, which was the cause of his early death. Job was swallowed by a whale." "Ruth went and weaned the corn in the fields of Boaz; Elisha made Gehazi a

leopard." Moses is again to the fore in the following: "Would there were a sword in my hand, for now I would kill thee," said Moses to the golden calf, when he came down from the Mount."

The best example is as follows: "Six days shall thy neighbor do all that thou hast to do; but the seventh is the Sabbath. In it thou shall do no manner of work," etc. There is a point about the first part of this. The godly employer and stickler for the Sabbath is often disposed to act as if the commandment were indeed "Six days shall thy neighbor do all that thou hast to do."

Since the turn of the tide in the fortunes of the South African war, it is noticeable that very little has been said about the need of a national humiliation. This looks very much as though, in many cases, the idea had been taken up in a merely superstitious spirit, and had been regarded as a sort of bribe whereby Providence might be prevailed on to send us victory. Now that our arms are successful, such a step has, of course, become unnecessary. For the prevalence of such a spirit amongst us there is certainly more call for humiliation than for anything we may or may not have done in South Africa.—Church Gazette.

Considering the fuss that has followed, Dr. Temple now probably wishes that he had refrained from issuing that form of intercession for Her Majesty's forces. Protestants have made out a pretty good case against this sanctioning of prayers for the dead. The way in which the form was decided upon, and issued, was more than a little autocratic. Cantaur, York, and the Duke of Devonshire put their heated heads together in a fit of hysteric piety and patriotism, and straightway the precious form is thrust on the Church without consultation with anybody else.

They called it a "Form of Intercession with Almighty God." The least they could have done was to avoid bad English. We intercede with, but we make intercession to. However, the One Above may not be very particular, and we mustn't expect too much from a couple of Archbishops and a Duke, even though one of the former was once the headmaster of a public school.

Kruger is beginning to think it is all up with him. He has got down to that last despairing cry: "God help us!" With this he winds up a cablegram to the New York Journal. When you have reached the "God-help-us" stage it is about time to give in.

Little anti-infidel Kensit, who is doing better business now as a Protestant champion, paid a visit the other day to Womersley Church and carried off some of the High Church "images." Kensit holds that such things are illegal, but he does not say who gave him the right to interfere. We suppose we shall hear by-and-bye that he is "inspired."

Father Ignatius continues his crusade against the "Higher Critics" within the Church of England. Writing in the Hereford Times, he says that Dean Fremantle "is not a heretic," but "an absolute and entire infidel." "He believes," says the irate Father, "in neither God or Devil, creeds or Bible, heaven or hell." Very sad for this honest gentleman's point of view, no doubt; but it shows how hard it is for any man of brains to be orthodox.

Charles Deneson Heaps was for many years one of the most prosperous merchants in Leeds. He also occupied a prominent position in connection with the Methodist New Connection body, being treasurer for the circuit funds. This position enabled him to effect loans from friends to the tune of some £40,000, which he really wanted to make good his heavy losses in gambling speculations. He is now doing twelve months' hard labor for obtaining £11,000 on false pretences.

Mr. Brann, who started Brann's Iconoclast as a professed organ of Freethought with a special fondness for Roman Catholicism, was shot in the street, but his paper survived him and is still "going strong" at Chicago. It is going strong in more ways than one. The last number to hand refers to Mrs. Langtry as a "yellow-haired, rangy, big-footed, flat-chested Jezebel." No wonder the bullets fly about!

The Two Worlds calls the Freethinker "our wideawake contemporary," but regrets that "Mr. Foote likes to come down on us Spiritualists." This, however, is an exaggeration. We take material for a "smart" paragraph from any and every quarter. Still, we have no special quarrel with the Spiritualists, although we cannot accept their beliefs. They are generally opposed to orthodox superstition, and friends to liberty of thought and speech. On that account,

at least, we extend to them the hand of friendship. For the rest, we are willing to live and let live; only we don't promise to refrain from humorous criticism of our Spiritualist friends' aberrations from the path of intellectual sanity.

The Rev. C. M. Sheldon, of "What Would Jesus Do?" fame, says that, "To use fiction in the pulpit, the preacher is obliged to know life in the pews." Yes, up to a point. He must know enough of the people in the pews to calculate how much they will stand. If they will stand a lot, he is an orthodox fictionist; if they will only stand a modicum, he is an "advanced" fictionist. Every preacher is a fictionist of some description, or rather in some degree.

Missionary Work in China is the title of a pamphlet by W. A. Alcock, which is published at Leeds, and is apparently being sold in the streets. The writer says he has done soul-saving himself in the land of the Celestials, and claims to speak from personal experience. According to his figures, food is wonderfully cheap in China; his own food-bill never exceeded £4 12s. 6d. a year, and this is "much more than the ordinary Chinese literary man can spend" on his stomach. Why, then, does the Christian missionary want £120 or £200 a year? This writer denounces the "shameful extravagance, self-indulgence, and luxury of high living that characterise the missionaries of all denominations."

The household of faith was never too harmonious. We are not surprised, therefore, to read that Missionary Alcock got to loggerheads with Dr. John, of the London Missionary Society, who told him: "It's the Devil's work you are doing; the Devil has brought you to China, and each step you have taken is of the Devil." The result was his expulsion from the country. It is not stated whether he took the Devil away with him. If he did, both parties are now in England; or, to be more precise, at 3 Cobden-place, Claypit-lane, Leeds—which is not a very aristocratic address for his Satanic Majesty.

