

THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

VOL. XXIII.—No. 24

SUNDAY, JUNE 14, 1903

PRICE TWOPENCE

Superstition, folly, and cunning will go on to the end of time, spinning their poison webs around the consciences of mankind. Courage and veracity—these qualities, and only these, avail to defeat them.—J. A. FROUDE.

The King at St. Paul's.

"Oh for a few enlightened Republicans, men to say their say honestly, and dare to do and say the truth!"

—THACKERAY, *Letter to His Mother*, 1840.

THE King worshipped God at St. Paul's Cathedral on Sunday afternoon, and we suppose the Almighty and the ghost of Christopher Wren duly appreciated the compliment. His Majesty had not visited the magnificent Joss House on the top of Ludgate Hill since the Thanksgiving Service which followed his Coronation, when he assisted in making a solemn declaration that it was not science, nor the doctors, nor the nurses, that had brought about his recovery from a dangerous disease and a risky operation, but simply and solely the beneficent power of Providence in answer to the prayers of his people.

It was not to thank the Lord again that the King went to St. Paul's on Sunday afternoon. His object was to do a good turn to the doctors. They had to be left out on the previous occasion, but this time they had it all to themselves. Indeed, the Archdeacon of London, in a public letter calling attention to Monday's meeting at the Mansion House, took care to point out their claim to consideration. After observing that the meeting would be attended by "the greatest authorities in Church, Medicine, and Surgery"—what a strange Trinity!—and stating that the Church's representative would of course be the Archbishop of Canterbury, he admitted that "Sir Douglas Powell and Sir Frederick Treves had earned the gratitude of the whole nation by their share in the recovery of the King from the deadly peril of last year."

We thought this admission would come along in due course. Last year the King's recovery was all the work of God. This year it is allowed to have been a co-operative enterprise. The doctors had what the Archdeacon of London calls "a share" in it; the nurses must have had a share too; and the rest belongs to the Deity.

It would be interesting to know the precise share of each of the three parties. How much belongs to the doctors, how much to the nurses, and how much to God?

Let it not be said that this is rank blasphemy. We are only following the Archdeacon's lead, and he is an ordained and certified—yea, and salaried—man of God. He says that the doctors had a "share" in the King's recovery; consequently it is obvious that God's "share" was a limited quantity. Some people, indeed, think it was *very* limited. They even go to the length of saying that the doctors might have saved the King without God, but God would hardly have saved the King without the doctors.

We have said that the King went to St. Paul's to do the doctors a good turn. He knows very well who saved his life, and he honestly expresses his gratitude; not merely in words, such as he offers to God, but in deeds that may be translated into hard

cash, which the doctors find very much more acceptable.

The plain truth is that the King has once more been made use of by the medical profession. They wanted a special advertisement of their Hospital Funds, and they went to work in a way that reflects credit upon their business sagacity. No subject would do for them; they bagged the sovereign—whose visit to St. Paul's was like the big drum in the concert of "pay, pay, pay."

Whenever a whole class move like one man, it is perfectly certain that they are actuated by self-interest. This is the only universal motive. All other motives are sectional or intermittent. We may be sure, therefore, that the doctors are exploiting the King for their own ends in getting him to act as a supreme advertiser of their Hospital Funds, after already acting as their collector-in-chief and amassing for them a huge general Fund for detailed distribution. It is not an exaggeration to say—and we say it without the least malice—that their exploitation of the King has reached the proportions of a grave public scandal.

We are quite deliberate in speaking of *their* Hospital Funds; for the London Hospitals are *their* Hospitals, and the huge funds now being raised are intended to keep them so. The King is lending himself, however unwittingly, to a great Trade-Union effort to stave off municipalisation and keep these important institutions under the immediate control of the medical profession.

Every profession on earth—even the noblest—requires watching. It has its own craft, its own *esprit de corps*, its own lust of selfhood, and a tendency to form its own peculiar ideas of right and wrong. In the case of the clergy, it was not merely the logic of the doctrine of salvation by faith that set them persecuting heretics; they were also moved by the feeling that heresy was a danger to their profits and privileges. It is undeniable that doctors have been, and are, influenced in the same manner—though not perhaps to the same extent. They are apt to regard the public health as a thing that should be under the absolute rule of medical experts. They are apt to go to the most ridiculous lengths in upholding dogmas like that of vaccination, and to fortify the principle of this nostrum by patronising quack serums and other injections, which are suddenly heard of, widely puffed, and then as suddenly dropped into oblivion. They are apt to cultivate a special conscience in regard to matters like vivisection. They do not escape the bias of their profession. And it is alike the duty and the interest of the community to keep them in their proper place, to rebuke their insolence, to check their usurpations, and to teach them that there is a general conscience and a general welfare of society to which every class must be strictly subordinate.

