

THE
Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

A War Phase Reviewed.

A LITTLE time ago one of the war correspondents, then at Colenso, made some caustic observations on the performances of the army chaplains at the front. One Sunday he heard a chaplain preach a sermon to the assembled troops, and found that, of all possible topics, he had selected that of Jericho! It was a dull and dreary discourse, absolutely unsuited to the occasion, and an infliction that our brave, and no doubt physically tired, defenders might well have been spared. Probably many of them wished that prosy and indiscriminate preacher was himself at Jericho, or at the Devil. The correspondent concluded from his general observation that the bulk of the army chaplains were unfit for their work, and that the Church was missing "a bridegroom opportunity." Another correspondent made a similar complaint in regard to at least one of the chaplains at Ladysmith.

Subsequently we learnt that a number of people at home had been writing savage complaints to the Chaplain-General as to the deficiencies of the army chaplains, accusing them of neglecting the soldiers' spiritual welfare.

That is the view taken by religious persons as to these men of God. The allegation that the chaplains were neglecting the spiritual welfare of the troops is not, in the opinion of many of us, a very serious matter. The chaplains might easily be better employed; but then, of course, they are sent out for a specific purpose; they undertake the work, and they draw their pay; and it hardly seems right that they should fail to discharge their duty. Though, after all, the same kind of thing is not entirely unknown in the Established Church at home. All that could be said on behalf of the regimental clerics was said recently by a war correspondent who was moved to undertake their defence.

He said he undertook to speak for them "because, by the nature of their profession, they were incapable of defence." That was a curious observation. We may readily grant the "incapability," but in what way are these men of God barred from making an attempt? There is nothing in the army regulations to prevent them. Last week a religious magazine printed a long and comprehensive letter on what was being done in the way of religious work from a commissioned army chaplain, who wrote from the Modder River. Nor can there be anything in the profession which any more prevents clergymen at the front defending themselves than it does those at home; especially when, as we are told, "some of them have felt the accusation bitterly." Their press champion retorts on the correspondent who complained of Jericho by saying that the particular sermon "may not have been such a model of eloquence as the young correspondent could have given us." The complaint, however, was not so much as to the want of eloquence as of the ineptitude which could select such a stupid subject for such an occasion.

No. 985.

During the war many instances have been given as to the services of the chaplains in the way of kindness to the sick, cheerful encouragement to all in distress, and fearlessness in the face of shells and bullets. We do not doubt the "fearlessness," for probably many a good soldier has been spoiled in the cleric. The human sympathy and assistance may also be credited and appreciated; but these are not the distinctive features of the chaplain's duty. He is there, first and foremost, on a so-called heavenly mission—not so much to look after the bodily comfort of the men as the salvation of their "immortal souls." Of the work the men of God have done some glowing accounts have been forwarded.

One would conclude from these accounts that Tommy Atkins, who certainly never exhibits any strong tendency to piety at home, nor was ever suspected of having done so before he enlisted, had suddenly become a pronounced devotee. It may be that, having been brought face to face with possible death, some fear takes possession of him—as it is said to seize the dying "infidel"—in regard to his fate hereafter. Here the chaplain comes in with his special nostrum. He directs the attention of the "fearful" and unregenerate soldier to the Savior, and implores him to wash himself in the "blood of the Lamb"—as if there were not already enough blood all around. He talks to him of Christ, who is the Prince of Peace, and whose teachings are opposed to war under any circumstances, and who by anticipation has condemned the very work in which these suddenly "roused souls" are engaged. He urges him to pray to "Our Father," who is looking down at these his children, who are trying their hardest to send each other to heaven as not being good enough to remain on earth. He holds out prospects in regard to a future life of which he knows no more than any other man.

All of which is called "administering spiritual consolation." It is a poor consolation after all. The real consolation to the wounded and dying soldier would be the surgeon's assurance that he will recover from his wounds and live. That, indeed, would be accepted as "glad tidings of great joy." By the side of such a comforting pronouncement the chaplain's talk would sink into insignificance. Tommy Atkins would gladly relinquish, or at any rate postpone, any entrance on the heavenly joys whispered of in his ear by the man of God, though, according to the latter, they are greater than the human mind can conceive, infinitely surpassing any that are possible in this world, and are, moreover, eternal.

It may be—as the Rev. J. Robertson, chaplain to the Highland Brigade, wrote home—that the work of spiritual salvation at the front showed "how increasingly much Christ is the *all in all*." We beg leave, however, to think that, whatever conversions and awakenings he and the other army clerics may have effected, the "all in all" of the bulk of the men was not Christ or a desire to make an immediate ascent to him, but a hope to enjoy immunity from wounds and sickness, and make a safe return home—which now happily is rendered possible.

FRANCIS NEALE.

The Future of Religion.

(Continued from page 339.)

ULTIMATELY, then, we come back to the general conclusion that the tenure of a belief is decided far more by the kind of social structure existing, with its available stock of knowledge, than by its accuracy or inherent strength. Men's beliefs are determined for them to a much greater extent by slowly operating forces, to the influence of which they are largely unconscious, than by elaborate logical demonstration; and, consequently, the only real guarantee that can be offered that any belief is dead beyond the possibility of resurrection is that it no longer fits into the existing circle of positive knowledge, and that the conditions that would harmonize with it cannot again be called into existence.

Adaptation to environment is, in brief, as much the condition of existence for intellectual matters as it is for physical structures. Change the environment so that to an increasing number of people a particular belief no longer harmonises with their knowledge concerning the world, and it is doomed. It is out of its element; it may continue to exist as a figure of speech, it may be perpetuated for a time by the operation of vested interests, but its decline is nevertheless assured. All history emphasises this lesson. Preach Christianity to a nation of savages, and all that is effected is that new names are given to the old conceptions. These latter, on the testimony of all independent travellers, remain unchanged. The various gods of the ancient world become transformed into Christian saints; the converted Catholic transfers to his new Church the whole stock of feelings he had formerly associated with Rome. But change the social structure, introduce new conceptions of nature, add to the stock of existing knowledge, and insensibly these feelings and beliefs decline because they no longer receive nourishment from anything around them. They die out for want of support, just as a civilized man in the midst of savages, or a savage in the midst of civilised men, puts off a little of his native state and approximates somewhat to the nature of his surroundings.

In what follows it will be my object to try and determine to what extent the changed surroundings of today may warrant us in regarding the decline of certain religious beliefs as a matter of tolerable certainty.

So far as the belief in revelation, in miracles, or in the value of prayer as a means of effecting any alteration in the order of events, is concerned, we may safely put it on one side as having already been rejected by a sufficiently large number of people as to be beyond the possibility of a revival. There are, of course, a considerable number of people who still profess to believe in all of these items; but the majority of them, when pressed, attach some fanciful meaning to the beliefs, and thus rob them of all real value. The place of miracles is placed in some extra-cosmical region, or its meaning reduced to that of the wonderful or the unusual. Prayer is accepted, not as the offering and granting of a petition, but as a mild mental tonic. Revelation is, in turn, expanded until it embraces almost everything—the genius of a poet, of a painter, and the “sacred” literature of all people. This, it is clear, is only saving revelation in name, while robbing the thing itself of all real value. From an evidential point of view, the man who sees the revelation of God everywhere may just as well fail to see it anywhere. Its value lies in its exclusiveness; and if, as many writers assure us nowadays, there is inspiration in the utterance of all that is great and good, one wonders what special value can be attached to the Christian possession of the same article. Already the question is being asked in religious circles, Why, if there is salvation outside of Christianity, need there be all the trouble about carrying religion to the “heathen”? and this is only a slight indication of the manner in which new views are slowly undermining the ancient faith.

Now, in this there is a very clear illustration of the correctness of the principle I have been insisting on. So long as the assaults on the Bible consisted of a catalogue of various brutal regulations, or of verbal contradictions, the book was tolerably secure. The retort that man had no clear right to judge God, or that God was justified in doing as he pleased, was held to be an

adequate reply to the first class of objections, and the ingenuity of commentators satisfied the bulk of believers that the second class had also been satisfactorily met and disposed of. But with the amount of positive knowledge concerning non-Christian beliefs steadily accumulating, with more exact information concerning the conditions under which “inspired” literature comes into existence, and with the comparison of the Christian “revelation” with other sacred writings, these apologies and harmonies fell flat. They were no longer appreciated, because there was growing up an altogether different intellectual atmosphere, and methods that were adequate in the last century, so far as the Christian world was concerned, were found to be sadly inadequate in this. The Christian had come to accept as a matter of course the very beliefs and positions that his predecessors in the faith had been battling against.

It is the same with the belief in miracles. Volumes have been written to prove that miracles are impossible, or to demonstrate the reasonableness of their existence. Yet it may be questioned if anyone ever gave up the belief as the result of any reasoned-out process concerning their incredibility, or if anyone ever believed in them because they were *a priori* possible or probable. To those who take a comprehensive view of man's intellectual history it is clear that the belief in miracles is a perfectly normal phenomenon at one stage of human development. When little is known of the nature of the forces that constitute the world, there is nothing anomalous in the belief in miracles. Everything is then possible, because nothing is certain. It is only as knowledge grows that possibility narrows, until everything is swallowed up in an all-embracing necessity. Miracles no longer occur, for the simple reason that people have ceased to expect them; and they have ceased to expect them because the intellectual life of man has undergone such a profound modification during the past three centuries, the current teaching concerning nature is so permeated with the conception of natural law, that the miraculous has become, not a subject to be seriously argued against, but one to be rejected without even wasting time over its discussion. All instinctively recognise that, this belief being a characteristic feature of an undeveloped mind, and one that dies out as development proceeds, there need be neither surprise at its presence nor doubt of its ultimate disappearance.

Putting on one side, therefore, such matters of belief as those noted above, we may fairly summarize the fundamental beliefs of the modern religious world as consisting in (a) the belief in the existence of God; (b) the belief in a future life; and (c) the belief in the beneficial influence of religion as a controlling and regulative force. We will take each of these beliefs in the order placed above.

A very slight examination of the Theistic writings of the present day, and a comparison of them with similar writings of an earlier period, are enough to show that the nature of the controversy has undergone a profound and significant change. A hundred years ago the controversy was for the most part between different forms of Theistic belief, rather than a struggle between Theism and its negation. Conceptions of God were freely criticised on the score of their accuracy or inaccuracy, their worthiness or unworthiness; but comparatively little was said concerning the much deeper question of whether *any* conception was either justifiable or possible. Of late years we have seen such questions assuming a position of only secondary importance, while controversialists have shown a marked tendency to range themselves into two sharply-defined parties—those who still cling to a deity of some description and those who hold that all such beliefs are illegitimate or useless. In other words, the contest is no longer so much between rival religious views as between Theism and a complete negation of all its forms; and it requires but little depth of research to see that the latter party gains ground yearly.

And the cause of the growth of the non-Theistic party of late years has again to be sought in the spread of positive knowledge concerning the nature and development of the God idea. Such arguments as were derived from the contradictory nature of the attributes ascribed to Deity, from the suffering and injustice in the world, etc., were stated as powerfully centuries ago as in our

own day. Our sole superiority in attacking lies in the fact that the purely logical attack upon Theism is now supplemented by a mass of positive knowledge concerning the nature and development of the God idea, all pointing the same lesson and all leading to the same conclusion. Whichever school of anthropologists be correct, whether animism be the primary form of Theism, or whether ancestor worship pre-dates it, or whatever be the exact stages through which the idea has passed, there is now a practical consensus of opinion amongst anthropologists that it is in the fear and ignorance of our savage ancestors that the idea of God, of a future life, and of supernaturalism generally, has its rise. Reasoning on one side may be met by reasoning on the other, and the ordinary individual is not so keen a judge of the logical niceties of an argument as always to lodge his verdict on the right side; but it is impossible for one to entirely close his mind to all that science has disclosed concerning the origin and nature of the belief in God, or not to feel that belief lowered in value by finding it affiliated to all the gross stupidities and cruelties that disfigure uncivilised life, still less to resist the insidious operation of a number of forces that sap the foundation of Theism by destroying the type of mind upon which it lives. Instead of finding the idea of God treated as something too sacred to be discussed, the Theist finds it analysed, discussed, and ticketed by science in much the same manner as though it were an ordinary geological specimen. He sees it omitted from all treatises on positive science, ignored in daily life, and from sheer disuse he discovers that his belief is gradually growing weaker.