The Daily News says we shall have to appoint a Minister of Astronomy to settle the controversy about the right date of Easter. What a pity it was that the Christians did not know and celebrate the actual dates of the Crucifixion and Resurrection of their Savior. Instead of this they adopted heatben calculations about the sun and moon; perhaps on the ground that Jesus Christ is the sun of righteousness, and that the moon is sacred to lunatics.

Individuality.

SURELY every human being ought to attain to the dignity of the unit. Surely it is worth something to be one, and to feel that the census of the universe would be incomplete without counting you. Surely there is grandeur in knowing that in the realm of thought, at least, you are without a chain; that you have the right to explore all heights and all depths; that there are no walls nor fences, nor prohibited places, nor sacred corners in all the vast expanse of thought; that your intellect owes no allegiance to any being, human or divine; that you hold all in fee, and upon no condition, and by no tenure whatever; that in the world of mind you are relieved from all personal dictation, and from the ignorant tyranny of majorities. Surely it is worth something to feel that there are no priests, no popes, no parties, no governments, no kings, no gods, to whom your intellect can be compelled to pay a reluctant homage. Surely it is a joy to know that all the cruel ingenuity of bigotry can devise no prison, no dungeon, no cell in which for one instant to confine a thought; that ideas cannot be dislocated by racks, nor crushed in iron boots, nor burned with fire. Surely it is sublime to think that the brain is a castle, and that within its curious bastions and winding halls the soul, in spite of all worlds and all beings, is the supreme sovereign of itself.—Robert G. Ingersoll.

Man vainly ascribes his misfortunes to obscure and imaginary agents; in vain he seeks for mysterious and remote causes of his ills. In the general order of the universe his condition is doubtless subject to inconveniences, and his existence overruled by superior powers; but those powers are neither the decrees of a blind fatality nor the caprices of whimsical and fantastic beings. Like the world of which he forms a part, man is governed by natural laws, regular in their course, consistent in their effects, immutable in their essence; and those laws, the common source of good and evil, are not written among the distant stars or hidden in mysterious codes. Inherent in the nature of terrestrial beings, interwoven with their existence, they are at all times and in all places present to man; they act upon his senses, they warn his understanding, and dispense to every action its reward or punishment. Let man, then, study these laws! —Volney.

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Mr. Foote's Engagements.

April 1 and 8, Athenæum Hall, London, W.C.; 22, Camberwell.

To Correspondents.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—April 1, Birmingham. 8, Camberwell.—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.

N. S. S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss E. M. Vance acknowledges: Manchester Branch collection £2 10s.

W. YOUNG.—Thanks See "Acid Drops."

J. ROBERTS.—Logan Mitchell was the author of *Christian Mythology Unveiled*. Do you mean that the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes's grandfather was a Jew? Not that he could help it, or is really the worse for it, if it be true. By the way, you quite misread the passage in Corinthians (i.-vii. 5). Give the Devil his due—and the same with Paul.

T. WILMOT.—The Camberwell lecture notice did not reach us in time last week. Your postcard was delayed somewhere, if you posted it on Monday. For the rest, see paragraph.

H. C. SHACKLETON.—The Bible says that Joshua stopped the sun; therefore it teaches that the sun goes round the earth, instead of the earth turning round itself and going round the sun. The "firmament" in Genesis means a solid roof stretched over the earth, which must have been regarded as flat. The Bible does not say that the world has four corners; even if it did, that would probably pass as a colloquialism. Shakespeare uses the expression: "Come the four corners of the world in arms, And we shall shock them." This is a lively, telling way of referring to east, west, north, and south.

X. L.—Those who broke away from the N. S. S. in Nottingham, under outside influence, soon ceased to do anything whatever for Secularism. It was always thus. With regard to the books you mention, we regret to say they are not of much commercial value. Those published by Richard Carlile would fetch the most.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for your cuttings.

G. BELLCHAMBERS.—Shall appear in our next.

H. PERCY WARD.—Very sorry to hear of Mr. Ridgway's illness. Kindly convey to him our earnest wishes for his speedy recovery. See paragraphs.

C. W. HECKETHORNE.—Thanks for your letter. We have dealt with Lord Roberts's telegram. The other matter stands over till next week.

A. W. MARCHANT.—Herbert Spencer is a very old man now, and his work is done. But what a great work it is! Not that he is infallible. No man is so, not even the Pope. We have always said that his "Unknowable" was a solemn absurdity.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Blue Grass Blade—Freidenker—Two Worlds—Secular Thought—Brann's Iconoclast—Open Court—People's Newspaper—Liberator—Sydney Bulletin—Public Opinion—Ethical World—Progressive Thinker—De Vrije Gedachte—Cape Argus—Boston Investigator—Progressive Thinker—Londoner—Hereford Times—Truthseeker (New York)—Isle of Man Times—Crescent—Torch of Reason.

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.

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

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

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.

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

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

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.

The extinction of a religion is not the abrupt movement of a day; it is a secular process of many well-marked stages—the rise of doubt among the candid; the disapprobation of the conservative; the defence of ideas fast becoming obsolete by the well-meaning, who hope that allegory and new interpretations may give renewed probability to what is almost incredible. But dissent ends in denial at last.—*John W. Draper.*

Sugar Plums.