This is plain language, but why should any sensible and honest doctor resent it? If it is true, it ought to be stated, at least plainly enough to be understood. The medical profession is a noble one; not in the sense that every doctor is a noble man—which is not true; but in the sense that it has ostensibly a noble object—the destruction of disease and the preservation of human health. This noble object cannot be achieved in disregard of ethical considerations. Every man of sense knows that health is

very largely a question of morals. Medical men ought to know it too; and if they ever seem to forget it, owing to the special temptations of their calling, they should be thankful to anyone who sounds a note of warning in their ears.

In this matter of the Hospitals the doctors are not keeping the highest ends in view. They are acting too much from motives of class interest. This will be evident if we look closely at the facts.

Theoretically, the Hospitals are pure philanthropic institutions, supported by the subscriptions of the benevolent, in which poor people are treated for the sake of humanity, and in which medical men, sometimes of the greatest distinction, give their services gratuitously in order to relieve the sufferings, and restore the health, of the indigent and diseased. Practically, the Hospitals are training grounds for the medical profession. Students "walk the hospital" to gain practical knowledge, and the lights of the profession acquire there the medical and surgical skill which is so lavishly paid for by wealthy patients. The poor are doctored for nothing in order that large incomes may be derived from doctoring the rich. This is, roughly speaking, the *raison d'être* of Hospitals. All else is by the way; everything is subordinated to the primary object. The very nursing staff is maintained as a caste by means of peculiar regulations; the first being that probationers are not accepted until they are twenty-three years of age, and have to serve several years on trial after that before they become full-blown nurses; which, of course, keeps the daughters of the people out of the nursing profession, and makes it the private preserve of what are called "good families"—that is, of persons in much the same sphere of life as the doctors themselves.

Far more might be said on this aspect of the case, and we are ready to say it if challenged. It must not be supposed, however, that we are indicting the medical profession. Plenty of doctors are good and true men individually, and some of them belong to the finest type of humanity. We are dealing with them collectively, and in relation to a matter which involves their class interests; and we say that the best of men may go wrong in this direction. Did not Lecky observe that the Spanish Inquisitors, who tortured heretics and infidels without blenching, were often mild and benevolent men in other respects, and that Torquemada himself was almost a model of all the virtues except toleration?

We repeat, then, that the doctors want to keep the Hospitals on the present basis, and are exploiting the King for that object. Indeed, the cat was let out of the bag by the Bishop of Stepney, who preached the sermon at St. Paul's. This is what he said:—

"Already there are ominous declarations that this strain of raising funds has reached the limit of endurance, and that ere long the hospitals of London must turn to the compulsory help of the rates. To remove from the walls of our hospitals the old familiar words, 'Supported by voluntary contributions,' would be an act of moral retreat on the part of a great and wealthy city."

These words of the spokesman of the "Church" on behalf of "Medicine and Surgery" are an appeal against the municipalisation of the Hospitals. If they were supported by the rates they would be under public control. Ay, there's the rub! Doctors could not then do precisely what they pleased; some of the grosser scandals of the present system would be immediately abated, and soon entirely abolished.

The Bishop of Stepney's argument is in itself sufficiently absurd. Voluntary charity is a good initiator, but is not adequate to deal with so vast an enterprise as the hospital-system has grown to in civilised countries. The thing is too big for "voluntary" organisation, and the people are becoming sick of the "voluntary" devices for raising the wind. Hospitals are now as much public institutions, in reality, as schools, workhouses, asylums, museums, art galleries, and free libraries; and they should be maintained in the same way out of the

public funds. There is no more reason why doctors should run the Hospitals than there is why authors should run the Free Libraries. Doctors and authors are both necessary, but the government of the institutions should be in the hands of the representatives of the whole community. Class government is as wrong, and as dangerous, here as it is everywhere else.

In view of the gravity of this problem—as evidenced by the Bishop of Stepney's reference to the 105,000 in-patients and the 1,670,000 out-patients in the London Hospitals—we have not the heart to devote any more words to his foolish sermon. We join in the demand for the municipalisation of the Hospitals; in the interest of common sense and common justice, and even in the interest of common decency and common morality.

G. W. FOOTE.

Secularism and the "Newcastle Chronicle."

ALL things considered, there is no reason for complaint against the treatment meted out by the Tyneside press to the National Secular Society's Annual Conferences. I say, "all things considered" advisedly, for the reason that while the reports might have been much fuller than they were, yet it has been so much the habit of English papers to treat the National Secular Society as though it were non-existent, that even a brief notice comes as a welcome variety to the ostrich-like policy of the newspaper press generally. I do not note this newspaper ignoring of the N.S.S. in any spirit of mournfulness. Neither the Society, nor those at its head, are of the class that run about seeking notoriety by the means of carefully-prepared puffs; when reports are printed we are pleased for the reason that it adds effectiveness to our propaganda; and when they are not we are still content to go forward unnoticed by this particular department of the advertising world.