True there still remain many apologists who profess to find as strong proofs as ever of the existence of God. But if their arguments receive support it is far more because they harmonise with inherited feelings on the subject than because they are supported by existing knowledge. And in this respect the Theistic advocate always possesses a considerable advantage over the non-Theist. His arguments appeal to those feelings which, because they are a product of the uncivilised past, are the more deeply seated. The Atheist is using, so to speak, a new language; he has to create the feelings which his opponent finds ready to hand. Yet, tardy as this process necessarily is, one can see it developing. Knowledge does not transform existing feelings in a year or in a generation; but gradually it sinks deeper and deeper into the unconscious habitual past of man, and from which it dominates, in turn, the conscious mental life. It is only a question of how long accepted religious formulas can stand out against the steady encroachments of positive knowledge; and although it is not within the power of any man to predict their exact duration, their gradual weakening and final disappearance can hardly admit of rational doubt.

C. COHEN.

(To be concluded.)

Christian Remedies.

As we pointed out in our article last week, the *Church Gazette* deplored not only the "religious alienation of the masses," but also the utter inadequacy of all Christian methods hitherto adopted to bring the populace within the fold of the various Christian sects. Our religious contemporary, however, considers that it has discovered the true panacea for the extensive apathy which prevails towards religion. Here is the remedy suggested: "(1) The recognition of real, personal, and corporate religion; (2) earnestness in religious aim; (3) an equally full recognition of the results of science and criticism; (4) and of common sense; (5) along with all this a simple form of belief, and such as can be believed." Now, three of these supposed remedies are of a theological character, and appear to us to have the same defects which pertain to all alleged Christian specifics. The very language used is vague, and fails to convey any definite meaning. We have "words, words, words," but what they are intended to signify it is difficult to understand. Take, for instance, the phrases, "corporate religion," "religious aim," and "a simple form of belief." These expressions may possibly

satisfy churchgoers, but they will fail to convey any clear and distinct meaning to the thoughtful and critical non-churchgoers. And these latter are the very persons for whom it is stated the remedies are required. To the practical reformer the terms above quoted appear very much like "sound and fury, signifying nothing." Whatever is incapable of being properly understood possesses but little remedial value. This will explain to some extent why the Church has failed to cure the evils by which it has been surrounded. The "remedies" Christians generally put forward are couched in language that is mystic, and based upon the notion that it has some supreme force behind it. Thus faith takes the place of works, and belief is substituted for knowledge. The result is that, while the ages roll on, the evils that are deplored still remain.

It is with us a settled conviction that the true remedy for social evils is to be found in the highest physical, moral, and intellectual development of human nature, the acquirement and application of genuine education, and the destruction of all priestly and imperial power which seeks to fetter human thought and to despotically control individual action. The highest outcome of ancient civilisation in Greece and Rome was at a time when democratic freedom adorned their history. In Athens and Republican Rome we have many illustrations of this fact. Potent in arms, able at one period to defend and preserve their liberties against every aggressor, these States were mighty in other and nobler fields. In philosophy, science, literature, art, and all that enriches and elevates mankind these democracies were unequalled. The great object that the reformer should keep in view is to promulgate principles capable of re-moulding society in such a manner that the greatest possible liberty and happiness may be secured to the individual and to the general community. To obtain this thoroughly, a knowledge of the causes of good and evil in man must be acquired. Ignorance is admitted to be an evil which directly impedes human progress and stands in the way of human happiness. This ignorance many of us regard as being possible to remove, and to substitute in its place a knowledge of the pathway leading to goodness, truth, and virtue. Experience has proved that the panacea for wrongs and shortcomings is not to be obtained from the Church, with its perplexing doctrines and its mind-deteriorating dogmas. Old creeds have had their day, and before the power of modern thought the superstition that those creeds bolstered up is rapidly tottering to its basis. Society, as now constituted, with its strongly-marked distinctions between rich and poor, its blatant hypocrisy, its wicked extravagance and abject penury, has been weighed down by the theories of so-called Divine predestination and ordination. These theories are, fortunately, becoming more and more discredited by the intelligence of the nineteenth century.

Let us examine the five so-called remedies named by the *Church Gazette*, with a view of ascertaining if they would be efficacious in removing the apathy which now exists towards the Churches. In the first place, what are we to understand by a "corporate religion"? The term means "united in a body, and acting as an individual, collectively one." But can this be accurately said of the Christian religion? Where connected with it is to be found its "corporate" and "united body"? There is no evidence of the "collectively one" throughout its entire organisation. The professors of this religion are split up into opposing sections, presenting a heterogeneous mass. Even the columns of the *Church Gazette*, which is supposed to represent the broadest phase of Christianity, have recently contained abundant evidence of disunion amongst the teachers of, and believers in, this very religion. The latest attempt to form a "corporate" body has just been made by the Broad Church party, but it has proved an absolute failure; for its members have been writing for some weeks in the *Gazette* in opposition to each other with a vehemence that is indicative of their being anything but "united in a body." Where, then, can this "corporate religion" be found? Moreover, if it could be discovered, what evidence have we that it would contain the necessary remedial potency? None whatever; and the editor of the *Church Gazette* makes no effort to supply what is so badly needed.

His two other theological antidotes for what he deems the bane of religious indifference are as unsatisfactory as

his first. "Earnestness in religious aim" and "a simple form of belief" have long obtained, to some extent, in the Churches; but neither the earnestness nor the belief has proved to be the required remedy. A person can be as earnest with a bad "aim" as with a good one, and the simplicity of a belief is no guarantee of its real value. The important question is, What is the nature of the aim a person has in view, and what is the kind of the belief which he accepts? It is here that the futility of all theological remedies is manifested. The Christian's aim, as a rule, is directed too much to the consideration of teachings which refer to some other world, instead of endeavoring to realise the greatest possible advantages of our present existence; and orthodox religious belief is too absurd, too complicated, and too impracticable, to command the adherence of the really thoughtful portion of the community. Christianity, as such, is played out. Its authority, the Bible, is out of date as a guide in secular affairs. The position it once held in the estimation of many has been destroyed by modern criticism and the better recognition of the requirements of every-day life. Even its historical value is no longer regarded as it once was. As the late Dr. Mivart stated: "Comparatively few persons now believe that the account in Genesis of the creation of the world, or of Adam or of Eve, is, in any sense, historical and true; or that the account of the Fall is such; or that diversities of language were due to God's fear lest men should build a tower to reach heaven; or that Joshua or Isaiah in any way interfered with the regularity of the earth's rotation on its axis."

No doubt it is very desirable, as the editor of the *Church Gazette* intimates, to have "an equally full recognition of the results of science and criticism and of common sense." But if Christians think that this would be a remedy for the existing indifference towards the Church, they are greatly deceived. It is the recognition of scientific results and the exercise of common sense that have alienated the masses from the Churches. It would, however, be interesting to learn how the editor of the *Gazette* would attempt to reconcile science and common sense with his other proposed remedies of "personal and corporate religion" and "a simple form of belief." He, like most Christian exponents, deals in general statements without even attempting to show their particular application to the subject that may be under consideration. The real want of the age is not merely improved religious belief, but a fuller recognition of the evils of society, and a firmer determination to apply the true remedies, which are only to be found in science, ethics, and philosophy.

CHARLES WATTS.

National Secular Society.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE IN LONDON.

THE annual Conference of the National Secular Society was held last Sunday in the Athenæum Hall, Tottenham Court-road, W.C. There was a large attendance of delegates and of individual members. Towards the close of the morning session the hall was crowded. The platform was very prettily decorated with flowers, plants, and festoons of Liberty silk, and generally presented a very gay appearance. There was a considerable sprinkling of ladies in bright summer toilettes.

The President (Mr. G. W. Foote) was accompanied on the platform by Mr. Charles Watts, Mr. Hartmann (treasurer), and Miss Edith M. Vance (secretary). The front part of the floor was allotted to delegates, amongst whom were the following: Messrs. C. Quinton and W. S. Clogg (Bethnal Green); Mr. T. Shore (Bolton); Messrs. H. Percy Ward, W. T. Pitt, and J. Sullivan (Birmingham); Messrs. J. Umpleby and J. Titherington (Blackburn); Messrs. Victor Roger and F. Cotterell (Camberwell); Mr. R. Rhodes (Chatham); Mr. H. McGuinness (Derby); Messrs. D. Frankel and J. Cooper (East London); Messrs. E. W. Quay, W. Leat, and E. Bater (Finsbury); Messrs. W. H. Spivey, T. Whiteley, T. Ollerenshaw, and T. A. Spivey (Huddersfield); Mr. and Mrs. J. Siddon (Liverpool); Mr. and Mrs. C. Pegg, Mr. and Mrs. Willis, and Mr. J. Mayhew (Manchester); Messrs. T. Horseman and B. Chapman (South Shields); Mr. J. W. Gott (Stanningley); Messrs. C. E. Sims and E. Leggatt (West Ham); Messrs. R. P. Edwards and B. Munton (West London). Amongst individual members were Mr. G. Thwaites (Stockton); Mr. J. Dobson (Lancaster); Mr. and Mrs. Mumby (Newark); and Mr. Lee Sumner (Birmingham).

Amongst the ladies present were Mrs. Foote and two daughters, Mrs. Charles Watts and Miss J. Nowlan, and Miss Goyne, of Birmingham. The entrance of Miss Emma Bradlaugh, sister of Charles Bradlaugh, during the early part of the proceedings was marked by applause.

The minutes of the previous Conference having been taken as read,

The PRESIDENT explained that the Conference was strictly a National Secular Society's Conference, dealing with the business of that Society only. There would probably be some diversity of opinion on some of the subjects to be discussed, but they ought to congratulate themselves upon that, for, as Milton said, "Opinion in good men is only knowledge in the making." They were bound to pass through the stage of opinion before they could arrive at certitude. The PRESIDENT then read the following:—

ANNUAL REPORT.

From a special point of view the past year has not been one of great success. In some respects it has been distinctly below the average. But this is mainly owing to the fact that the most important part of the year for the Society's work, extending from October to May, has been covered by the war in South Africa. Public attention is after all a limited quantity, and, with so much of it turned into one broad deep channel, there has been relatively little available in other directions. All advanced, all intellectual, causes have suffered in consequence. Compensation may be looked for, however, in the time of reaction which is pretty sure to follow the military excitement of the past seven or eight months.

Fortunately, the Secular movement has received a fresh impetus through agencies not formally, but indirectly, and yet vitally, connected with the work of this Society. The formation of the Secular Society, Limited—as to which a statement is to be made at a later stage of this Conference—has already borne good fruit. Grants from this Incorporation to the National Secular Society have exceeded in amount all the other sources of actual revenue, and have thus prevented a deficit which is serious from becoming positively alarming. The other agency is the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited. Incidentally, this Company saved the Society from a loss of over £9 in connection with the Almanack. But that is a trifling matter in comparison with the saving which is being, and will continue to be, effected through the Society's co-operation with these two Incorporated bodies. Office rent no longer stands at £40 a year; it has been reduced to £20. The Secretary's salary no longer stands at £91 a year; it has been reduced to £26. In other words, an expenditure on these two items of £131 a year has been reduced to £46. This involves an annual saving of £85. In these circumstances it is reasonable to expect that the Society's financial deficit will be practically wiped out in the course of the next twelve months, and that in due time a fair balance will be realised on the other side.

It may be mentioned that the Secretary (Miss Vance), having other employment, and of course salary, in connection with the aforesaid Incorporated bodies, does not suffer pecuniarily. Why then, it may be asked, was so large an amount expended on the Secretaryship before? The answer to this question is very simple. Although the Society's work did not occupy the whole of the Secretary's time, it had to be done at incalculable intervals all over the week, and thus it was necessary for Miss Vance to attend at the Society's office daily and transact the relatively small business as it presented itself. At present the Society has not so much an office as the use of an office, as in a certain sense it has the use of a secretary. But a mere technicality is not in itself of any importance; and, as a matter of fact, the Society not only saves a great deal of its old expenditure, but gains in other ways by the concentration of Secular effort in which it is operating. Persons who come to No. 1 Stationers' Hall Court for one purpose may find themselves interested in another. The purchase of a book or a pamphlet may lead to a subscription to the Society. Indeed, it is unnecessary to expatiate on an advantage which must be obvious to everyone who takes the trouble to look and think.