WE should be glad if the friends of the *Freethinker* could make a special effort to sustain its circulation just at present. One wholesale newsagent, whose weekly order has dropped a bit, being written to by us on the subject, replies: "The decrease in the order is no doubt due to the War. All papers, other than those dealing specially with War news, are suffering in like manner." One way of helping us through this difficulty is to take an extra copy of the paper weekly. The purchaser could give it to an acquaintance, or lend it to more than one. A good deal of valuable advertising, at a comparatively small cost, might be done in this way.

The Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road, will be reopened for Freethought meetings this evening (March 25). Mr. C. Cohen will occupy the platform. It is some time since he lectured in London, and no doubt his friends will be glad to hear him again. Mr. Foote will be at the Athenæum Hall on the following Sunday.

Education may not be the sole cause of the reduction in our prison statistics, but it has a great deal to do with the change. During the ten years before 1870 our prison population increased from 115 out of every 100,000 of general population to 128. By 1880 it had fallen to 111, by 1890 to 68, and last year to 56. In 1870 we had 135 prisons, now we have only 66. Of the prisoners now in our gaols 20.3 per cent. can neither read nor write, and 77.2 per cent. can only read and write imperfectly. Only 2.5 per cent. belong to the fairly educated classes. Does not this prove the truth of Ruskin's old saying that the best way to empty prisons was to fill schools?

The American Secular Union is still living, and even appears to be in funds; for we see by the New York *Truthseeker* that it has decided to offer one thousand dollars reward for the discovery of a true Christian, alive or dead. President Remsburg is to "give a full description of the individual wanted," and when we see it we may be inclined to print it in the *Freethinker*, if only for the sake of the many Christians in this country who would like to get hold of that reward.

Mr. Washburn, the able and eloquent editor and proprietor of the *Boston Investigator*, the oldest Freethought journal in America, makes another urgent appeal for financial assistance. It was self-supporting, he says, until the hard times of four years ago. Then it was badly hit, and it has been hard work for the past two years to make both ends meet. "We want to keep the paper alive," Mr. Washburn says, "and make it better than ever; but we cannot do it without help." Surely the needed help will be forthcoming. We should be grieved to see that fine old flag run down the staff.

Even the *Church Gazette* says it is "very probable" that Shakespeare was "himself in no sense a devotee to any religion at all." "The great sphinx," it says, "never reveals his special conclusions." We don't agree with this latter statement, but we have pleasure in recording the former.

Miss Olga Nethersole's company have had a lively experience in New York over the play called *Sapho*. Of course the men of God were very active on the side of the "purity" people—mostly fussy women—in denouncing this "wicked" drama. Rev. D. A. McMurray, for instance, of Morningside Baptist Church, preached a special sermon, which was reported in the *World*. One passage of it was printed in very large type: "She and those who support her are teaching all who go to see and hear them the art of the harlot and the libertine." This caught the eye of Mr. John Glendinning, a Freethinker, and the son of a Freethinker, as well as a member of Miss Nethersole's company. Mr. Glendinning is a "fine figure of a man," and has a spirit to match his size. So he paid this reverend gentleman a visit, which was also reported in the *World*. Mr. Glendinning took his wife with him, and demanded an apology on her behalf and also on behalf of all the other ladies of the company. Mr. McMurray said the newspaper had misquoted him a little; he didn't mean to insult any good woman, he hadn't seen the play, indeed he never went to the theatre. But the relentless actor was not to be hocus-pocussed in this way. "Sir," he said, "you will take the privilege of apologising to my wife now. She will, no doubt, convey your regrets to Miss Nethersole and the other ladies of the company. I shall look for your qualification of your statements in the *World* with great interest, and if they don't appear I possibly may call again." The man of God took the hint, and his apology appeared the next day. He said that the play was immoral "in tendency," but he withdrew whatever seemed to reflect on "the personalities" of those engaged in it. By this means, we guess, he escaped a worse humiliation.

This evening (Mar. 25) a public debate takes place in the Secular Hall, Camberwell, between Mr. R. P. Edwards and Mr. H. Quelch, editor of *Justice*. The subject of debate is "Malthusianism v. Socialism." There will be reserved seats at threepence and sixpence.

Mr. H. Percy Ward delivers three lectures to-day (Mar. 25) in the Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints, Manchester. We hope the local Freethinkers will give him good meetings and a hearty reception.

The *Open Court* (Chicago) is an excellent and well-printed magazine. The March number contains an article by G. W. Buckley on the Wit and Humor of Jesus Christ. Most readers of the Gospels would consider this a very barren theme, but Mr. Buckley spins out thirteen pages of illustrative laudation. After reading them, however, we fall back upon the recollection that "Jesus wept," but is never reported to have smiled. Perhaps this new critic thinks he left the smiling to others—like a practised joker.

Editor Moore, of the *Blue Grass Blade*, Lexington, Kentucky, is undoubtedly a man of courage, and in that respect he has our admiration, but we could wish he were even a little more discreet. He has been to prison more than once, and now he is in trouble again. The bigots and the purity people, or the purity people and the bigots—we don't know which lot are entitled to the precedence—are prosecuting him again on account of an article on "The Virgin Mary" from the pen of Mr. Grier Kidder, of San Francisco. Editor Moore is rather eccentric in his defences, and we are afraid that he will give himself away once more in the present case. What he ought to do is to make the best defence he can on general grounds of liberty of the press. By keeping out of prison, instead of going into it, he serves the cause of Freethought best; thus making the fight easier for others, and deterring the enemies of freedom from fresh attacks.