In addition to the ordinary press notices, however, the *Newcastle Daily Chronicle* published a leading article headed "Secularism," which appears in another part of this journal, and which raises various points worthy of a little consideration. This article, while free from anything that could legitimately be termed objectionable on the grounds of courtesy or fair controversy, yet contains much to which exception may be taken. To begin with, there is a damning-with-faint-praise tone about the article not at all palatable to one who understands the position of the Freethought movement either in the present or in the past. The N.S.S. is not a bad society, nor are its leaders a bad sort of people; but they have had their day; the period of their usefulness has departed. They were badly treated in the past, but are better served in the present. Many of the objects they strove for were good ones, and these have become accomplished facts, so that the sooner the Society disbands the better. Such is the general position taken up by the writer; but it is one which, I fancy, will not withstand criticism.

The main reasons that the writer of the article puts forward to justify his belief in the decline of Secularism are three in number. The first is that the "avowed Atheist is no longer able to attract to his teaching the notice that was given to it in days not very far remote. To-day a debate upon the subject of Christianity *versus* unbelief would attract but a meagre amount of attention compared to that which would have been given to it a generation ago." This strikes one as being one of those very dangerous generalisations which, while true in form, is not true in substance, and is so far better calculated to mislead than to inform. It is true that the getting together of a large audience is a matter of greater difficulty than was the case thirty years ago, but this does not mean either that there are fewer people genuinely interested in the matter at issue, or that the Atheist attracts fewer to his teaching.

First of all some allowance has to be made for the novelty of a Freethought teaching among a people who are now fairly well acquainted with its existence. Half a century ago, in very many parts of Great Britain, the mere announcement that someone was to lecture on Freethought was sufficient to ensure a large audience. People came out of sheer curiosity, and it is some credit to the movement that many hundreds who came from that motive stayed from conviction. In any real survey one must certainly allow for this factor. The fact that large audiences are not so easily obtained now merely means, from one point of view, the elimination of the curiosity-monger. As to a debate nowadays attracting comparatively meagre attention, I venture to say that if the *Chronicle* can induce a really prominent Christian minister to enter upon a discussion with a representative Secularist, he will find the audience as large and the interest as keen as ever. I do not, however, think the *Chronicle* will try; and, if it did, I am certain it will not succeed. In the old days Christian ministers, unacquainted with the full strength of the Freethought position, or unaware of the influence of a Freethought speaker on an audience, did debate, with, generally, one result—the Churches lost members and Freethought gained converts. The clergy were not slow to perceive this. They saw that at every debate the plain truth about Christianity was brought home to Christians who might otherwise never have heard it, and the word went round to leave the Secularist severely alone. The better-class Christians left the debating platform; the inferior article took its place; with the result that the responsible Secularists felt a strong disinclination to debate with an inferior class of men, and Christians absented themselves for the sufficient reason that they were usually half, or more than half, ashamed of their representative when they attended.

Further, in the earlier days of Freethought advocacy, battle had to be waged against the Christian Sunday in all its pristine ugliness and deformity. The parson, the publican, and the secular lecturer shared the population between them; and all those who did not care for the two former went to the latter. But there is this distinction between the parson and the secular teacher. The one teaches men to depend upon him; his whole aim is to make people feel that they cannot get along comfortably without him. The aim of the latter is to teach people to do without him; and, having broken the religious shackles, to turn them out free men and women, ready and willing to devote themselves to a more rational ordering of this world's affairs. The result is seen in the rapid multiplication of societies devoted to the special purposes of encouraging rational Sunday recreation, and the delivery of lectures upon all manner of social and intellectual topics. I do not think I am exaggerating when I say that most of the societies that hold their meetings on Sunday were either started by Secularists or influenced by them, as they still are. And the multiplication of these societies necessarily involved greater difficulty in securing audiences for Freethought meetings. I do not complain of this; it is part of our work to bring it about, and is a further evidence of the fruitfulness of our work. Indeed, the sooner we are rendered unnecessary, the better; but we can be rendered unnecessary only by the complete destruction of theology, and the thorough emancipation of the people from religious fetters.