It was very fortunate that this new arrangement could be effected just when it was, for the Society had to leave its old office in the Strand, and it would have been extremely difficult to find another. That office was part of a large floor, containing four rooms, rented by the Land Restoration League from Messrs. Manfield and Sons, the well-known boot manufacturers. The Rev. Stewart D. Headlam, president of the League, was the legal tenant; and, being a gentleman—although a Christian—if the expression may be permitted—he kindly sub-let one of the rooms to your President as an office for this Society. There happened, however, another tenant on the premises, who was also a Christian, but not a gentleman. He had no legitimate complaint to make against this Society's officials. His grievance was that they had access to the same building with himself; in fact, he seems to have resented their existence in the same city, and even in the same world. Naturally a very vulgar man, as well as a religious bigot, he subjected your Executive in general, and your Secretary in particular, to every possible form of annoyance within the limits of the law. Finally, he committed a gross assault on a gentleman who was assisting

Miss Vance with her accounts in a sudden emergency; a gentleman, by the way, who was not a member of this Society, but a member of the Land Restoration League. This led to an appearance at Bow-street Police Court. Whereupon, instead of putting pressure upon their violent tenant, with a view to compelling him to leave the sober tenants in peaceable enjoyment of their right in the premises, Messrs. Manfield and Sons put pressure upon Mr. Headlam to get rid of his sub-tenant; even going to the length of declining to renew the lease unless the National Secular Society—to use their own polite and elegant language—was "removed." Mr. Headlam was not prepared to remove us, or to abet our removal; on the contrary, he remonstrated with Messrs. Manfield and Sons on their playing into the hands of a religious fanatic, to the detriment of others who were guilty of no offence except an inability to share his opinions. Nevertheless, it was scarcely fair that the Land Restoration League should suffer in such a quarrel. Your President, therefore, decided to release Mr. Headlam and the League from their painful position by vacating the office as quickly as possible. It is well to add that Mr. Verinder, the Land Restoration League's secretary, who was constantly at his office, often until late at night, has written that their sub-tenant's business was carried on in an irreproachable manner, and that they never offered any offence except their mere presence to the fanatic who was perpetually annoying them.

In itself, of course, this incident was one to be forgotten with celerity. But it unfortunately revealed a tone and temper which are only too common. The Freethought Publishing Company was baffled for months in its quest of premises for carrying on its projected business. Place after place was refused, although the agents had found that the references were quite satisfactory. Finally, the Duke of Bedford's steward declined to sanction the assignment of the lease of premises on the Bedford estate to the Company; and this after the place was got ready at considerable expense by the leaseholder, after the agreement was prepared, and, indeed, after the keys had been handed over to the Company's secretary. Facts like these are very deplorable; still they are facts, and must be taken into account. They show that those who fancy, or affect to fancy, that the reign of intolerance is over are basking in a fool's paradise.

Recurring to the matter of this Society's secretaryship, your Executive has to report that Mr. Robert Forder has resigned the *honorary* secretaryship on the ground of his broken health and inability to attend even to his own business. It is useless to attempt to conceal what is rather widely known already, that there had been friction between Mr. Forder and the Executive; but that may now be buried and forgotten, while Mr. Forder's services to the Society in former years may be gratefully remembered. As for the *honorary* secretaryship itself, the Conference will bear in mind that it was a special office, created in order that Mr. Forder, after resigning the secretaryship, might still keep in specially close touch with the Society's work. That consideration no longer obtains, and the Executive suggests to the Conference that the *honorary* secretaryship should be abolished. Mr. Forder still remains on the list of vice-presidents. In that capacity he will be able, if circumstances permit, to attend the Executive meetings and take part in conducting the Society's affairs.

The Executive desires to make a rapid survey of the past year's work. Propaganda has been carried on throughout Great Britain with a good deal of vigor, and in the circumstances of the time with real success. Mr. Charles Watts and Mr. Cohen have travelled far and wide in the lecture field, penetrating once more as far north as Dundee and Aberdeen. Both the veteran and the later comer have well-established reputations, and it will be a pity if they are not more frequently and extensively employed during the next winter. Mr. Percy Ward, who is domiciled at Birmingham, and acts as lecturer and organizer to the local Branch, has also stood on many provincial platforms, and has won high appreciation. Messrs. Moss and Heaford are almost confined to London, but they have done an immense amount of hard work there in connection with the open-air propaganda. Mr. Edwards, a younger recruit, has also taken a good share of this labor. Your President has also lent a hand by organising, with the competent and ever-ready aid of the various London Parks. Messrs. Cohen, Snell, Moss, and Heaford assisted as speakers—Mr. Watts being unfortunately incapacitated by illness. Very large meetings were addressed, and the entire series of Demonstrations were carried through without cost to the Society. This was partly owing to the fact that a generous friend lent a brake and a pair of horses on each occasion. Turning to the provinces, it is to be noted that the Glasgow Branch is remarkably active and prosperous; that the Manchester Branch has held its own gallantly during an unpropitious winter; that the Liverpool Branch, after a hard struggle, has turned a corner and gained fresh hope, partly through its own brave efforts, and partly through a timely grant from the Secular Society, Limited; that the Birmingham Branch has moved along triumphantly in spite of the bigots who struck at it so savagely and unfairly through the School Board, which was induced to exclude it from the common use of the Board

schools; that fine work has been done by the Chatham Branch at New Brompton; and that gratifying work has been done by the new Branch at Porth, in South Wales. Another new Branch has been formed at Tooting. The West Ham Branch, formed a little prior to the late Conference, as a permanent result of the local agitation for excluding the *Freethinker* from the tables of the reading-rooms in the Public Libraries, has amply justified its establishment by carrying on a most vigorous and effective propaganda. The Camberwell Branch, besides the winter lectures in its Hall, conducts two outdoor lecture-stations during the summer. The West London Branch is famous for its Hyde Park meetings, as the Bethnal Green Branch is for its meetings in Victoria Park. The East London and Finsbury Branches also take a good share of the open-air work. The propaganda in Finsbury Park has been temporarily reorganised by Miss Vance, after the collapse of the local Branch. She is also occupied in attending to the business side of the lectures at the Athenæum Hall, where Sunday evening meetings have been carried on for nearly four years by your President, ostensibly on behalf of the Society, but actually at his own risk and responsibility.

A difficulty arose in London with regard to the open-air meetings in the parks under the control of the County Council. An effort was made to stop the sale or distribution of literature at such meetings, as being against the general bye-laws; but, pressure being brought to bear upon individual members of the Council, it was at length conceded that literature might be sold, and collections made, within the limits of these gatherings, on condition that copies of publications sold should be deposited at the County Council's head office. No sort of interference has since been attempted, and this condition seems to be of a merely formal character—perhaps to silence the tongues of bigots and busybodies.

There have been but few social functions organized by your Executive, but it is pleasant to report that the Annual Dinner at the Holborn Restaurant was a signal success.

The Society's Almanack for 1900 has yielded a good profit, in consequence of the extra advertisements, including those of the Freethought Publishing Company and the Secular Society, Limited. Next year it will be possible to make changes in this publication, with a view to its improvement, and probably its enlargement. It has been found that the reduction in price, from sixpence to threepence, has not led to the increased sale that was anticipated.

The general distribution of literature has been much assisted by presents of parcels of books and pamphlets from Mr. George Anderson to Branches and individuals who undertook to see to their circulation. Fortunately the new order of things will permit of a more comprehensive, and no doubt a more successful, prosecution of this side of the Society's work.

Turning for a little while from this country to the outside world, your Executive feels bound to note with strong appreciation the grand work of open, avowed French Freethinkers, such as Ciémenceau, Guyot, and Zola, on behalf of justice and religious liberty. This is not the time and place to discuss the Dreyfus affair, but so far as it involved a conflict between religious bigotry and the free toleration of all forms of belief your Executive is proud to record that the part played in it by Freethinkers reflects the greatest credit upon their principles, as well as upon their character and courage. In spite of the reaction which has been going on in France for many years, and which has recently culminated in the capture of the Paris Municipal Council by the so-called Nationalists, the French Freethinkers may still be depended upon to defend the two great principles of the Revolution—namely, equal justice to all citizens, and absolute freedom of conscience. Germany has been disgraced by many prosecutions for "blasphemy" and "insulting religion," but nothing is able to arrest the spread of Freethought amongst the industrial population. Churches remain empty in Berlin, and the phenomenon is not affected, except perhaps for the worse, by the pious zeal of the Empress in building new ones. From far-off Sweden a letter reaches this Conference, with a resolution of sympathy from its reorganised Freethinkers. Still farther away, at the Antipodes, Mr. Wallace Nelson, an old member of this Society, conducts the *People's Newspaper* at Rockhampton; and although his work is chiefly political, he does not neglect Freethought. Mr. W. W. Nelson, one of the Society's vice-presidents, has recovered his seat in the New Zealand parliament, in spite of the *odium theologicum* being freely raised against him. Another vice-president, Mr. Joseph Symes, still gallantly upholds the Freethought standard at Melbourne. Some months ago he was nearly murdered by a lurking assassin, who probably represented the hatred felt by the Roman Catholics towards the editor of the *Liberator*. Mr. Symes has sufficiently recovered from this dastardly attack to be able to attend to his affairs, but he feels the effects of it still, and it is to be hoped that he may see his way to recruiting his strength by an ocean voyage to his native land, where many of his old friends will be delighted to see him again.

In America the Freethought cause has not been extinguished, as Christians predicted, by the death of Colonel Ingersoll. There is, of course, less activity in the lecture field; but the Freethought journals and magazines—and

there are many of them—still hold their own, and seem likely to continue doing so. Naturally the death of Colonel Ingersoll caused an immense void. He was such a colossal figure! And he was as loveable as he was great. Head and heart in him were alike splendid. His death was felt as a personal bereavement by thousands of Freethinkers in America, and it was felt in the same way by many in this country who had never seen him. At the last Conference we were urging him to come over to England, where a royal welcome was awaiting him. He will not visit us now, but his genius and character abide with us as an imperishable possession. We shall laugh at his wit, smile at his humor, thrill at his pathos, and feel the inspiration of his noble appeals to our humanity.

Recurring to home affairs, the one important matter that remains to be dealt with is that of finance. It is not surprising that the Society's income was reduced last year; for not only were general public conditions unfavorable, but the means of the Freethought party were drawn off into a special channel. But this state of things ought not to continue, and it should be one of the new Executive's chief duties to consider how the revenue of the Society may be considerably enlarged during the ensuing year. At the last Conference it was decided to raise a Twentieth Century Fund. One of the Society's vice-presidents, the veteran Mr. J. Umphey, sent his contribution at once in the form of a cheque for £20, which is still in the hands of the Treasurer. But other projects barred the way, month after month, in a quite unexpected manner, and it was impossible to proceed with the projected Twentieth Century Fund without courting a *fiasco*. The road is now clearer, though, and the President has been asked to draft the circular of appeal, which he will do immediately after the present Conference. Half a year still remains of the nineteenth century, and the Fund could easily be raised before the arrival of the twentieth century. Easily, that is, in point of time. Whether it can be easily done in other respects will depend upon the zeal and generosity of the whole Secular party. It ought not to be impossible to raise £1,000 by this special effort. Indeed, it ought not to be difficult to do so, in view of the extraordinary efforts made by nearly all the religious bodies in a similar direction. The Churches are raising altogether two or three millions in this way. Their object is to strengthen the organizations and stimulate the forces of superstition; and, as it is resources that tell in the long run, Freethinkers should feel how incumbent it is upon them to provide the means for counteracting the enterprise of the common enemy.

It is ridiculous to suppose, as some do, that the war with bigotry and superstition is practically over. This is so far from being true that it is necessary for the army of Freethought to prepare for a vigorous campaign. There are signs of reaction all around. The Catholic Church is making progress in this country, at least in wealth and influence; the Church of England has secured immense advantages in relation to thousands of elementary schools, where the State provides millions of scholars for the clergy to indoctrinate; and Sabbatarianism itself has scored many distinct successes during the past year. After all, the spirit of progress does not exist in the air; it only exists in human hearts; and if those who possess it there do not make it spread and prevail, it will be beaten and thrown back. This has frequently happened in the course of history, and nothing but the courage, energy, and wisdom of the army of progress can prevent it from happening again.

(Continued on page 362.)

Acid Drops.

A LUCKY thing has happened to the famous great telescope at the Paris Exhibition. It was formally "blessed" on Sunday morning by the Papal Nuncio, Monsignor Lorenzelli, in the Optical Palace in the Champ de Mars. This gentleman was got up in his best ecclesiastical finery, with a gorgeous jewelled mitre on his head. A little phial of holy water was emptied into a little silver basin, and the telescope was duly sprinkled, as though it were a blessed baby at a christening. In fact, the Nuncio addressed it in the name of the Church, which he had the cool effrontery to call "the protector of science." "Proceed in confidence," he said, "God is with thee." The telescope made no reply, but perhaps it thought the more. Anyhow, we suppose it is safe now against all accidents; though we doubt if this will have an effect on the insurance.

The Rev. Mr. Sheldon, of *In His Steps* fame, who explained "What would Jesus do?" and edited the *Topeka Capital* for a week on Christian lines at a salary of £1,000 for the six days, has just landed at Liverpool. His church has given him eight months' leave of absence, with his stipend going on presumably all the time. Clearly it pays a lot better to follow Jesus now than it did in the beginning. Mr. Sheldon, we daresay, follows Jesus; but he seems to follow him at a considerable distance. Perhaps he is too loving a disciple to tread on his Master's heels.