In the excitement roused by the war some other things are more or less forgotten—Freethought and its propagation, for example. In Melbourne our cause has been merely struggling for many years, and probably any man with less patience than my own would have dropped it in despair and removed to some other field. Against us we have had the Jesuits, the newspapers, the government, the judges, the J.P.'s, the pulpits of course, anarchy, Socialism, etc., etc. But the tide must turn, and is turning. All honest and earnest Freethinkers should unite to push their cause. It may be true that they cannot do half of what they would like; but they should at least do what they can. I hope they will. There does not seem to me any reason why they should not.—*Joseph Symes, "Liberator" (Melbourne)*.

We have just received a letter from a Freethinker at Kimberley. It is dated February 1—"the 107th day of the siege." The writer was bravely doing his duty there as a volunteer in the defence of the town, and occupying a very perilous position. We hope he lived through the siege and saw the relief column ride into the place. He gives us a sad description of the sufferings of the inhabitants, and especially of the women and children. Lack of food was telling upon them even then. Our correspondent was looking forward to receiving the *Freethinker* again; and as he says he would be much honored and pleased if he could get a brief personal letter from us, we are writing him one, which will reach him all right now, if he is still in the land of the living.

Mr. G. J. Holyoake is interesting himself in the raising of funds for an Ingersoll Chair in the Liberal University of Oregon. The following subscriptions have been already collected:—Mr. George Anderson, £5; Mr. Alfred Marsh, £3; Mrs. E. Holyoake Marsh, 10s.; Mr. Thomas Allsop, £1; Mr. J. M. Gimson, £1; Mr. Arthur Gimson, £1; Mr. Sidney Gimson, £1; Mr. R. Applegarth, 10s. Further subscriptions can be sent to Mrs. E. Holyoake Marsh, 62 Pentonville-road, London, N., or to Mr. Pearl W. Geer, Liberal University, Silverton, Oregon, U.S.A. We may observe that "Liberal" is a common expression in America for "Freethought," although the latter word and "Freethinker" are getting into general use there. One object of the (as yet infant) Liberal University is the education of Freethought advocates.

The clergy have no longer a superiority of intellect or cultivation; and a conference of prelates from all parts of Christendom, or even from all departments of the English Church, would not present an edifying spectacle. Parliament may no longer meddle with opinions unless it be to untie the chains which it forged three centuries ago. But better than councils, better than sermons, better than Parliament, is that free discussion through a free press which is the fittest instrument for the discovery of truth, and the most effectual means for preserving it.—*J. A. Froude*.

Shakespeare's View of Death.

"The rest is silence."

—*The dying words of Hamlet.*

It was a fortunate circumstance that the lot of Shakespeare was cast in the spacious times of great Elizabeth. The age was very susceptible to noble and beautiful impressions. It had still enough of the firmness, inherited from a vigorous olden time, not to shrink in dismay from strong and virile writing. There was room for a supreme poet.

In that hour the life of England ran high. Great struggles had made it strong, and great sufferings and dangers had made it noble. The revival of learning had enriched the national mind with a store of new ideas. The reformation of religion had been accomplished by the strenuous efforts of intellectual giants. The attempt of Spain against the independence of England had been defeated by the gallantry of English seamen. English adventurers were exploring untravelled lands and distant oceans. It was felt that England was a power in the world—a country eminently fitted for the birthplace of a great writer. To praise Shakespeare is easy; but to make a full and accurate estimate of this Titan of Tragedy would require the powers of Shakespeare himself, and "nature has broken the mould in which she made him." He is the poet of the world. He alone is of no age. He speaks a language which thrills our blood across the gulf of centuries. He holds the mirror up to nature, and his genius will be contemporary with the mind of every generation until the crack of doom.

A great genius like Shakespeare is no mere rhetorician, saying what comes uppermost, and, because he says everything, saying at last something worth remembering. His heart and brain is in unison with his time and country. He is receptive, although his writings may startle and dazzle a complacent world.

The dominant note of Elizabethan literature is that of freedom. It was influenced even more by the Renaissance of Paganism than by the Reformation of Christianity. Freethought had not only penetrated our literature, but, in the person of Giordano Bruno, its highest representative visited our shores.

Shakespeare himself was essentially a sceptic. Nowhere does his iconoclasm show itself more plainly than in his treatment of the subject of death.

Listen to his grand, deep, mystic utterance:—

We are such stuff
As dreams are made of, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep.

To die is only to be as we were before we were born. The circle of individual existence is an eternal sleep, a dreamless forgetting. One might apply the language which Cassius uses of his birthday and deathday in *one* on the fateful plains of Philippi:—

Time is come round,
And where I did begin, there shall I end;
My life is run his compass.

Claudio's imaginary fears of death are silenced by the Duke in *Measure for Measure*:—

Thy best of rest is sleep,
And that thou oft provokest,
Yet grossly fear'st
Thy death, which is no more.

No other immortality is suggested than that through offspring:—

And nothing 'gainst Time's scythe can make defence,
Save breed, to brave him when he takes thee hence.

In portraying the seven ages, the last scene of all is not the entrance into eternal glory, but second childishness and oblivion:—

Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.

Othello, pausing at Desdemona's taper-lighted bed, bethinks him that there is no re-lighting the wick of life:—

If I quench thee, thou flaming minister,
I can again thy former light restore,
Should I repent me; but once put out thine,
Thou cunning'st pattern of excellent nature,
I know not where is that Promethean heat
That can thy light relume.

h. Macbeth, when he hears of his wife's death, passionately exclaims:—

Out, out, brief candle!
Life's but a walking shadow; a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more: it is a tale
Told by an idiot full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.