Apropos of this, the *Chronicle* writer says: "It would hardly be seriously contended that the sum of a man's happiness on earth would be increased by the fact that he did not believe." Well, in all seriousness, I do maintain this position. I contend that the sum of man's happiness is decreased by his religious belief, and increased by his disbelief. The writer practically says as much himself. He points out that many of the things for which Secularists fought have been conceded, and many of their teachings adopted by the public at large. Quite so; but upon the face of it the opposition offered by the religious

world to these improvements represents so much human energy that has been expended in the fighting, that, but for the presence of religion, would have been conserved for other work, and would thus have advanced human well-being to a proportionate extent. Suppose, for instance, that all the time taken up by scientific investigators and social reformers in fighting religious prejudice had been devoted to their investigations and teaching; suppose also that the money spent yearly on religious propaganda was spent on schemes of social reform; is it not fair to assume that the happiness of the race would be greater and more assured than it is to-day. The issue seems to me a perfectly simple one. If the changes wrought, in spite of religious prejudices, were good ones, religious belief did detract from the sum of human happiness, and that happiness was increased by disbelief. If the changes were not good ones, then Secularism is to be blamed for having helped to bring them about. And as the *Chronicle* writer believes that these changes were good, he seems to me to have demonstrated, in spite of himself, that man is benefited by his disbelief and injured by his belief.

The remaining two reasons offered in justification of the writer's position are that we have become more tolerant, and that nine-tenths of that for which the early Secularists contended have been rightly conceded. He says:—

"Speech is almost as free in this country as it can conveniently be made; the press, if not entirely free, has had most of its fetters removed; no child need be given religious instruction; and the civil marriage is just as valid as that performed by the priest. On the delicate and debatable question of Sunday observance, too, the Secularists see in practice much of that liberty for which they contended. And we believe that these reforms have been brought about without any increase in the number of dogmatic unbelievers."

Now, every one of these statements, laid down as though they were self-evident truths, are open to dispute. First of all, I, for one, have doubts about about there being more tolerance nowadays, except in a very qualified sense. There is more tolerance only in proportion as there are more unbelievers. Generally speaking, the religious world is what it was; but it is now held in check by the greater number of Freethinkers abroad. But, where it can exert its power, Freethinkers are denied the rights of hearing, their literature is severely boycotted, and themselves subjected to a social ostracism more effective in its way than the imprisonment of earlier times.

Speech, we are told, is "almost" as free as it can "conveniently" be. There is much virtue in this "conveniently." I have no doubt that speech was as free in the Middle Ages as was "convenient" for some people. The value of the qualification depends upon whose convenience is meant. For my own part I do not believe that speech can ever be called properly free while public halls are refused because a certain opinion is to be ventilated, while people are punished for the holding of particular opinions, or while the avowal of unbelief is an almost certain disqualification for office in civic or political life. Nor do I think we have yet reached the dignity of a really "free" press. Free in the sense of having removed certain legal fetters the press certainly is, but is it in a wider and healthier sense? Would even the editor of the *Newcastle Chronicle* give the same latitude for the expression of heretical opinions as for the ventilation of religious beliefs? Or if he would, is his position that of newspaper editors in general? Everyone knows full well how difficult it is to get the Freethought side heard through the public press. The advertiser sits supreme, or if his rule is shared it is by the bigot who terrorises editor and proprietor by discontinuing his subscription should anything offending his religious opinions be given publicity. Much more has to be done in the way of educating public opinion before our press can be properly regarded as "free."

Some little proof of this, as well as an indication of how much has yet to be done, is afforded by the writer's

reference to the "delicate" subject of Sunday observance. Why "delicate"? I imagine it is because, in Newcastle just now, there is a dispute as to whether the people of that city shall be permitted or not to listen to bands in their own parks on Sunday. The bigots say no, and hitherto the bigots have had their way. The subject is "delicate" for a newspaper, because there are subscribers to offend. Not a very clear proof of there being any very great amount of freedom to spare, even in Newcastle. And Newcastle is only a type of dozens of other places. There are dozens of places in Great Britain where the religious bigot stands at the entrance to public parks and museums, and reading-rooms, and denies the right of the people to use their own on the one day of the week when they are most free and most able to use it. The Sunday question alone is enough to show how much work still lies in front of the Freethinker.

The reference to religious instruction is, for the writer, most unfortunate. No child need receive religious instruction, we are told. We can let the statement pass, as it is legally correct, but is it nothing that Freethinkers are compelled to pay for a religious instruction they do not want, and will not have? Is it nothing that for over a generation the educational development of this country has been retarded by the religious quarrels of the sects? The writer must surely see, if he stops to consider, that it is religion, and religion alone, which is the great stumbling-block to education in this country. Remove the Episcopalian parson and the Dissenting minister, and the road is clear for the educational reformer. Retain these in the schools, and you perpetrate an injustice on the non-Christian citizen, inflict an injury to the child, and demonstrate that here is one more instance where belief does detract from the sum of human happiness.