The *New York Journal* for Sunday, May 13, contained a number of short articles on Christianity from the pens of distinguished persons. The Chinese Minister to the United States, Wu Ling Fang, wrote very astutely. Seemingly to praise Jesus for going "a little further" than Confucius in the matter of "loving one's enemies," he really leaves it open to be inferred that Confucius stopped at the right point and Jesus went beyond it. With regard to the persecutions in Christian history, he says that they fill him with horror. "We have no such records," he observes, "in China." Jews, Mohammedans, and Buddhists have lived there peaceably side by side. "It is only," he adds, "when indiscreet Christian missionaries go to extremes and excite the people that they ever have any trouble."

Wu Ling Fang concludes by scoring neatly for Confucianism. Confucius did not teach the doctrine of a future life. He said he didn't know what was going to take place to-morrow, and how could he know anything about a more remote future. Besides, it was men's duty to do their best to-day, with no thought of reward. "That," says the Chinese Minister, "seems to me the higher view."

A joke is a joke though some weeks old. At the Easter Conference of School Teachers, Mr. Howard told a story of an infant who, being asked where he would be missed when he died, replied: "In heaven." Much laughter.

The *Sunday Reader* notes the fact that "so small a percentage of the working-class ever come to a place of worship," and surmises that "possibly the so-called National Secular Society has not a little to do with it." Our pious contemporary is good enough to say that "Every week in the summer months the emissaries of that Society give an exhibition of their hatred against Christianity in the London parks before large audiences, for the most part appreciative." Of course they talk "claptrap" and are very "unscrupulous," but they catch on with the public somehow, and are too much for the "earnest and well-meaning, but not too intellectual, Christians" who oppose them. It appears, however, that the courage of Atheist lecturers melts away when the Rev. A. J. Waldron puts in an appearance. This gentleman has "met and thrashed" the leading Freethought speakers, who are now "distinctly shy in [?] of] encountering him in debate." No doubt Mr. Waldron is the source of our pious contemporary's information on this point, and it would be "distinctly" blasphemous to throw a suspicion upon its accuracy. At the same time, it is only fair to say that the Freethought speakers with whom Mr. Waldron has debated do not share his lofty estimation of himself, and are averse from meeting him again on that very account. They do not see why they should condescend to give him too many gratuitous advertisements.

The names of Messrs. Foote, Watts, and Cohen are mentioned in connection with these lectures in the London parks. But on this point it is easy enough to *prove* that our contemporary is mistaken. Mr. Cohen delivers outdoor lectures still, but Messrs. Foote and Watts have not done so for a great many years. They have, indeed, spoken at some open-air Freethought Demonstrations, but our contemporary cannot be referring to these, since allusion is made to the way in which opponents are treated, and, as a matter of fact, opposition is neither invited nor allowed at this class of meetings.

Besides, if the truth must be told, the leading Freethought speakers, when they do debate, like to debate with gentlemen. Now in private life Mr. Waldron is very likely a perfect gentleman. We don't know, and must confess we don't care. But in public life he is very apt to be something different. His attitude towards the Freethought speakers whom he has "met and thrashed" is not the same before their faces that it is behind their backs. Mr. Waldron is capable of indulging in high-flavored personalities at their expense when they are not present to keep him in order.

For these reasons we are not likely to take much notice of the "series of articles on Infidelity" which Mr. Waldron is to contribute to the *Sunday Reader*. "These will consist," the announcement says, "of his personal experiences while debating with the principal infidels of the day." Evidently, therefore, a line display of egotism may be expected. Only a man of intolerable vanity would think of giving an account of his fighting matches. Fitzsimmons and Corbett would never sink as low as that. They leave reporting to the reporters. Mr. Waldron prefers to do his own.

Reader Harris, Q.C., the founder of the Pentecostal League, has been further distinguishing himself in his own particular way. This time he has been testifying to the Lord walking lying nude on a slab. It was in a Turkish bath, so that, no one was shocked as Michal, daughter of Saul, was at David's naked antics before the ark of the Lord. He tells the story himself with great gusto in the *Sunday Companion*. He says he is one who believes in witnessing for Christ every where. Well, when a blustering, wild-eyed, black-bearded, bald-

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headed man, with a raucous voice, sets out on the war-path with that specific intention, there is no knowing what he may do. At the same time, there is little doubt what sensible people will think of him.

In the hot room of the Turkish bath he had, he says, a "nice talk" with a gentleman concerning the kingdom of heaven—though one would have thought that the "other place" would have been a more suitable topic just then. He remarks: "We spoke pretty loudly." Is there any doubt about it—at least, so far as Reader Harris is concerned? He continues: "I do not know what we said exactly." Very likely; what he says exactly. He goes on to tell us that he went into the shampooing room, and lay on a slab. Soon afterwards another gentleman came in, and took possession of the neighboring slab, and entered into conversation with the shampooer. He said, pointing to the hot room: "A couple of bishops in there!" He then recounted to the shampooer the extraordinary dialogue which had just taken place. "When one of them said 'praise the Lord,' what do you think the other said?" And then there was a pause, for he could not get the word out. So, says Reader Harris, I exclaimed from the other slab: "Hallelujah!" The other man jumped bolt upright, and said: "Good gracious, there's one of them!" It is wonderful, adds Reader Harris, how strange it is when you speak of salvation with the confidence and simplicity that come from a knowledge of the "truth as it is in Jesus."

Reader Harris edits a paper called the *Tongues of Fire*. In every issue there is a list of "prayers requested." That is to say, the readers generally are invited to pray that the specified requirements of other readers (anonymous) shall be providentially supplied. The requirements are varied, ranging from a mangle for an old washerwoman to a refutation of the Higher Criticism. In the current issue prayer is asked that a member and his wife may be blessed with a child; also for the salvation of a member's brother who is an agnostic; two wives ask for prayers for their husbands who appear to be "on the loose"; also that a member may procure a situation (qualifications and salary not stated); also that someone may recover from pneumonia.

The gem request, however, is: "Prayers are asked for an only boy who uses fearful language." Imagine the collective readers of the *Tongues of Fire* offering up some such petition as: "Almighty God, we beseech thee to direct thy beneficent attention to an only boy—we don't know whose boy he is, but thou O Lord knowest—who, we are told, uses fearful language, and whose parents are much distressed. Take him, O Lord, by his little tongue, and cleanse his mouth of iniquity, and bring him to an understanding of thy grace, so that he may no longer use swear words and horrify the household. Amen."

Harmsworth's "ha'-penny" evening had a curious announcement the other night. The heading was "Bishop Chausse installed." This set us wondering who was Bishop Chausse? The name seemed unfamiliar. But the paragraph itself commenced with "Dr. Chausse, second Bishop of Liverpool." And then we knew that Harmsworth's office boy had been wrestling with the name of Dr. Chavasse.

After this we are not surprised to hear that a Church Guild of Journalists has been established. This interesting body recently held a meeting at Hyde Park Gate, and discussed: "How far can a religious tone enter into the conduct of a daily journal?" Well, Harmsworth's ha'-penny evening shows how far crass ignorance can enter into the contents of a daily sheet. As for the "religious tone," the gifted Sheldon tried his hand at that, and we know the mess he made of it.

The Coventry cycle maker who has been putting the cart before the horse by issuing a Bible with the New Testament printed first and the Old Testament following does not seem to have been rewarded by much commendation of his novel idea. One objection which seems to be generally taken by religious people is that the Old Testament prefigures and predicts the advent of Jesus Christ, and therefore should naturally precede the record of Jesus's coming. But that is absurd; there is absolutely nothing in the Old Testament that refers to Jesus. Ask the Jews; it is their book, and they ought to know.

For an outrageous violation of the Ninth Commandment, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor," the Rev. John Wakeford, vicar of St. Margaret's, Anfield, returned a verdict against him for £150 damages and costs. He grossly libelled a postman in his congregational magazine, making insinuations as to the plaintiff's employment by the British Protestant Union, and charging him with systematic cruelty to his wife.

Numerous significant admissions have been made by

responsible speakers at a various number of the May meetings, which tend to show that all is not well within the Christian fold. These statements should prove very cheering to Freethinkers as an evidence that the internal decay of Christianity is a fact the Christian leaders are recognising.

The failure of foreign missions was practically admitted by Dr. Glover, of Bristol, when he declared that "the nineteenth century bequeaths to the twentieth the *beginning* of sublime work in heathen lands." The futility of prayer was again demonstrated by the following announcement in the *Christian World*: "Mrs. Rickett, wife of the treasurer of the Baptist Missionary Society, passed away in Hampstead on Sunday morning. At the May meetings many prayers were offered that her valuable life might be spared." Mr. Thomas Spurgeon, of the Pastors' College, confessed "to *anxiety about money matters*." Former friends, he said, are passing away, and it is not easy to secure new ones.

The Rev. W. Tremberth, of Yunnan, China, said he had been returned to England a year, and during that period had seen more drunkenness than during the whole nine years he had spent in China. The Rev. David Davies, of Brighton, said he was ashamed to find there were 178 clergymen and ministers in the list of shareholders of the Guinness Company.

Dr. Watson said: "There were many thoughtful persons who had ceased to believe in the Christian creed—far more, I suspect, than many ministers know, and far better people than they imagine." Dr. Watson further said: "Were you to withdraw from the Christian Church persons who find a real joy in the study of art and in the collection of books, you would not very seriously affect either her numbers or her usefulness; but if you withdrew that class of people who are hostile to art and letters, you might close Christianity as an organised agency."

Dr. Steel, of Glasgow, remarking on the serious decrease in the number of Sunday-school teachers and scholars, blamed "the prevailing love of amusement and week-end travelling." Rev. John Young said the decrease commenced five years ago. Lord Provost Chisholm, of Glasgow, said if the Church was not attracting young men the Church was to blame.

Mr. Compton Rickett said the change of thought that had taken place with regard to the ultimate fate of the heathen had diminished the interest in foreign missions. People, he said, did not *now* believe that nations would be condemned for not believing in a Saviour of whom they had never heard. How significant is that word *now*, and how eloquently it speaks of the way in which Christianity is always changing its colors.

Rev. F. W. Lester declared that Christianity was winning its way by its influence in changing the character, thus convincing "many sceptics" of its divinity. Mr. Lester did not say where these "many sceptics" were to be found.

Dr. Watson said: "In a dispute between a capitalist and his workmen the capitalist had only to ring his bell, and Christ's ministers ran like lackeys to vindicate his character."

The London Missionary Society reported a financial deficit of £26,905. Other organizations seem to have suffered in proportion. Miss Bragg went to the length of saying that two-thirds of the church members were indifferent to foreign missions.

The annual meeting of the famous Religious Tract Society was a bad failure. According to a religious newspaper report, the "empty seats had a very depressing effect on the speakers," while the reading of the Society's report "had anything but an exhilarating effect."

At the Sunday School Union meeting the Rev. J. Morgan Gibbon declared: "There's a great deal of Christianity about, but there's something the matter with it. It eats a great deal, and works very little." We presume this refers to the gentlemen who live on the subscriptions.

This same Rev. J. Morgan Gibbon was one of the speakers at the Christian Evidence Society's meeting, and he was good enough to say that "the Society pursued unbelief to its refuge of lies." Even this gentleman only assigns *one* such refuge to unbelief. We beg to assure him that the Christian Evidence Society has dozens.

A Dutchman in South Africa—in fact, a Transvaaler—has lost faith in the Bible. According to the *Standard* correspondent in Natal, he refused to credit the statement that the work of translating the Bible from the original was largely due to Englishmen. Full of horror, he ran to a Dutch preacher, and asked if this was true, and, on being assured that it was so, he vowed it could not be any good.

if the Englishmen had anything to do with it, and he would never put faith in it again.

The negro evangelist known to Kansas citizens as "the Sin Killer" is operating in St. Louis. He is a Hercules in stature, and possesses a powerful voice. On several occasions Vineyard Hall, where he held forth, was the scene of wild confusion. Repentant sinners lost control of themselves. Some screamed and tore their hair in their frenzy. Others crawled to the mourners' bench, and wildly cried for forgiveness of their transgressions. Throughout the evangelist never lost control of his hearers. He chanted and moaned until he was hoarse; he gesticulated like a crazy man, and stamped his feet as though in a rage; but he never forgot to call for funds before pronouncing the benediction. He said to a reporter of the *Kansas City Times*: "I can't explain how I get 'em. I jes' talk an' talk an' moan an' moan until I gets 'em coming my way. Then I turns on the steam an' I shout hallelujah! I tell 'em of the big devil with horns that's after 'em. Then they howl for mercy an' crowd to the mourners' bench." That is the Christianity of to-day.—*Truthseeker* (New York).

It is wonderful how easily some folks are converted. The Army Scripture Readers' Society recently held its annual meeting. One of the speakers was the Rev. E. J. Kennedy, who, after complaining of the little recognition by the press of God's claim in connection with the campaign in South Africa, said it was refreshing to find Lord Roberts writing home and saying "By the help of God" he had overcome the enemy. The speaker then told how the pulpit mention of that utterance had led an artisan hearer to trust Christ as his Savior.