Prince Hamlet, having seen his father's spirit "piping hot from purgatory," speaks of death as the bourne whence no traveller returns. When dying, he utters as his last words: "The rest is silence."

Macduff, when he hears of the slaughter of his little ones, blasphemously breaks out: "Did heaven look on, and would not take their part?"

The Duke, in *Measure for Measure*, playing the part of a friar preparing a criminal for death, gives Claudio consolation. Not a word of Christian doctrine, not a syllable of sacrificial salvation and sacramental forgiveness, is introduced. The omission is most significant.

In the last scene of *Othello*, when Iago is led as a prisoner into the sad bed-chamber where poor murdered Desdemona lies, Othello can hardly believe he is not in the presence of a fiend:—

I look down towards his feet; but that's a fable.

Let the reader, who cares to pursue the subject, turn to Shakespeare's sonnets, the inmost citadel of his mind, and note that there is no mention of Christian theology of any kind. Shakespeare banished religion from literature. It was well. His mind is the horizon beyond which, at present, we do not see.

MIMNERMUS.

A God-of-all-Work.

JEHOVAH was a gory God,
A God of derring-do;
A swarthy, young, old, hoary God
Who hated what was new;
A good old crusted Tory God,
If story-books be true.

A feeble but emphatic God
Who jumbled praise and blame;
A solemnly erratic God
Who gloried in the shame
Of posing as a static God
Who'd always be the same.

He aye maintained capriciously
A changeless, fitful state;
He ordered things maliciously—
His littleness was great—
And always hated viciously,
As one who loved to hate.

He truly was a lying God—
He owned he lied for spite—
A "week-end," tripper, dying God,
One foggy Friday night.
And, once, a jump-sky-highing-God
A jumper-out-of-sight.

A blazing-hell-damnation-God,
When parsons thought 'twould pay;
A pleasing-recreation-God,
Say crimps and touts to-day,
Who boom their sustentation-God
With platitudes and play.

This Damn-you-for-his-glory-God
Is half-reformed, to-day;
This Curse-you-con-amore-God
Is giddy now, and gay;
A Lunch-and-funny-story-God;
Bazaars-and-pray-no-morey-God,
Et Cæ't'ra—Let us pay!

G. L. MACKENZIE.

Not long ago the pastor dined with the family, and Master Tommy was at the table. He behaved pretty well until the cake was brought in, then he suddenly lurched forward and snatched the piece he sized up as the biggest. "Why, Tommy," cried his distressed mother, "you are forgetting that Dr. Choker is here!" The boy gave the worthy pastor a withering look. "Naw, I ain't forgettin' it," he snarled. "If he wasn't here, I'd git two pieces."—*Cleveland Plain Dealer*.

Moody and Ingersoll.

BORN under the same flag, not far from the same place, and almost at the same time; each of humble parentage, each forced early into the arena of conflict; products of the same past, inheritors of the same civilisation; both carried westward by the same resistless stream to the same State; each amiable, generous-hearted, and sincere; each in his own field without a parallel or peer. Such is the similitude between these two men, Ingersoll and Moody.

Still further the parallel runs. Both, by the eminence of their gifts, o'erstepped the limitations of local fame and place. The name of each became familiar to the English-speaking world; each became the ideal embodiment and living symbol of the cause he advocated. The individuality of each became co-extensive with the cause he had espoused; each had thousands of followers who had never seen their leader; each stirred to the utmost depths the admiration and affection of his admirers; the name of each became a token by which the faithful conjured; each gave his whole life to disseminating truth as he believed it. And at last both, at life's full noon, with strength unspent, at almost the same time, surrounded by the loved in the earthly paradise called "home," sank to sleep, feeling upon their longing lips "love's last and holiest kiss." Such is the superficial likeness between these two men.

That two such men could be produced by the same generation, and at the same time, shows the breadth and roominess of our institutions. The spirit of those institutions must indeed be generous and hospitable, the opportunities they offer ample and various, in order that simultaneously the Agnostic and the Apostle can attain eminence, wealth, honor, and fame. In this respect our country exhibits a tolerance wholly new in the history of the world. Hitherto the pre-eminence of the one has implied the extinction of the other. When the Catholic was in power, the Protestant went into hiding, or fled. When the Protestant swayed the sceptre, the Catholic suffered; whilst the Freethinker, a heretic in the sight of both, found no quarter at the hands of either.

Freedom of thought is the foundation of all freedom. Without it, liberty is but the deceiving mask that hides the leer of oppression and the lying lips of tyranny. He is a traitor to thought, a coward to conviction, a poltroon to his profession, who seeks or desires an advantage gained by compulsion and force! It is the bigot who seeks to back up his brains by the bayonet, to emphasise his teaching by torture, to promulgate his philosophy by fire, to vindicate his faith by the fagot, or to spread his gospel with the sword! The Inquisition is the bigot's argument for this world, and hell is his argument for the world to come.

Under the inspiration of free thinking and free speaking every sanctity has its guaranty, and all progress has its promise and its defender. The battle of the future will be a battle of the brain; and contending forces will be mind, facts will furnish the armament, knowledge supply the resources, science will be the field-marshal, and reason the commander-in-chief. There will continue to be some who would appeal to force if they could, who would use the dungeon if they dared, who remain faithful to the fagots, but cannot light them, and who, despairing of these things, deliciously anticipate a future hell for their conquerors. There will continue to be such, but they are the bushwhackers and guerillas; the disease, the running sores of war.