The *Chronicle* writer is, if I may be pardoned saying it, living in a fool's paradise. Not he alone, but many others. It has become quite the fashion of late for people to talk of the days of militant Free-thought as over. It is an easy creed for arm-chair philosophers and would-be "respectable" Freethinkers, who, because men are no longer burned at the stake or buried alive in prisons, speak of the fight as over. Those who read the signs of the times aright know that the power of religion for evil is far from spent. It was Grant, I think, who said that the only good Indian was a dead Indian. I venture to apply the same to religion. While it lives there is always a danger of its repeating its past crimes. It may be quiescent for a season, it may wear the mask of tolerance in the face of superior power, but it is the same now as ever, ready to be as virulent as ever when the opportunity occurs. Religion still lives, and while it lives there is plenty of work for all who care more for principle than popularity, and more for the future of the race than for the ease of the moment.

C. COHEN.

Theological Elasticity.

NOTHING in the world is so pliable, shifting, and accommodating as modern theology. It pretends to be heroically bold and courageous, grandly independent of all changes in other sciences, and sublimely indifferent to attacks upon its own positions. But, in reality, its chief characteristic is mean cowardice. Not long ago it said "He who doubts the literal accuracy of the account of Creation and the Fall in the Book of Genesis shall be eternally damned." To-day, it gives you permission to call that interesting story a fable. A little while ago it pronounced belief in the Proper Deity of Jesus Christ essential to salvation, but now it generously grants that even a Unitarian may enter heaven at death. The truth is that theology is steadily veering round towards naturalism and the beautiful realm of common sense.

Does anyone wish to possess a tangible proof of

this statement? Such a proof is at hand in the shape of a great critical and theological work, entitled *Encyclopædia Biblica*, the fourth and concluding volume of which has just been published. This is a most remarkable book, and all the more remarkable when we bear in mind who its editors are—namely, the Rev. T. K. Cheyne, D. Litt., D.D., Oriel Professor of the Interpretation of Scripture at Oxford, and Canon of Rochester, and J. Sutherland Black, M.A., LL.D. Everybody knows that Canon Cheyne is at once an accredited teacher in the Church of England, whose sermons at Rochester and elsewhere have a distinctively evangelical flavor, and one of the most extreme and destructive of the Higher Critics. In this most scholarly and learned production the evangelicalism is conspicuous by its absence, while the sceptical criticism, as the *British Weekly* calls it, is in full evidence. Thirty and forty years ago theology found Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible* a marvellous tower of strength, an invaluable compendium of Biblical and doctrinal information, and a great bulwark of vital orthodoxy. In that work supernaturalism was the dominant note. But the theologians soon outgrew it, and began to characterise it as old-fashioned, excessively conservative, and hopelessly antiquated. Then came Hasting's *Dictionary of the Bible*, in which the moderates among the Higher Critics were allowed to utter themselves. Forty years ago this work would have been regarded as of Satanic origin; but to thinkers of Canon Cheyne's type it proved too cautious, hesitant, and compromising, and close on its heels appeared the *Encyclopædia Biblica*, as an exponent of the more advanced and daring school. In this work Rationalism is the dominant note. It might have been issued by the National Secular Society. Take any article you please, and you will find that it fully justifies this characterisation. The one on "Jesus" is from the pen of the late Professor Bruce, of the Glasgow United Free Church College, who began his career as a stout champion of orthodoxy, and ended it as a notorious Freethinker. His article on "Jesus" might have been written by Mr. G. W. Foote himself, so far as any leaning to supernaturalism is concerned. The essay on the Gospels is by Professor P. W. Schmiedel, of Zürich, which Dr. Robertson Nicholl condemned as glaringly subversive of the Christian faith. Now, this German sceptical critic contributes to the *Encyclopædia Biblica* a series of articles extending to no less than 450 columns, all of which are of a destructive nature. We will take his article on the "Resurrection and Ascension Narratives" as an example. His position throughout is that miracles have never happened, and, of course, that Christ did not rise, and could not have risen from the dead. Remember that this sceptic is a Professor of New Testament Exegesis at Zürich, and calls himself a Christian. Here is an extract:—"It is undeniable that the Church was founded, not directly upon the fact of the Resurrection of Jesus, but upon the belief in his resurrection; and this faith worked with equal power whether the resurrection was an actual fact or not." What a terribly disastrous admission! Blind belief in a fact that never occurred—what a foundation for a Divine institution to rest upon! But here is another equally fatal admission: "The idea of Paul that, apart from the literal truth of the resurrection of Jesus, there is no forgiveness of sins, has as its necessary presupposition the dogma, not of Paul the Christian, but of Paul the Pharisee, that every crucified person without exception is accursed of God; as soon as the possibility of a miscarriage of justice, either in the synedrium or at Pilate's judgment seat, is conceded, this view *eo ipso* falls to the ground." Poor Paul, after so long and undisputed a reign, thou art dethroned at last! Had this German iconoclast lived a few centuries earlier, he would have been burnt to ashes at the stake for a much less blasphemous assertion. I cannot resist the temptation to make a quotation from the speech delivered by Dr. W. Robertson Nicoll, at the recognition of Mr. Campbell as minister of the City Temple:—"I had