Thus, a war dispatch is said to have effected a religious conversion. But, then, the artisan hearer probably overlooked the fact that it was the Lord *plus* Roberts, and that the teachings of Christ the Savior are opposed to war. Furthermore, the fact that Roberts was gracious enough to share the honor with the Christian Deity by no means proved that the latter had anything to do with the victory. Certainly, the Boers did not think so. As to "God's claim," it does seem a pity that the press have not given the Deity a look in.

The *Christian* observes that "many persons have found in the Agnosticism of such men as Mr. Herbert Spencer an immense obstacle to their own belief." It proceeds to say that "a flood of light has just been shed upon this matter by Mr. Hector Macpherson, who writes an appreciation of Mr. Spencer—the man and his work. Mr. Macpherson says: 'In conversation I once asked Mr. Spencer if, like George Eliot, he had first accepted the orthodox creed, then doubted, and finally rejected it. His reply was that to him it never appealed. It was not a case of acceptance and rejection: *his mind lay outside of it from the first.*' The whole secret is exposed in that last sentence. We know now the exact value of Mr. Spencer's criticism of religion."

This so-called disclosure, which is no disclosure at all, does not, of course, diminish, but rather increases, the value of Mr. Spencer's criticism. For, as an "outsider" from the first, he might naturally be expected to view the subject with impartiality. Partizans are proverbially blind. The "whole secret" which is exposed is the obtuseness of the *Christian*, but then that can hardly be a secret to any intelligent person who picks that paper up.

According to the *Ecole Laïque*, more than 300 French priests have left the ranks during the last two years. Of these 125 have, in the first instance, entered the home founded by M. Bourrier at Sevres, where they have found repose and opportunity for making a fresh start in life. Eventually they enter on business, or become artisans, professors, doctors, etc. Many have gone back simply to their native village, and begun again at the plough.

This is very well, supposing they do not associate themselves with Protestantism, which is equally a superstition with Roman Catholicism. It would be rather difficult to find three hundred Church of England clergymen resigning their livings and taking to some honest secular calling, however much they may be convinced by modern criticism that the doctrines of their Church are untenable.

It is a matter of small moment, but it is amusing to notice how two religious weeklies—the *British Weekly* and the *Christian World*—differ in their description of the great Talmage. The former speaks of his "great height and stately presence," the Rev. Mark Guy Pearse, it adds, looking almost small when walking in front of Dr. Talmage. The *Christian World*, on the other hand, says Dr. Talmage is "somewhat short in build."

The Rev. H. R. Haweis, incumbent of St. James's, Marylebone, tells a number of good stories in the *Temple Magazine* about his congregation. Here is one illustrating

the sycophancy of Church officials to any members of our "old nobility" at whose feet they can find a chance to grovel: "There was a certain old Duke who used to sit up in the left-hand gallery with his old Duchess, believing himself to be incog. One Sunday a too officious steward, on seeing the old nobleman take a back seat, hurried up to him, and said: 'Will not your Grace have a better seat?' 'Come along, Maria!' said the old Duke, 'we're discovered!' and he immediately walked out with the Duchess, and never showed his face inside my church again."

Our slavery to words that have become so familiar as to lose their meaning, and to phrases which have lapsed into mere jingle, will receive an amusing shock in the Scottish version of the New Testament, which is shortly to be published by Mr. Gardner, of Paisley. Here is a portion of the Beatitudes in Scotch: "And, seein' the thrang o' folk, He gaed up intil a mountain; and when He was suttend-door, His disciples gather't about. And He open't His mooth, and instructit them; and quo He: 'Happy the spirits that lown and cannie: for the kingdom o' heeven is waitin' for them! Happy they that are makin' their maen: for they sal fin' comfort and peace! Happy the lowly and meek o' the yirth: for the yirth sal be their ain hadden! Happy they whose hunger and drouth are a' for holiness: for they sal be steg'h'd! Happy the pitifu': for they sal win pitie theirsels! Happy the pure heartit: for their een sal dwell upon God! Happy the makers-up o' strife: for they sal be contit for bairns o' God!'"

The Bishop of Beverley is disconsolate. He addressed the other day a meeting of the York Branch of the Church Missionary Society. The population of the world, he said, was 1,500,000,000. Yet of these not more than 500,000,000 were Christians. The Mohammedan inhabitants numbered one-seventh of the whole, and a quarter of them were within the limits of our own Empire, and though much more had been done among the Mohammedans than people generally knew, yet it could not be said that much progress had been made in the conquest for Christ of the Mohammedan world.

From these facts, he urged the need for renewed missionary effort. Obviously Christians are more concerned about the spread of the Gospel than Christ himself seems to be. Otherwise he would have taken some less inadequate means of enlightening the heathen, who, by the way, are dying off year by year in happy ignorance of the plan of salvation.

A fine sense of proportion is possessed by the Rev. Arthur Battersby, who addressed a meeting at Southport of clerical and lay members of the Church of England. It seems that there is a reduction of two hundred a year in the number of candidates for ordination. This, said the Rev. Battersby, was premonitory of "a spiritual famine that might have as serious consequences as the physical famine in India." So the fact that nowadays fewer people care to "take holy orders" may eventually be as serious a calamity as the Indian famine! Well, well, some folks—especially if they are parsons—have a mighty fine opinion of their own importance.

The Rev. Battersby, instead of talking such vain nonsense, would have done better to explain why there is such a remarkable falling off in the number of persons desirous of becoming priests in the Church of England. It is not that there are less fat livings now than formerly. May it not be a disinclination to take service in a Church where hypocrisy reigns supreme—where, from cowardice, the pulpit is in rational thought and expression so far behind the pew?

The extent to which superstition still prevails amongst the Italian peasantry, and the way in which it is exploited by ecclesiastical cunning, may be inferred from what happened lately in the neighborhood of Acqui, not a hundred miles from Turin. The Virgin was reported to have appeared repeatedly to a girl in a field in that district. The rumor, which no doubt spread rapidly through the country side, brought multitudes of eager visitors. It is said that they numbered 5,000 a day. The authorities have investigated the matter, and have arrived at the conclusion that the girl is sincere, but is hysterical, and so has unconsciously become the victim of a religious suggestion.

The Bishop of Carlisle laments that the observance of Sunday in his diocese is distinctly on the decline. He specially cites cycling trips as one of the forms of desecration. It is hardly likely, however, that cyclists will, in consequence of the Bishop's lament, sacrifice their Sunday "spin." They would be great fools if they did. The Bishop would have done well to refrain from saying anything on the subject, unless, indeed, he wanted to disgust sensible people. But it seems to be the special function of some fatuous folk in the Church to make religion as disagreeable as possible. In that way they render a service to Freethought, for which they are entitled to our politest thanks.

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The FREETHINKER is no longer published at 28 Stone-cutter-street, but at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, London, E.C., the office of the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, where all orders and communications should be addressed.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, June 10, Athenæum Hall, Tottenham Court-road; 7.30, "Christian Missionaries and Christian Rifles in China."
 June 17 and 24, Athenæum Hall, London.

To Correspondents.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—All communications for Mr. 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.

A. E. ELDERKIN.—Many thanks. They have proved useful, as you will see.

W. B. JOHNSON.—You will find much of the information you are seeking in J. M. Wheeler's *Footsteps of the Past*, which you will see advertised on the last page of the *Freethinker* at the reduced price of 2s. Our late sub-editor compressed into the pages of that volume a multitude of interesting facts, gathered in the course of his wide and careful reading. You can always rely upon the accuracy of his information, whether you agree or not with the soundness of his conclusions.

A. T.—Your letter arrived too late for an answer in our last issue. You will find an answer now by reading our report of the N. S. S. Conference.

FOUR YEARS' READER.—The Gibbon we advertise is quite complete. You need have no apprehension on that score. The two volumes are large royal octavo, the page being so broad that the printing had to be done in double columns. Professor Bury's edition of Gibbon is in seven volumes. The Milman-Smith edition is in eight, and some previous editions were in ten. But that does not alter the fact that these two volumes contain the complete text of Gibbon, with all the Guizot foot- notes. It is Virtue's edition, and is well known to booksellers.

J. EDWARDS wishes to know Mr. Neale's authority for stating that the ancient Jews went in for bull worship. We will let Mr. Neale answer the question himself, although it could easily be answered without him.

G. WISE.—We note your appreciation of the article.

HARRY ORGAN asks whether he would be justified in saying that the Christians not only supplicated their God, but dictated to him. Well, it all depends on how you look at the matter. If you start by saying that God is omniscient, and then tell him of things you think he had as well do, you are as near dictating to him as you can get without giving him express orders. No doubt the Christian would reply that he is only bringing his wants and desires to God's attention. But, according to his theory, God knows them already.

J. TITHERINGTON.—Sorry to hear of your indisposition. Hope you are now better.

MATTHEW WARD.—We cannot undertake to answer such queries by letter. We do not know the Ramsgate coroner's name, but what does that matter? It was the Ramsgate jury that brought in a verdict of "Died by the act of God" on the young woman who was killed by lightning on the sands on Easter Monday. The case was reported in all the newspapers before we made it the subject of an article in the *Freethinker*. What do your Christian friends want in the way of evidence? Do they mean that we are bound to produce the Ramsgate coroner and the whole jury every time they choose to throw doubt upon the matter?

W. A. NEWCOMB.—Sorry we had not the pleasure of seeing you at the Conference. Glad to hear you are taking some Shares in the Freethought Publishing Company.

W. P. BALL.—Much obliged to you for the cuttings. Your letter on "Objectionable Religion" has to stand over till next week in consequence of the space demanded by the Conference report. Other matter has to stand over too, including the second instalment of Dr. Park's essay.

JAMES NEATE.—See paragraph.

G. ANTENRIETH.—Yes, the Freethought Publishing Company will supply whatever you order.

G. NASH sends us 10s. 6d. towards the cost of the proposed visit of Mr. Joseph Symes to England.

H. F. SESEMAN.—Your contribution has been handed to the Secretary. Much pleased to hear from you after your illness.

CONFERENCE FUND.—Miss Vance acknowledges:—R. Linford, 10s.; B. Coleman, 5s.; H. F. S., £1; C. Shepherd, 2s.; F. Cotterill, 5s.

LOUIS LEVINE.—We are much obliged to you for sending us American papers.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Glasgow Herald—Two Worlds—Our Fellow Creatures—Yarmouth Mercury—New York World—Islington Gazette—Paisley Express—Boston Investigator—The Ethical World—Newcastle Weekly Chronicle.

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 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

THE National Secular Society's office is at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., where all letters should be addressed to Miss Vance.

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SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS:—Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*:—One inch, 4s. 6d.; half column, £1 2s. 6d.; column, £2 5s. Special terms for repetitions.

Sugar Plums.

MR. FOOTE is lecturing at the Athenæum Hall during the remaining Sundays in the present month. His subject this evening (June 10) will be "Christian Missionaries and Christian Rifles in China." This is a subject of quite up-to-date interest, and should attract Christians as well as Freethinkers.

The National Secular Society's Annual Conference was a most successful gathering, and the public meeting at the Queen's Hall might almost be called perfect. All the speakers were in first-rate form, and the interest of the crowded audience was sustained unflinchingly to the very end. Whit-Monday's weather was all that could be desired, and the provincial delegates and visitors had a good time from morn till night. We understand that they have all returned home with pleasant memories of the last N. S. S. Conference of the nineteenth century.

A great deal of hard work devolved upon Miss Vance, the N. S. S. secretary, who was unfortunately overweighted at the same time with serious indisposition, which she struggled against bravely and successfully. She had ready and capable assistants in Messrs. Bater, Quay, Leat, and Samuels—the Reception Committee. Mr. T. Shore was also a great help. Mr. D. Frankel, Mr. and Mrs. Henderson, Mr. and Mrs. Caisey, and others, rendered valuable assistance. Mr. W. Heaford was very helpful during the Whit-Monday drive in pointing out and "illustrating" the various objects and places of interest that were passed *en route*.

Mr. Foote was with the excursion party on Monday till nearly 5 o'clock, when he had to go home and get to work on the *Freethinker*. Two of his daughters remained with the party in charge of the secretary. Mrs. Foote was present at the morning session of the Conference and at the evening public meeting. Mrs. Watts and her sister, Miss Nowlan, were also present. Mrs. Cohen was detained at home by the approach of an interesting event in the family history. Miss Emma Bradlaugh, the late Charles Bradlaugh's sister, attended both the Conference and the Queen's Hall meeting, and has since written to Miss Vance to say how much pleasure she experienced.

The veteran Mr. J. Umpleby, of Blackburn, was present at all the Conference meetings, and with the excursion party on Monday until 5 o'clock, when he went to his hotel to prepare for starting by the 7 o'clock train for home. Considering his great age—eighty-six—he shows a wonderful example to many of the younger "saints."