The contrast between these two men commences in the conditions under which their respective careers began. Mr. Moody joined an army already organised and in the field; he espoused a cause ancient and established, a system with its traditions and its inherited advantages and profits. This system was in absolute command. It was popular and prosperous. It controlled the colleges and universities, and most of the primary schools. It had printing establishments, publication societies, and book concerns; it had the advantage of the press, the public favor, and the public ear. It had wealth; its institutions were amply endowed and abundantly equipped; it had missionaries and colporteurs in every field; it had thousands of advocates and champions trained to the work, and devoting their entire time

and all their talents to the promulgation of its teachings and the defence of its authority. It held and used the bribe of heaven and the threat of hell, and ruled millions by appeals to selfishness and fear. It lacked nothing. Moreover, in addition to its wealth, its social prestige and influence, it was swift and pitiless against its adversaries; it extinguished them by ostracism and obloquy, as it had once done by the dungeon and the *auto da fe*. No one could—no one dared—stand against it. Moreover, this great organised army, with its churches in every hamlet, village, and town, and every city a wilderness of spires; this great organisation, with common purposes and common longing, believed in Evangelists—they were part of the divine plan. Had they not enrolled the names of such amongst the immortals? They had had John the Baptist, and Peter the Hermit, and John Knox and Whitfield and Wesley. The people were watchful, longing for the Evangelist who was to come at the appointed time. He must be a man lowly born, of humble origin, and unknown; a man filled with the Holy Ghost (whatever that may be); he must not be rich or wise, or learned or eloquent; the less there was of him the more there would be of the Holy Ghost. Then Dwight L. Moody appeared. He claimed no power of his own. He was simply an instrument, the voice of the word of God, a mouthpiece of the Holy Ghost. He took command at once; the great army was expecting him; strifes ceased, factions were forgotten, and the various camps were merged into one. Wherever his banner was flung aloft, the soldiers made haste to come. The Churches accepted him, and placed their enormous resources at his command. He was the man who answered their longing, fulfilled their expectations, embodied their theories, and vindicated their faith. Moody was, for the time being, the Church.

Every several and particular condition was reversed in the case of Mr. Ingersoll. He espoused no popular cause, he joined no opulent party; no organised army equipped awaited him in the field; like a star he dwelt apart; he stood alone, doomed to the isolation of greatness. Taking counsel of his own convictions, he counted not the cost; guided alone by the light of reason, he fought his way out from the thralldom of the superstitions of the past into the light and air of liberty; he fought that fight alone; it was Ingersoll against the world, and the world against Ingersoll. Not that there were no others who revered reason, but the others were afraid; they were cowed, subdued, enthralled. It was not popular nor politic to attack the Bible or to assail dogma, or to recount the personal history and adventures of Jehovah. The man who did that invited the pious revenge of the powerful Church; the man who did that was boycotted and ostracised; living, he was reviled and vilified; and, when dead, he was followed to the grave by the unclean birds of slander. All this Ingersoll knew, but faltered not. A hundred years had passed since Thomas Paine lived and taught, but even yet the perennial slanders of that great man were fresh upon the lying lips of the elect. All this Mr. Ingersoll knew, yet he stood firm. He was attacked from every side; the pulpit, like an avalanche, rushed down upon him; they moved him not, he stood alone. It was not respectable to hear him lecture. A man ran the risk of losing his standing in society who, in the earlier years, attended one of his lectures. But few people went to his lectures at first, and none of them were women. The women were afraid; they were afraid of the speech of the people; they were afraid of the Church. But equipped with reason, backed by common sense, armed and inspired by honest convictions, the great man faced undaunted the criticism, the censure, and condemnation of the universal Church. The harvest of lies began to ripen; he heeded them not; from reason's serene heights he looked down upon the turbulent defenders of the faith, and smiled. Years passed on; the multitude, seeing the courage of this courageous man, found theirs; the women broke away from the restraint and gossip of the Church and flocked to hear him, and found in him the best and bravest defender they had ever had of the rights of mother and child, of the sanctity of love and home. The attitude of the multitude had changed; the sentiment of an entire continent had been reversed; he had touched the heart and won the brain of intelligent people. In every section it was the same. North and South, East and West, millions applauded the orator, honored

the genius, and loved the man. Ingersoll had conquered.

The time was when it was accepted as a matter of course that, if a man abandoned the orthodox belief, he abandoned himself to evil, to wickedness, to vice. The man is sitting in this audience this minute who was once charged before me with having no other aim or intent in breaking away from the Baptist Church than the desire to revel and riot in uncleanness and wickedness. It was *prima facie* evidence, or considered so, of a man's evil heart and vicious intent if he gave up the orthodox belief; and, when a man was found who never had that belief, and who inveighed against it, it was assumed, as a matter of course, that he was altogether vile. Mr. Ingersoll's nobility of life and character silences forever that darling calumny of the Church.

Each one of these men lived his life for the commonweal. In them there was not the least trace or taint of selfishness; each made of himself an ample sacrifice, gave the strength and talent of his years to the promulgation of the truth as he saw it, in order that the world might be better. Mr. Moody went up and down the earth beseeching men to turn and flee from the wrath of God, because he thought they were in imminent danger of sinking into hell. His motive was the love of mankind, and he was one of the very few who was honest in his belief of a hell. He spared no time, no strength, no expenditure of his resources and of his own powers; but, with perfect abandon, with the perpetual gift of sacrifice, gave himself, if by any chance he might save some soul. Speak of his doctrine as men may, refuse it, reject it, laugh at it, trample upon it; nevertheless, the inspiring motive of that man's life was one of devotion and love for his fellow-man. It is a great delight, and I embrace the opportunity with gladness of paying the tribute of my sincere respect to an honest orthodox man. I have profound respect for every sincere and honest man, whatever his faith may be; and because this man believed in hell for the great multitude was the reason he went up and down the world imploring men to accept the terms of salvation.