great delight yesterday in reading the article of Schmiedel on the resurrection in the new volume of the *Encyclopædia Biblica*. Schmiedel is one of the ablest, most extreme, and at the same time most candid, of the German rationalists, and he sets himself with all his might to show that Christ never rose from the dead. What does he do? He demolishes with irresistible logic every explanation of the resurrection of Christ which other rationalists have built up in the years before. For one, I have never seen the work performed in a more masterly fashion." Take heart, Mr. Editor, do not despair; the churches are drifting so rapidly towards blank negation, that soon they will be applying for membership in the National Secular Society. The appearance, under the wing of the Church of England, of the *Encyclopædia Biblica* is a most significant and encouraging sign of the times.

ANTI-HUMBUG.

A One-and-Elevenpenny Battle.

LAST Friday, June 5, the monotony of my office duties was varied by an appearance before "His Majesty's Justices of the Peace for the City of London and Liberties thereof," as it stated on the summons I received. I was rather disappointed to find only one of these gentlemen present, but his imposing appearance in a fur-trimmed robe lent a dignity to the occasion altogether out of proportion to the paltry sum of 1s. 11d. which the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, had been summoned to pay as tithes by the Churchwardens and overseers of the Parish of St. Sepulchre. Really, it seems a pity so many big guns were not employed in the pursuit of some larger game, but it wasn't my fault. I don't have the assessing of Church tithes.

After I had taken my place, at eleven of the clock, as directed, with sundry other of His Majesty's subjects, some bearing very visible marks in black eyes and other signs of dilapidations of the breaches of the peace, of which they had come to complain, a splendid apparition in scarlet and gold called, in stentorian tones, for Edith Vance, of the Freethought Publishing Company. I stepped up and answered to my name, and after the parish tax collector had answered to his, and duly kissed a greasy book (they did not ask me to kiss anything) and proved service of the notice, the Clerk of the Court proceeded to read the Act of Parliament—144 Geo. III., 89, sec. 13. I hope he understood what it was all about. I confess I didn't; but when I was asked what I had to say, I replied: "I understood that all Church rates, and similar forced contributions to the maintenance of the clergy were abolished, and I have come here to-day to say so, and to be told if I am right or wrong." The Clerk returned that this was not a rate, but a tax in lieu of tithes, and that the magistrate had no power in the matter. I said: "It would be against conscience to pay such a demand unless compelled. The Freethought Publishing Company is established to help put an end to parsons, and its funds ought not to be diverted to the opposite purpose." Alderman Simmons said very politely that he must decide against us, and I left the Court remarking that "This 1s. 11d. would be cheerfully paid for a good and sensible object." The *Star*, *Leader*, and *Reynolds'* reports add to this that the money was then paid. This is not true. Who can tell whether a mysterious dispensation of Providence might not use our refusal to pay Church tithes as a means of bringing these respectable gentlemen to a knowledge of the truth?

EDITH M. VANCE.

Church and Tax.

MR. EVERETT'S proposed act "to exempt the real estate of religious corporations in the city of New York, as now constituted, from assessments for public improvements" may not assert any new principle, but is a sufficiently serious extension of sectarian privilege to merit attention, I do not say of taxpayers, but of the students of political history. While the church-and-state unions of Europe have long been marked by the steady decline of taxation for the support of religion, here the sect-and-state union is growing and expanding in that direction.

Our sects, by sufficient union with the State to obtain all temporal advantages without payment, while sufficiently separate from the State to be irresponsible to it, have secured a composite establishment with detailed advantages distinctively American. The English Church is in this sense not "established" at all. Its property does not belong to

churchmen, but to the whole nation—to Quakers, Jews, Catholics, Infidels, nothingarians, etc., as much as to communicants of the national Church. Each particular English church is accountable to the public for every pound entrusted and expended. Its vestries are open to dissenters. The Church is in discipline and administration subject to the secular law courts. It is subject to Parliament, which may control its ritual, change its creeds, secularise its endowments.

But in New York the whole body of churches have been established—and genuinely. For while their exemption from taxation adds to the burden of every taxpayer, thus virtually taxed to support those churches, he has no right to any vote or voice in determining the use to which his money shall be put. The community which has forced him to pay has no right, in his behalf, or in its own, to enter into the pious conclave and influence or even know the disposal of funds thus raised.

This transfer of public money to private corporations from whose administration the public is excluded is a flagrant example of taxation without representation.