We should have been glad to see delegates from Glasgow. Couldn't the Branch there find a delegate who could spare the time for a trip to London? Mr. Dewar was to have come from Edinburgh, but did not put in an appearance. Mr. Maclean came all the way from Dundee. Mr. Chapman, of South Shields, brought his two brothers with him. The South Wales "saints" were in strong force. They say there is going to be a big propaganda of Freethought in their district. The Derby delegate is a veteran Radical fighter, and his effort on Sunday morning lent a little excitement to the Conference. We were sorry to miss the familiar figure of Mr. Ridgway, of Birmingham, though the Branch was well represented by other delegates. Newark contributed visitors in Mr. and Mrs. Mumby, and there were some Northampton Freethinkers at the back of the hall. Mr. Sunderland, of Bradford, kept things lively as usual in his immediate vicinity. Mr. and Mrs. Gott also came from Bradford, with Mr. Barnard. But here we must pause, or we shall be making up a second list of persons present.

Mr. J. Partridge, of Birmingham, could not get up to London in time for the Conference, but he arrived in time for the Monday's outing. Mr. Partridge richly deserves this paragraph all to himself. He is one of the best and most devoted, as he is one of the quietest, workers for Freethought on this planet.

Since our Conference report was in type we are informed that at the Athenæum Hall, on Monday evening, after the return of the excursionists there, a vote of thanks to the Executive was moved by Mr. C. Pegg, of Manchester, for the "very generous hospitality the provincials had received." This was seconded by Mr. Sunderland, and supported by Mr. Percy Ward. In the absence of Mr. Foote, who was engaged elsewhere, the vote of thanks was acknowledged by Mr. Watts, who said he was quite sure that the members of the Executive would all be delighted to know that their poor efforts, which were after all only their plain duty, had met with so much appreciation.

The *Chatham Observer* gives a good report of the prize distribution at the Secular Sunday School, New Brompton. It notices the "crowded attendance" and the "much appreciated" program.

Mr. Stanley Jones, who is now residing again in Liverpool, occupies the local Branch's platform this evening (June 10). There is no charge for admission, but a silver collection will be taken at the door. After the lecture a committee meeting will be held to arrange for the annual picnic.

The Bethnal Green Branch starts an evening meeting in Victoria Park to-day (June 10). Mr. Heaford, who lectures at 3.15 near the fountain, will lecture there again at 6.15. As this is an experiment, the local "saints" should attend and support the lecturer.

In view of the London School Board elections, which take place in November of the present year, the Moral Instruction League has printed a new form of Petition for the signature of parents whose children attend the Board schools, praying that "facilities may be granted to our children to receive, in place of the present Bible lessons, instruction in personal and civic duties from Board school teachers who have prepared lessons for the purpose." Copies of the Petition can be obtained from the League Secretary, Mr. C. E. Hooper, Surrey House, Victoria Embankment, London, W.C.

The *Programme*, a well got-up weekly paper devoted to London theatrical matters, is a curious organ in which to find a long and highly flattering account of Mr. Foote's appearance at the Athenæum Hall. "How I Spent a Recent Sunday Evening" is the title of the article, with the signature of "L. C.," whoever that may be. It fills six columns, and is vividly written. The physical, mental, and moral description of the lecturer is almost too flattering for reproduction in the *Freethinker*. Those who want to read it must please invest a penny in the *Programme* itself, dated June 2. There is a pretty reference to Mrs. Foote and her youngest child, who occupied front seats at the lecture. After paying Mr. Foote some very handsome compliments as a speaker, the writer of the article expresses wonder at his lecturing in so small a place as the Athenæum. "Knowing," the writer says, "the class of people who composed the late Colonel Ingersoll's audiences, the beautiful houses (theatres and halls) in which he lectured, the great numbers of people that were wont to assemble to hear him, I sat in wonderment that *this man*, upon whose shoulders the mantle of Colonel Ingersoll would have surely fallen—rather, would have been proudly placed there—had it so happened that he was an American, and then to find him in this tiny hall, that would not hold a tenth of the people always 'turned away' when Ingersoll lectured." We may add that the writer is an American who knew Colonel Ingersoll personally.

Several applications have been received by the Secretary for Shares in the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, since our last appeal. Of course the holiday time is not a very favorable one for this object, but now that Whitsuntide is drawing to a close we venture to press the matter again upon the attention of all our readers. We want the Company to be a grand success, as we have no hesitation in saying it ought to be. The Shares are only £1 each, payable at easy intervals; 2s. 6d. per Share on application, 5s. per Share on allotment, and 6s. 6d. and 6s. per Share on the first day of October and the first day of January. He must be a very poor Freethinker who cannot take up one Share, and we know there are hundreds who can take more than one, without ever missing the money they invest; which, however, will not be exactly sunk, for there is no reason why the Company should not return a fair dividend on its paid-up Capital. The great thing now is to move quickly. We appeal to the friends of Freethought all over the country to bestir themselves at once, if they have not already done so, on behalf of this promising enterprise.

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF ANNUAL CONFERENCE.

(Concluded from page 358.)

Mr. G. J. WARREN moved the adoption of the report, which was seconded by Mr. SUNDERLAND (Bradford), and unanimously carried.

The President then submitted the financial report, which was adopted on the motion of Mr. CHAPMAN (South Shields), seconded by Mr. CLOGG (Bethnal Green).

ELECTION OF PRESIDENT.

The President vacated the chair, which was taken by Mr. Watts.

Mr. BATER, on behalf of the Finsbury Branch, moved the re-election of Mr. Foote as president.

Mr. PERCY WARD said he was requested by the Birmingham Branch to second that resolution. He wished that some older member of that Branch, Mr. Ridgway for example, could have been present to undertake so important and pleasant a duty. Anyhow, it was perfectly clear that they had in Mr. Foote an eloquent speaker, a forcible writer, and, looking at the formation of the Secular Society, Limited, an admirable organiser—one who never shrank from danger, and had always been a good fighter. (Loud applause.)

Mr. WATTS: I don't anticipate that anyone else will be nominated. Still, it is my duty to give an opportunity for that to be done. It is unnecessary for anyone to speak on behalf of Mr. Foote. His life and works speak for themselves. I have great pleasure in putting the motion.

The resolution was then carried with acclamation.

Mr. FOOTE, in retaking the chair amidst further applause, said: It is now full ten years since this Society first entrusted this honor to me. As a matter of chronology, my first election took place at a special meeting of members summoned by our late and yet, in one sense, ever present President. (Applause.) That meeting took place at the Hall of Science in February, 1890. At the annual Conference that election was confirmed, and every year since it has been reconfirmed. Ten years make a very good slice out of any man's life. This president's hammer was handed to me by Mr. Bradlaugh. (Applause.) It is not very valuable from an intrinsic point of view, but I regard it as of the utmost value from another point of view. It bears the names of Richard Cartile and James Watson—(applause)—both heroes in the struggle for freedom in this country. (Applause.) On another piece of silver at the top of the handle appears the name of Charles Bradlaugh, President. I was told that I ought to have had my name put somewhere on it—(hear, hear)—but I did not feel in any hurry to do that. But now that ten years have rolled round, I do not think it would be altogether an immodest act if I had it put there. (Applause.) I trust that this hammer will be handed down and treasured by the next president. We none of us know what even a year may bring forth, but I trust that, as I received this hammer from a man who wielded it not only with power, but with entire credit to himself and the cause, I may pass it on to my successor—however soon or late the event may take place—without a stain. (Loud applause.)

ELECTION OF VICE-PRESIDENTS.

The PRESIDENT formally moved the re-election of the following Vice-Presidents, nominated by the Executive:—Dr. T. R. Allinson, George Anderson, E. Bater, Annie Brown, C. Cohen, W. W. Collins, J. F. Dewar, R. Forder, J. Grange, T. Gorniot, S. Hartmann, W. Heaford, A. B. Moss, James Neate, Victor Roger, J. Partridge, S. M. Peacock, C. Pegg, W. Pratt, E. W. Quay, J. H. Ridgway, T. Robertson, F. Schaller, H. J. Stace, W. H. Spivey, Joseph Symes, T. Thurlow, J. Umpleby, E. M. Vance, G. J. Warren, Charles Watts.

Mrs. PEGG (Manchester) inquired as to the non-attendance at meetings of two of the Vice-Presidents. Explanations having been given, Mr. QUINTON (Bethnal Green) seconded the list, which was adopted.

Mr. PERCY WARD said he had been instructed by the Birmingham Branch to move the addition to that list of their member, Mr. W. H. Wood. Mr. PITT (Birmingham) seconded that proposition. The PRESIDENT and Mr. WATTS spoke very highly of the services of Mr. Wood, whom they had known for a very long time. Mr. Wood was then unanimously elected.

FRATERNAL GREETINGS FROM SWEDEN.

The PRESIDENT said it would make a convenient break at this point if he were to read a letter he had received from Sweden. This letter from Captain Otto Thomson, of Stockholm, congratulated Mr. Foote on his work for Freethought, praised the *Freethinker* highly, and conveyed an official resolution of sympathy from the Swedish Liberty League to the N.S.S. Conference.

Mr. A. B. Moss thought that some reply should be made reciprocating the kindly feelings expressed in the letter.

The PRESIDENT cordially concurred, and said he would undertake to communicate with the writer and with the Liberty League.

THE HONORARY SECRETARYSHIP.

Mr. GORNIOT moved the resolution, arrived at by the

Executive, that the Honorary Secretaryship of the Society be abolished. Mr. PEGG (Manchester) seconded.

The PRESIDENT said he would have liked to hear any observations Mr. Forder had to offer, but as he was not then present there was no alternative but to put the proposition. Carried.

HONORARY TREASURER.

The PRESIDENT moved the re-election of Mr. S. Hartmann as Honorary Treasurer, expressing his greatest confidence in Mr. Hartmann's sagacity and zeal.

Mr. VICTOR ROGER seconded, observing that Mr. Hartmann had for many years been a member of the Camberwell Branch, and that his association with it had been most highly esteemed. (Hear, hear.)

Mr. PEGG said they all knew that Mr. Hartmann not only showed capacity for receiving money, but also a great and generous capacity for contributing it himself. (Applause.)

The resolution being carried with acclamation, Mr. HARTMANN, who was warmly applauded, heartily thanked the Conference for the honor. "I have," he said, "one point to mention, and that is I should have liked you to assist me in spending more money for the benefit of the cause." (Laughter and applause.)

ELECTION OF AUDITORS.

Mr. W. E. THOMPSON (Chatham) was re-elected auditor on the motion of Mr. BATER, seconded by Mr. PEGG. On the proposition of Mr. BATER, seconded by Mr. Moss, Mr. Thomas Shore was also elected auditor.

THE SECULAR SOCIETY, LIMITED.

The PRESIDENT then made a statement in regard to the Secular Society, Limited. He said: This is a matter which has occupied the attention of the Conference informally for the last two years, and now the Executive itself has placed the following motion upon the agenda:—"That the Secular Society, Limited, be strongly commended to the support of Freethinkers as a sound and secure instrument for realising legacies and bequests, as well as receiving and holding donations, for the propagation and maintenance of Secularism; and that Freethinkers be earnestly invited to become members of this Incorporation, and to remember its claims, if possible, in their wills." My own statement will be very brief, because that most present are—will be pretty well acquainted with the principal facts of the case. The Secular Society, Limited, is the legal instrument for giving security to the Freethought movement for the possession, the receiving, and the expenditure and investment of funds. Nobody outside a lunatic asylum could for a moment throw any sort of doubt or suspicion upon the utility of such an Incorporation; but there are many ways of hinting dislike, and one of them is to throw doubt and suspicion upon the safety of such an Incorporation. What I have to say upon that matter is simply this; and I don't know that I can do better than just preface it with a very small anecdote. A Scotsman was once crossing a field that did not belong to him, and the proprietor met him in the middle, and asked him where he was going. The Scotsman replied, "Bock again!" (Laughter.) That is all anybody has to do—to go on until he is stopped. It is quite time to talk about what you are going to do when you are pulled up. As a matter of fact, the Secular Society, Limited, holds the field. It is in legal possession, and possession is at least nine points of the law. The critics of this Society say that it cannot possibly serve the end in view. They indulge in criticism, and we receive the legacies. (Laughter and applause.) Well, I think we have decidedly the best of the bargain. It is extremely difficult to get a legacy back when you have paid it over. (A laugh.) Besides, all this criticism is founded upon either an ignorant or a wilful misconception. There is no possible way by which an executor could withhold a bequest to the Secular Society, Limited. As executor he is bound in law to fulfil the conditions of the will. If he were foolish enough at his own expense—for the costs would not be allowed out of the estate—to go to a Court, and raise an objection to the payment of a bequest, the judges would tell him that that was a point with which they had no concern in that connection. This Society exists with all the rights of an Incorporated Society. The Court could not go behind the registration. There is only one way in which it is possible to go behind the registration, but it cannot be done by an executor or an executor or as a beneficiary, and it is in this way. Any citizen could go and appeal to the High Court to cancel a charter of an incorporated body. Whether it happens to be a Bottonley or a Hooley Company, or, as some critics call it, a Foote Company, it does not in the least matter; the law applies the same all the way round. And that is the only way of upsetting a charter. And if it were upset—which is a perfectly whimsical idea—the memorandum is absolutely within the limits of the law. It would not affect one halfpenny of the funds of the Society. According to the Articles, no member of the Society is able to receive any sort of profit from his membership in the shape of dividend or bonus or apportionment of funds. He is debarred by the Articles from doing anything of the kind, and even if the Society were wound up at any time, its funds, according to the Articles, must be handed over and

distributed among kindred societies or perfectly unsectarian charities. So that the funds would still be at the disposition, by vote, of the members of the Society. The Executive of the N. S. S.—which, as you will see by the report and the financial statement, has received £90 by way of grants from the Secular Society, Limited, during the past year—is quite convinced, at least, of the solid reality of the £90—(laughter and applause)—and hopes to meet with more solid realities in the shape of similar grants in the future. (Applause.)