(DR.) E. J. ROBERTS.

—*Truthseeker* (New York).

(To be concluded.)

The Deistic Movement.

BY THE LATE J. M. WHEELER.

(Continued from page 172.)

A BILL for the further suppression of blasphemy and profaneness, brought this year (1721) before the House of Lords by Lord Willoughby de Broke, Dean of Windsor, and which would have proved a thorough restriction of all liberty of speech upon the doctrines of Christianity, was happily thrown out by a large majority. Nor was this all; an Act was passed for the relief of Quakers by substituting their affirmation for the oath; and in 1726, when Edward Ewall was tried at Stratford for denying the Trinity, the jury, knowing him to be an honest man, refused to convict. Henceforth the Unitarians felt tolerably safe. It was soon, however, to appear how far we were from having gained complete toleration. Free publication was by no means assured. In 1723 an edition of Servetus was seized by Bishop Gibson, and destroyed. The same prelate contrived to get hold of the MS. of Matthew Tindal's second volume, which, consequently, never saw the light.

Undeterred by his narrow escape, Woolston pursued his work, and in 1726, and the following years, published the *Six Discourses on the Miracles*, upon which his fame rests. They were dedicated to six bishops. They had no publisher's name on them, but were "Printed for the Author. Sold by him near Moregate, and by the Booksellers of London and Westminster." Infidelity was, for the first time, put before the people in common language. The older Deists had used the language of scholars, but Woolston attacked the Church with mother-wit and held its doctrines up to ridicule.

Woolston cites St. Hilary, who says: "There are many historical passages of the New Testament that, if they are taken literally, are contrary to sense and

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reason, and, therefore, there is a necessity for a mystical interpretation." This he applies to all the miracles. If the story of sending the Devil into the swine had been recorded of Mohammed and not of Jesus, "our divines, I dare say, would have worked it up to a confutation of Mohammedanism. Mohammed would have been with them nothing less than a wizard, an enchanter, a dealer with familiar spirits, a sworn slave of the Devil; and his Mussulmans would have been hard put to it to write a good defence of him." If, when Pilate asked what evil had Jesus done, the merchants of the Temple and the owners of the pigs had come forward, it would not have been easy to vindicate his innocence.

In regard to the woman with a spirit of infirmity, Woolston says: "If the story of such a miracle had been related of any impostor in religion, of an arch-heretic, or popish exorcist, our divines would have flouted at it; they would have told us there was nothing supernatural and uncommon in the event, nor anything at all in it to be wondered at. Take the Devil out of this story, and there's no more in it than what is common for a simple, melancholy, and drooping woman, to be cheered and elated upon the comfortable advice and admonition of a reputedly good and wise man." He further remarks that the writings of the evangelists so abound with stories of Satan, Beelzebub, and of greater and less numbers of devils, and of demons and unclean spirits, more than any other previous histories, that one would think, if these stories were to be literally understood, the age in which Christ came was the one in which hell first broke loose.

The cursing of the barren fig-tree is termed "such an absurd, foolish, and ridiculous, if not malicious and ill-natured act in Jesus, that I question whether for folly and absurdity it can be equalled in any instance of the life of a reputed wise man." St. Augustine very plainly says that this act, upon the supposition that it was done, was a foolish one. To curse the fig-tree because hungry and disappointed was as foolish and passionately done as for another man to throw the chairs and stools about the house because his dinner is not ready. If he was of power to provide bread for others on a sudden, he might surely have supplied his own necessities, and so have kept his temper. But what is yet worse, the time of figs was not yet when Jesus looked and longed for them.

Did anyone ever hear or read of a thing more unreasonable than for a man to expect fruit out of season? What if a yeoman of Kent should go to look for pippins in his orchard at Easter (the supposed time when Jesus sought for these figs), and, because of a disappointment, cut down all his trees? Again, whose fig-tree was it? Jesus owned nothing. Even among the relics preserved by the Church of Rome there was not so much as a three-legged stool or a pair of nut-crackers that belonged to him. This miracle must be interpreted figuratively. Some of the Fathers explain the fig-tree as signifying human nature, others the Church, and others the Jewish nation.

In dealing with the miracles of turning water into wine and of the resurrection, the opportunities of mirth are so many that Woolston took the precaution of putting his gibes into the mouth of a Jewish Rabbi. This device, however, did not save him, any more than his constant plea that these things are an allegory.

The discourses were immensely successful. Voltaire, who was in England at the time, says that 30,000 copies were sold. Many copies were sent off to America. Torrents of abuse flowed from clerical pens. No less than sixty pamphlets were written in opposition. The title of one was *Tom of Bedlam's Letter to his Cousin Tom Woolston*. Another was *For God or the Devil; or Just Chastisement, no Persecution: being the Christian Cry to the Legislature for Exemplary Punishment of Public and Pernicious Blasphemers, particularly that WRETCH Woolston*. The cry for persecution was, of course, taken up, and a prosecution for blasphemy instituted by the Attorney-General, who declared the discourses to be "the most blasphemous book that was ever published in any age whatever."