La Majorité le veut! Yes, her majesty, the majority, so wills it. It is one privileged power conferring privilege on another; for the masses derive their authority from mere birth as much as kings and lords. But the majority is no exception to the law that only they govern wisely who can govern themselves.

—*New York Sun.*

MONCURE D. CONWAY.

The Size of the Universe.

SOMETHING FOR PROFESSOR WALLACE.

LORD ROSSE'S mammoth reflecting telescope at Birr Castle, Ireland, has not yet been exceeded in size, though others more powerful have been made. The Yerkes Observatory, U.S.A., which boasts possession of the largest refractor (40in.) in the world, is ambitious to excel with a giant reflecting telescope also, for there is in its optical workshops a five-foot glass mirror, nearly finished, after two years' work has been spent upon it, and Mr. G. T. Ritchie, who is instructor in practical astronomy and superintendent of instrument construction there, talks of a huge mirror eight feet across. The Gobain Glass Works, near Paris, are willing to undertake to cast a glass disc of this size, or even one of ten feet, and engineers and opticians only await a capitalist with the money.

An eight-foot reflecting telescope, it is calculated, would photograph stars fifty times fainter than any we are able to see. It would enable us to penetrate seven times farther into space than can now be done with the largest visual telescopes, and reveal to us a universe three hundred times greater than the universe which is revealed to the eye even by aid of the Yerkes 40in. lens. Already the limits of lens-construction have been nearly reached; but a mirror of these vast proportions is possible because it can be supported in every part, and only one surface has to be ground in place of the lens's four, while faults in the glass are of less moment, as the reflecting face is covered with a chemical deposit of silver. Telescope, dome, and all, Mr. Ritchie believes, could be done at the cost of half a dozen free libraries.

Let Me but Give My Life.

LET me but give my life from year to year,
With forward face and unreluctant soul,
Not hastening to, nor turning from, the goal,
Not mourning for the things that disappear
In the dim past, nor holding back in fear
From what the future veils, but with a whole
And happy heart, that pays its toll
To Youth and Age, and travels on with cheer.

So let the way wind up the hill or down,
Through rough or smooth, the journey will be joy;
Still seeking what I sought when but a boy—
New friendship, high adventure, and a crown.
I shall grow old, but never lose life's zest,
Because the road's last turn will be the best.

—*Henry Van Dyke.*

The trouble with most people is, they bow to what is called authority; they have a certain reverence for the old because it is old. They think a man is better for being dead, especially if he has been dead a long time.—*Ingersoll.*

Acid Drops.

The President of the National Secular Society's two questions in the *Daily News* were as follows:—(1) What would there be left to quarrel about if religion were removed from the public schools? (2) Why do Nonconformists, who oppose the teaching of religion in State churches, uphold the teaching of religion in State schools? Not a single Nonconformist has attempted an answer to either of these questions. Both of them go the root of the whole matter, and the second is a direct, though perfectly civil, logical challenge. Is not the absolute silence of the army of Nonconformist letter-writers a proof of the insincerity of the fine pretences they put forward in their battle with the Church of England? Does it not show a total absence of real principle? Is it not a demonstration that Church and Dissent are alike pursuing self-interest?

"Dr. Rowland's Furniture" was a glaring headline in a recent number of the *Daily News*. Dr. Rowland is Chairman of the Committee of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, and his "furniture" came up at a meeting of the Hornsey Passive Resistance Committee. The reverend gentleman said that after long and anxious thought he had come to the conclusion to have his furniture taken rather than pay the denomination school rate. We suppose his hall umbrella-stand will be seized, and he will feel like a blessed martyr. But it is about the cheapest sort of martyrdom we ever heard of—and martyrdom with a crowd at that.

These Nonconformist "martyrs" quite forget that they themselves have for thirty years forced a denominational rate upon all the non-Christians in this country. They have also forced a denominational rate upon Churchmen in many cases. Where they got upon School Boards and succeeded in arranging the religious instruction to suit their own taste and convenience, they simply had Nonconformist religion taught at the public expense. Lord Salisbury told them so plainly when they sent him a deputation, and it is as clear as daylight to everybody but themselves.

This view of the matter has just been expressed by a Church of England clergyman, the Rev. H. N. Thompson, in the *Isle of Wight County Express*:—

"But Dissenters are not the only people who are required by law to pay for a religion which they dislike. Church people have to do the same thing. We are required to pay for School Board religion. No Dissenting preacher or Progressive Guardian in the island hates the religion of the Church more than I do School Board religion. Dissenters are content with it. It satisfies them. It does not satisfy us. We loathe it. But we have to pay for it. Now, it may be noble and conscientious and magnificent for Dissenters to refuse to pay for Kenyon-Slaney religion. I do not wish to question it. But can it be conscientious on their part to insist that we shall pay for School Board religion? Surely, the conscience which says 'Dissenters ought not to pay for the Churchman's religion, but Churchmen ought to pay for the Dissenter's religion,' may perhaps be called a manageable conscience, a serviceable and convenient conscience, even a Progressive conscience. But the question is, Is it really a conscience at all?"