Mr. HARTMANN moved the resolution of the Executive. After referring to his own scheme for the benefit of the N. S. S., which he did his best to make a success, he said they all ought to be grateful to their President for giving them the means of upholding their Society, and doing the work they were established for. (Applause.) That scheme was the corner-stone of their existence. (Hear, hear.)

Mr. WATTS seconded the resolution, remarking that, from his first knowledge of the details of the proposal, he deemed it one of the best strokes of policy that had ever been performed in aid of the Society. It was on a thoroughly legal basis, and it had for its object that which they all desired—namely, the extended propaganda of their principles. Supposing Mr. Foote had done nothing else in his life—a great supposition—the conception, inauguration, and the consolidation of this one scheme would entitle him to their heartiest thanks and support. (Loud applause.)

Mr. PEGG said the Manchester Branch had suffered considerable loss from the want of an instrument like this. He regarded it as one of the greatest things that had ever been done for Secular organisation. It placed them on a level with religious bodies, and gave them rights which were not previously possessed. (Applause.)

The PRESIDENT: With just two exceptions, all the twelve members of the Board of Directors of the Secular Society, Limited, are members of the Executive of the National Secular Society. That being so, the interests of the N. S. S. are not likely to be overlooked. We have received intimation of two legacies in consequence of death. One legacy was from Mr. Lawson, of Aberdeen, who left the Society £100 contingently, and the other was from Mr. W. J. Birch, of Liverpool, which realised about £800. Both gentlemen were members of the Secular Society, Limited. No sort of objection was raised to the paying over of that amount—not even a shadow of objection. It went through in precisely the same business way in which a bequest of any testator would go through. I may add that I know some dozen, at least, who have mentioned the Society in their wills for sums ranging from £100 up to £2,000. In the course of time, as all men are mortal—not that one wants to hasten anybody's death—but in consequence of our common mortality, the Society is bound to get a fairly regular stream of legacies and bequests. This is not a scheme merely to secure one legacy. It is to secure bequests from members of the party all over the country. One or two members have taken this step: they have insured their lives, or effected an increased insurance, and left the amount, or some portion of it, by will to the Society. Many people cannot give a lump sum during their lives, but in this way they can do something at their deaths. (Hear, hear.)

Mr. CHAPMAN (South Shields) mentioned that Mr. Birch was a member of the South Shields Society.

The PRESIDENT remarked that Mr. Birch, before he made his last will, had made a previous will, and told him (Mr. Foote) that he had left him £500 and Mr. Watts £500. But after the formation of the Secular Society, Limited, he saw his way to leave it openly and securely, and he left what he calculated would be about £1,000, the residue of his estate, to the Society. The PRESIDENT added: "I don't know whether it may be considered that anybody has lost in the transaction; certainly the Society has gained."

The resolution was then carried.

TRIBUTE TO INGERSOLL.

On the motion of the PRESIDENT, seconded by Mr. Moss, the following resolution was carried: "That this Conference, being the first assembled since the death of Colonel Ingersoll, desires to place on record its intense admiration of his genius and character, and its recognition of the immense service his life and eloquence rendered to the Freethought cause throughout the civilised world; and that a copy of this resolution be forwarded to Mrs. Ingersoll and the Freethought press in America."

THE SOCIETY AND THE WAR.

Mr. H. MCGUINNESS (Derby) rose to move the following resolution: "That, as a state of war unhappily exists between Great Britain and the South African Republics, this Conference deplors that the points of difference between the belligerents were not submitted to arbitration." He said that this was not the resolution of which the Derby Branch had given notice. Their resolution condemned the war as unjustifiable. (Hear, hear, and "No politics.") They believed that this war could have been avoided. As to the cry of "No politics," this very resolution, as amended by the Executive, distinctly trenched on politics. At the request of the Derby Branch, he should move the original resolution—

The PRESIDENT: Wait a moment. A motion was sent up by the Derby Branch. That motion, like every other, was laid before the Executive. It is not open for any Branch or

any member to send anything he pleases, of any character, on any subject, for the agenda of the Society's Conference. There must be some sort of supervision, and the practice has been all along for these notices of motion to go before the Executive. Now, this motion of the Derby Branch came before the Executive, and the Executive decided that the resolution, as it stood, was a purely political resolution, which did not come within the scope of this Society's program. It was not a question whether the motion was one that could be supported. I suppose that, if a vote had been taken on the Executive on that resolution, it would have been carried. But they had to consider whether a resolution of that character came within the special object of the Society. If moved at a Liberal, Radical, or Socialist Conference, it would be in perfect order, because they are organised on a political basis. We are organised on a Freethought basis. We only touch political questions when they happen to be of such a character that they affect Freethought and cannot be considered to be solely within the range of party politics. I am bound to say that, as President of this Society, re-elected this morning, it would be for me an utter impossibility to retain my position on the Executive of a Society which is organised for one object, and yet is bound to consider proposals relating to entirely outside objects. Every time we took a division on these outside objects we should be multiplying the means of splitting up the Society. (Hear, hear.) I do not see why we should present the spectacle of floating about in the wake of the monstrous argosies of the great political bodies of the country. (Applause.) I don't propose to ask the Conference to discuss South Africa or to discuss my political views. I have a right to call upon the Society to confine itself to its own work. I will be no party to the discussion of mere politics inside the N. S. S. We have our program, and there is in it an article relating to arbitration. Very well; if anybody likes to move a resolution about arbitration within the limits of our program, neither Executive nor individual officer could honestly or even sensibly offer any objection. And I do most sincerely ask this Conference of the N. S. S. to confine itself to its proper business, and not to bring in gratuitous causes of discord. (Hear, hear.) There are quite enough causes of discord—at any rate, we have had enough in past years; indeed, a great deal too many. Every member of this Society can belong to a Conservative Club, a Liberal Club, a Radical Club, a Socialistic Club. We raise no objection, and we place no sort of obligation on our members in relation to outside questions; and, doing that, we have a right to ask those inside to confine themselves to their proper work and pursue their proper purposes. (Applause.)

Mr. MCGUINNESS: It would have been better if they had rejected the resolution altogether.

The PRESIDENT: The Executive put on the Agenda all of your resolution which could be brought within the scope of the Society's objects. We did the clerical work for you; there was not much time to do anything else.

Mr. MCGUINNESS then said he would accept the resolution as amended, and would move it.

Mr. SIMS (West Ham) seconded. He said there was no doubt that the original resolution from Derby was based upon a belief that the great majority, at any rate, of the Freethinkers of this Society and of the country were perfectly opposed to this disgraceful war in South Africa, and—

A DELEGATE: We are discussing the war now. (Hear, hear.)

Mr. SIMS said he would not tread too far on the ground that seemed barred to him. He was proceeding to speak of the disgraceful attack on the liberties of the two Republics, when the PRESIDENT said it was perfectly clear that, if they were going to have a discussion on South Africa, the Conference had better resolve to sit until that day week. (Hear, hear, and laughter.) The newspapers and public meetings had been fully discussing it, and it did seem a pity that the members of this Society, when they met on one day in the year, should devote a lot of time to such an entirely extraneous subject. Vegetarian members might just as well raise a discussion on vegetarianism.

At this point the meeting became somewhat excited, five or six members rising simultaneously to speak.

Mr. F. A. DAVIES (Camberwell) said a meeting of members had been held in his district, and they had all come to the conclusion that they would support the very strongest resolution condemning the war that could be put before the meeting. He protested that the condemnation of the war was not a mere party political question, and was proceeding when—

The PRESIDENT said: You are discussing the very thing ruled out.

Mr. DAVIES: Can I move an amendment that this Conference, believing that the war has been brought about by defective diplomacy—

The PRESIDENT: You must put down a motion altering the scope of the Society's work. To spring additions to the Society's program in this haphazard fashion is not conducive to the Society's welfare, nor does it add to its dignity and respect. (Applause and Oh, Oh!)

Mr. VICTOR ROGER: I never yet at any public meeting heard a chairman give such a ruling as this. I think that

Mr. Davies should be heard. I strongly protest against his being interrupted in this way.

A DELEGATE: I say that if we introduce political questions at this Conference we shall create considerable disturbance. (No, no, and Yes, yes.)

The PRESIDENT: I will ask all to take their seats. I am going to adhere to constitutional grounds. I am not chairman of a public meeting, I am President of the N. S. S., and I say I am bound to keep the deliberations and the votes of this Conference, not within the limits of its desires, but within the limits of its work as set forth in its program. I reserve my right to reject motions and amendments that are outside the scope of the Society's printed program.

Mr. DAVIES: I claim the right to continue what I was saying—

The PRESIDENT: I am now going—(cries of Chair, chair; Order, order)—I am now going, as I threw out an opportunity that has not been accepted—(disturbance)—to adjourn this session. (Cheers and cries of dissent.)

Mr. DAVIES: I strongly protest— (Chair, chair.)

The PRESIDENT: If anyone does not obey the chair, I will order his removal.

A VOICE: He is not a delegate.

Mr. DAVIES: I am a member.

At this point it was discovered that the time fixed for closing the morning session had arrived. Accordingly the Conference adjourned, the visitors and a large number of London and suburban friends dining at the Bedford Head Hotel, Tottenham Court-road.

AFTERNOON SESSION.

On the resumption of the business, Mr. BATER moved that the resolution they had been discussing be at once put. Mr. PEGG seconded that proposition, and it was carried. The resolution was then voted upon and carried without dissent.

SECULAR EDUCATION.

Mr. COHEN moved the following amended resolution—
"That this Conference urges upon all its members to do all that lies in their power to secure pledges in favor of purely Secular Education from such candidates as receive their support, and instructs the Executive to take all possible steps by means of the distribution of literature and otherwise, to educate the electorate on this all-important question." Very briefly Mr. Cohen pointed out the present unsatisfactory state of public education, the practical failure of the Conscience Clause, and said that, under existing arrangements, the utmost a man could hope for was that he need not partake of a part of the entertainment he was compelled to pay for. Dependence upon any of the religious sects was futile. Each religious body was engaged in playing its own hand. Their sole consideration should be to get it out. (Applause.) Nothing less should satisfy us. (Applause.)

Mr. WARREN seconded the resolution, and said that in London it was a question whether they would not do well to support Socialist candidates if they found it difficult to run a Secular candidate of their own.

Mr. LEGGATT (West Ham), Mr. PERCY WARD, and Mr. HARTMANN took part in the discussion. Mr. Hartmann thought it highly desirable to secure one or more Secular candidates. They could not do better than spend their money in supporting such candidates.

Miss GOYNE (Birmingham), in an extremely neat speech, gave the Conference the benefit of her experience as a mistress of a Board school. Psychologically, she said, it was a mistake to thrust abstract questions on young children. It was like feeding a baby on beef-steak. (Laughter and applause.)

Mr. GREEVZ FISHER said that on three occasions he had been a candidate for the Leeds School Board. If he could be assured of the support of this Executive, he might try again.

The resolution was then carried.

FUSION OF THE N. S. S. AND THE S. S. L.

Mr. WATTS moved: "That, in view of the fact that the objects of the Secular Society, Limited, are practically the same as those of the National Secular Society, it would be advisable to elicit the opinion of the party as to the advisability, or otherwise, of transferring the functions of the N. S. S. to the Incorporated Society, in order to secure greater simplicity and unity of operations." He said he brought this proposition forward tentatively and to elicit opinion. He had been asked to do so by several friends; and in reply to a suggestion that had been made, he wished to say that one of those friends was not Mr. Foote. The two Societies had the same objects, but one was Incorporated and the other was not. The N. S. S., of which he had been a member from its inception, had the advantage of old associations, and had done splendid work in the past, and was capable of still more; but it was a question open to consideration whether it would not be better if it were amalgamated with the Secular Society, Limited, which had all the benefits of an Incorporated Society.