At his trial at Guildhall before the Lord Chief Justice Raymond, in March, 1729, Woolston spoke several times himself; and, among other things, urged that "he thought it very hard to be tried by a set of men who,

though otherwise very learned and worthy persons, were yet no more judges of the subjects on which he wrote than he himself was a judge of the most crabbed points of law." He was guilty on all the counts, Lord Raymond declaring that the court would not suffer it to be debated whether writing against Christianity in general was a temporal offence. He said, however: "We interpose only where the very root of Christianity itself is struck at, as it plainly is, by this allegorical scheme—the New Testament and the whole relation of the life and miracles of Christ being denied."

Woolston's counsel contended the prosecution should have been under the statute 9 and 10 William III., cap. 95; but the Chief Justice ruled that blasphemy was punishable at common law in addition to the statutory penalties. Woolston was sentenced to one year's imprisonment and a fine of £100. At the expiry of his time, being almost friendless, and unable to pay his fine, he was detained in the King's Bench Prison. Solicitations for his release were made by Drs. Chandler and Samuel Clarke, and this might have been procured upon the understanding that he would not offend again by promulgation of his views. This he nobly refused to promise. He esteemed the right of freely uttering his views even more than personal liberty. Accordingly, he lay in the then deplorably unhealthy cells of the debtor's prison until the prison fever brought release by death in 1733.

An indication that Rationalism was now spreading amongst the mass of the people appears in the writings of Thomas Chubb. Chubb was a journeyman glover (Leslie Stephen says tallow chandler; and, in fact, he had followed that occupation). He had little scholarship, and less boldness than Woolston, but was honest in his convictions and had a fairly level head. A careful study of the Bible had convinced him that its teachings were very different from the dogmas of orthodox Christianity—in short, as Voltaire happily expresses it, that Jesus Christ was of the religion of Thomas Chubb. His first tract only went the length of Arianism. Being patronised by Whiston, it got printed, and was followed by others, thirty-five of which were collected and published in 1730. In these and succeeding tracts Chubb, while not breaking from the name of Christianity, which he considered in its essence was not dogmatical, but practical, gradually developed all the positions of Deism.

(To be concluded.)

Obituary.

I REGRET to have to report the death on the 3rd inst., at the age of fifty-eight, of Mary, the wife of Mr. Robert H. Wharrier, of Bedlington Colliery, Northumberland. Mrs. Wharrier had been a member of the N. S. S. ever since its formation, and, with her husband, had with great courage through all these years faithfully adhered to, and lived, the life which the principles of that Society inculcate. A member of the Malthusian League, a certificated member of St. John's Ambulance and Nursing Association, Secretary to the local Women's Liberal Association, and an active worker in all social movements which aim at the improvement of the conditions of life, she was highly esteemed by all who knew her, and was followed to her last resting place by a very large number of her friends and neighbors. She was interred on the 6th inst. at the Bedlington Church Cemetery, where, being forbidden to hold any non-Christian service inside, Mr. S. M. Peacock, of South Shields, outside the cemetery gates, read the Holyoake service with a marked impression upon the assembled mourners, many of whom heard this beautifully-worded service for the first time. The undersigned, in introducing Mr. Peacock, took the opportunity of protesting against the indignities which a National Church imposes upon a section of the nation's citizens, and pleaded for the friendly co-operation of his hearers in the reform of the Burial Laws.—MARTIN WEATHERBURN.

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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, C. Cohen.
CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, Debate between R. P. Edwards and H. Quelch, "Malthusianism v. Socialism."
EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (78 Libra-road, Old Ford, E.): 7, Miss Zona Vallance, "The City of Dreadful Night."
SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road): 7, Professor Earl Barnes, "A Successful Failure: A Study on Robert Owen."
WEST HAM BRANCH (Stratford Grove): 7.30, W. J. Ramsey, "Our Gospels: Their Credibility and Value."
WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Royal Palace Hotel, High-street, Kensington, W.): 11, Stanton Coit, "Honor thy father and thy mother."

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms): 11, J. Sketchley, "Secret Diplomacy"; 7, Miss L. A. Goyne, "A Chapter in the History of South Africa."
CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday School; 7, Monthly Entertainment.
GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): 12, Discussion Class—Mr. McCrone, "Caverns"; 6.30, "Celsus," "Omar Khayyam: Poet and Philosopher."
HULL (Friendly Societies' Hall, No. 2 Room): 7, H. Granger, "The Devil."
LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Humberstone-gate): 6.30, F. J. Gould, "Walt Whitman: Democrat and Poet."
LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, Mr. Swan, "The Value of Faith."
MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 11, Percy Ward—11, "Christianity and Education"; 3, "Witches and Witchcraft"; 7, "Christianity before Christ; or, the Pagan Origin of the Christian Religion." Tea at 5.
NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE (1 Grainger-street): 7, Members' Monthly Meeting; 8, Discussion.
SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): W. J. P. Burton, F.G.S.—3, "A Grain of Sand"; 7, "The Antiquity of Man" (with lantern illustrations). Tea at 5.

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—March 25, Athenæum Hall, London. April 1, Manchester; 15, a., Peckham; e., Camberwell

H. PERCY WARD, 2 Leamington-place, George-street, Balsall Heath, Birmingham.—April 1, Glasgow; 8, Birmingham; 15, Stockton-on-Tees; 29, Birmingham.

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