Mr. SUNDERLAND seconded, in order to give the motion a chance.

Mr. THURLOW moved the next business.
Mr. GORNIOT thought that the S. S. L. was simply formed to provide a wheel to the N. S. S. coach.

Mr. CHAPMAN was instructed by South Shields to oppose the motion.
Mr. MCGUINNESS was in favor of fusion, and Mr. LEGGATT thought that if the two Societies were kept apart one would prove the other up.

The PRESIDENT: Mr. Watts says that someone had written to say that Mr. Foote had probably put him up to this proposal. Whoever wrote that knows very little of Mr. Foote. When Mr. Foote wants anything done in the Society you can always rely upon it that Mr. Foote will say so himself. On the other hand, I confess I have no particular feeling about this resolution one way or another. The view I took at the outset, and which I put as some people said, especially the enemy, in very reprehensible language—was: If it be asked, after the establishment of the S. S. L., what is to become of the N. S. S.? I reply, I don't know and I don't care. That was quoted, of course, without the context, and I was represented as saying that I did not care what became of the N. S. S. I don't care, supposing that, in the course of time, the N. S. S. was by the process of natural selection absorbed and assimilated by another body which could do its work with more power and efficiency. My only desire is to see the organisation maintained and carried on. In the present condition of things, I don't see how the work of the N. S. S. could be transferred. It has Branches all over the country, with members who come and go and pay small sums as subscriptions. The S. S. L. has a higher subscription, specially fixed to keep out mushroom enthusiasts, and to ensure the moral confidence of those who may leave it bequests. The best thing is to leave the question to time and occasion—(hear, hear)—and the inevitable course of selection. I have accepted the Presidency of the N. S. S. this morning, and I don't want to see it die this year. (Laughter.)

Mr. VICTOR ROGER did not see how the S. S. L. could possibly carry on the work of the N. S. S., and if the latter were abolished something similar would probably take its place.

Mr. MOSS said the N. S. S. had been extremely useful in the past, and they did not want to curtail its usefulness. There was need for both Societies.

Mr. HEAFORD thought a small Committee on the subject might be appointed.

Mr. HARTMANN had come to the conclusion that it would not be a wise thing to abolish the N. S. S.

The motion was put to the vote and negatived.

MR. JOSEPH SYMES.

The PRESIDENT moved, and Mr. BATER seconded, the following resolution, which was carried:—"That this Conference regrets to learn that Mr. Joseph Symes has been obliged to postpone his intended visit to England indefinitely, and that the Executive be authorised to raise a Special Fund to facilitate his visit in case of his being able to surmount the non-financial difficulties in the way of his temporarily leaving Australia."

In the course of the discussion many kind things were said about Mr. Symes.

FREETHOUGHT LITERATURE.

Mr. PEGG moved, and Mr. LEGGATT seconded, the following resolution, which was carried:—"That N. S. S. Branches be advised to purchase, as far as funds will allow, all the standard Freethought works as they are published, with a view to forming the nucleus of a good Library, or adding to the usefulness of existing Libraries."

In the discussion the desirability of presenting Freethought literature to the Public Libraries and Newsrooms was emphasised, Mr. VICTOR ROGER pointing out what had been done in this direction in Lambeth.

On the motion of Mr. PERCY WARD, seconded by Mr. CLOGG, a resolution was passed authorising the Executive to pay the expenses of speakers at a Freethought Demonstration to be held in Birmingham on October 21.

This concluded the business of the Conference.

THE EVENING MEETING.

After the close of the Conference about seventy friends sat down to tea in the Athenæum Hall. In the evening a public meeting was held in the Queen's (Minor) Hall, Langham-place. This handsome, commodious, and beautifully-appointed room was crowded. Prior to the speech-making the audience—which included a considerable number of ladies—was entertained by a musical program. Madame Saunders presided ably at the fine piano, and Madame Lovenez and Miss Jennie Atkinson sang some lovely songs which fairly enraptured all present. Their noble and highly-trained voices, exquisite phrasing, and sympathetic rendering elicited tremendous enthusiasm. At 7.30 the speakers appeared upon the platform, led by Mr. Foote, and this was the signal for a great outburst of applause. After the chairman's brief introduction, Mr. A. B. Moss led off with a powerful little speech that was highly appreciated. Mr. C. Cohen followed in his best vein, and his telling points were heartily cheered. Then came Mr. Charles Watts with one of his rousing speeches, which created a strong impression on the meeting. This was

followed by a brief interval, during which ladies went round taking up the collection. The next speaker was Mr. Percy Ward, of Birmingham, who was warmly applauded. Mr. Foote then delivered his speech, provoking much laughter and more cheers. Mr. W. Heaford gave a bright, brief address, and was followed by Miss Goyne, of Birmingham, who was also bright and brief, and was very cordially welcomed as the only lady speaker of the evening. The meeting closed with the President's "benediction," and as it melted away in little groups the greatest satisfaction was universally expressed with the whole proceedings.

EXCURSIONING.

On Whit-Monday the weather was beautiful and warm. It was an ideal day for an outing, and there was a goodly gathering of delegates, provincial visitors, and some London friends, at the Athenæum Hall in the morning. Three large brakes had been engaged, and Mr. Wilson—the gentleman who lent the brake for the Sunday Freethought Demonstrations—kindly sent a fourth from his own stables. A start was made at 11 o'clock. The first place visited was Westminster Abbey. Thence the brakes drove along the Embankment, which was looking at its best, and over Blackfriars Bridge to the south side of the splendid new Tower Bridge. Crossing over this grand structure, a halt was made at the Tower of London. The journey was resumed by way of St. Paul's Cathedral, and another halt was made to enable the country friends to view the new Freethought premises at Stationers' Hall Court. The route then taken was through Fleet-street, and the Strand, up Regent-street, and into Regent's Park. This is one of the finest "lungs" of London, and it was in splendid condition. Thousands of holiday makers were moving about, and it was the annual display of the London Carhouse Association. The drive around the Park was lined with hundreds of vehicles, to which nearly a thousand horses were harnessed; all sleek, well-groomed, and gaily caparisoned, and many of them perfect pictures of living beauty. It was really a noble and inspiring spectacle. It showed what progress was being made in the growth of kindness to animals. And the country friends enjoyed it immensely. Driving back to the Athenæum Hall, the company broke up to get some solid refreshment, while the horses were baited and the drivers attended to their own victualling department. After a sufficient lapse of time another start was made, the second drive being to Hyde Park, the Albert Hall, Kensington Museum, and along the Embankment to Chelsea. Everybody was charmed with the day's outing. Those who had to wait for late trains stayed at the Athenæum Hall, where more music was provided. In the course of the evening a watch was presented to Mr. E. Bater, of the Finsbury Branch. He was assaulted and robbed of his watch some weeks ago by thieves who followed him from the Athenæum Hall after one of Mr. Foote's lectures. They had evidently watched him taking money, and fancied he was carrying the proceeds home with him. They were mistaken in this, but they rifled his pockets of a little silver and took away his watch. Another pocket timepiece had been privately subscribed for, and it was presented to Mr. Bater on Sunday evening. He was in complete ignorance of what was going to happen, and was quite overcome by the presentation. Altogether it was a very nice, appropriate ending to a most delightful day.

Correspondence.

"OBJECTIONABLE RELIGION."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In accordance with a habit formed some time ago, I last night went to bed, and whilst there I fell asleep. In my sleep I passed into the land of dreams, and found myself in a strange city. Here I made inquiry of one of the bystanders, and was told it was the ancient Borough of CIPHERLEY. Evidently something unusual was astir, for the citizens were hurrying to some gathering in the largest public hall in the place. The next thing I recollect was finding myself within the walls of the building listening to a speaker, who was explaining the object of the meeting. It appears that the trustees of the principal church of the city had long been dissatisfied with the ancient dogmas of the Christian religion, and they had at last made over their property unconditionally to the Secular Society of CIPHERLEY. The speaker explained that the gift was a valuable one, as it was estimated that, at one time and another, no less a sum than one hundred thousand pounds had been expended in the construction and adornment of the fabric. The necessary Act of Parliament had been obtained, and it now only remained for the Secularists to enter into possession of their property.

Then another gentleman on the platform, whose name was said to be Mr. Pill Tcherrick, got upon his feet, and said a few words. He assumed that the entire audience would concur in their appreciation of the very generous gift of the erstwhile Christian. At the same time, he ventured to suggest that the beautiful spire, which some people erroneously esteemed to be the Pride of CIPHERLEY, must be razed to the ground. (Some

murmurs of dissent were distinctly audible at this point.) A spire of any sort necessarily pointed to an unknown heaven as the only hope of a sin-stricken world. Such a doctrine was essentially opposed to the teaching of Secularism, and they must take heed that no one was misled by the architectural symbolism of their meeting-houses.

Mr. Pill Tcherrick was followed by a Mr. Roderick Friar, who was prepared to go even further. He thought it would be necessary to demolish the entire building. (Strong disapproval was here manifested.) Nothing less would suffice, as the cruciform shape of the structure was unmistakable. So long as this feature remained, they would never be able to dissociate the building from its original use. He urged upon the meeting the imperative need of thorough destruction before they attempted reconstruction.

Mr. Roderick Friar was followed by another speaker, whose name did not transpire. This gentleman thought the Secularists of CIPHERLEY ought not to accept the gift on any terms. He reminded the meeting that the church had been built on ground consecrated by a highly-paid ecclesiastic of the Christian community, and by no possible method of construction or reconstruction could they remove the stigma attaching to such consecration. The speaker concluded by moving that on these grounds the gift should be returned to the donors, with the very best thanks of the meeting there and then assembled.

The meeting was then addressed by a Mr. Eighteen-Carat. This gentleman pooh-pooed the suggestions of the previous speakers. He was in favor of an unconditional acceptance of the building as it stood. He was prepared to take over stained-windows, paintings, altars, and crosses, font, pulpit, reading-desk, and lectern. He was prepared himself to preach in that pulpit, and he ventured to believe that no one would misunderstand the meaning of his message. He was not ashamed to stand there "as a son of the past and inheritor of its thought." He denounced the proposals to mutilate or destroy a historic building as stupid iconoclasm.

Other speakers followed, some taking one view and some the other. I can give no information as to the result, because my dream broke up before the meeting terminated. The impression, however, remains that the sane party was the party which followed Mr. Eighteen-Carat. If ever my dream comes true, I hope the sane party will carry the day.

G. DAWSON BAKER.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

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

LONDON.

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "Christian Missionaries and Christian Rifles in China."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road): 7, J. A. Hobson, M.A., "The Anglo-Saxon Mission."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

STATION-ROAD (Camberwell): 11.30, E. Pack.

BROCKWELL PARK: 3.15, R. P. Edwards; 6.30, R. P. Edwards.

PECKHAM RYE: 3.15, E. Pack.

BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, Mr. White.

VICTORIA PARK (near the Fountain): 3.15, Mr. Heaford.

CLERKENWELL GREEN: 11.30, C. Cohen.

FINSBURY PARK: 3.30, A lecture.

KINGSLAND (corner of Ridley-road): 11.30, W. J. Ramsey.

COUNTRY.

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton) will be closed during the months of June, July, and August.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH (in the Bull Ring): 11, H. Percy Ward; 7, Prince of Wales's Assembly Rooms. (See local newspapers.) Mr. Ward will lecture in the Bull Ring every Wednesday and Friday evening at 8.

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, Stanley Jones, "The Roots of Christianity."

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, A lecture or reading.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation Schools, Market-place): 7, Annual Conference; delegate's report.

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—June 10, m. Clerkenwell Green; a., Finsbury Park; e., West Ham.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon-road, London, S.E.—June 10, m., Mile End. 17, m., Limehouse; e., Stratford. 24, m., Camberwell; a., Peckham Rye. July 1, N. S. S. Excursion. 15, m., Camberwell; a., Brockwell Park. 22, Northampton.

H. PERCY WARD, 2 Leamington-place, George-street, Balsall Heath, Birmingham.—June 10, Birmingham. 17, Northampton. July 1, Birmingham. 15, Northampton. 22, Birmingham.

F. A. DAVIES, 65 Lion-street, S.E.—June 10, m., Hyde Park; e., Hammersmith. 17, m., Station-road; a., Brockwell Park. 24, e., Stratford. July 1, m., Hyde Park; e., Kilburn. 8, e., Hammersmith. 15, m., Battersea; e., Stratford. 29, m., Station-road; a., Peckham Rye.

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(Continued from p. 368).

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