The *Daily News* calls this a "curious quibble." But it is nothing of the sort. It is plain fact and common sense. Our contemporary quibbles in arguing that there is a great difference between "the leaving untaught of certain doctrine which we believe" and "the teaching of certain doctrine which we heartily abhor." The absurdity of this is obvious to everyone who will look at it fairly. The doctrines that are left untaught are integral parts of the faith to the persons who accept them. Putting them aside for a more convenient reason, would be as sensible as making a Christmas pudding without the fruit, with a view to adding the fruit afterwards. Some things have to be done altogether or not at all, and religious teaching is one of them. Leave out some things in a Catholic school, and the children would be Protestants. Leave out some things in a Church school, and the children would be Dissenters. Leave out some things in a Trinitarian school, and the children would be Unitarians. Leave out some things in a Christian school, and the children would be Jews. Leave out some things in an orthodox school, and the children would be Deists. If the *Daily News* cannot see this, it is the blindest paper in England.

Let us reduce the whole matter to a practical level by taking concrete illustrations. A School Board is discussing the syllabus of religious teaching. It consists of members of various denominations. There is something in the syllabus about the Son of God, or our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. This is objected to by a Unitarian member. He

claims that it should be left out. Other members only believe it; he disbelieves it; therefore the cases are different; and, after all, he only wants it to *wait*; he doesn't want the children taught that Jesus was *not* God. Would the Trinitarian members be caught by this chaff? Would they not reply that not teaching the children the deity of Jesus was practically teaching them the opposite? And would they not be right? Or take the case of a Jewish member. He objects to portions of the New Testament in the syllabus, and claims that these also shall be left out. "We all agree about the Old Testament," he says, "but we differ about the New Testament. You only believe it; I positively disbelieve it; I even think it blasphemous. I claim, therefore, that the Old Testament alone shall be taught. I don't want anything said *against* the New Testament; I only want it to *wait*." Would the Christians be caught by this chaff? Would they not reply that not teaching the children the inspiration of the New Testament was practically teaching them the opposite? And would they not be right?

The Catholic Church has not long left off persecuting and murdering the Jews; but so few people know anything of history—even of *recent* history—that the Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne is able to take a prominent part in a public meeting to protest against the massacre of the Jews at Kischineff. We are glad, of course, to see priests caught, in spite of themselves, by the tide of humanity; only we want to put in a word of warning when they pretend, as they often do, to have got up the tide themselves.

A year ago Dan Leno was threatening us for paying him the handsomest compliment he ever received. He was serious for once, and the part did not suit him. Happily he had the sense to relapse upon the comic vein. We regret to hear that his exertions to please the public—which have been very successful—have brought upon him something of our own complaint. He has been advised to take a sea voyage in order to obtain complete rest.

President Roosevelt's abominable libel on Thomas Paine has been referred to more than once in the *Freethinker*. We think it best, however, to give the passage in full, once for all, from Roosevelt's *Life of Gouverneur Morris*. Here it is:—"One man had a very narrow escape. This was Thomas Paine, the Englishman, who had at one period rendered such a striking service to the cause of American independence, while the rest of his life had been as ignoble as it was varied. He had been elected to the Convention, and, having sided with the Girondo, was thrown into prison by the Jacobins. He at once asked Morris to demand him as an American citizen; a title to which he, of course, had no claim. Morris refused to interfere too actively, judging rightly that Paine would be saved by his own significance, and would serve his own interests best by keeping still. So the filthy little atheist had to stay in prison, where he amused himself by publishing a pamphlet against Jesus Christ. There are infidels, and infidels; Paine belonged to the variety whereof America possesses at present one or two shining examples—that apparently esteem a bladder of dirty water as the proper weapon with which to assail Christianity. It is not a type that appeals to the sympathy of an onlooker, be said onlooker religious or otherwise."

It is quite evident that Roosevelt's malice went hand in hand with a plentiful supply of ignorance. The "filthy little atheist" wrote in favor of Theism, he was nearly six feet high, and was always noticeably well-dressed until his last days of sick helplessness. The writer of "a pamphlet against Jesus Christ" never said a word against that personage, but called him a great and good man. Roosevelt would have known this if he had read the *Age of Reason*. Paine's "insignificance" is proved by his having been the most popular and influential writer in America—his *Crisis* having, by Washington's order, been read to every regiment in the American service; by his having been Secretary for Foreign Affairs to Congress; by his having been singled out for prosecution by the British government on account of his famous reply to Burke; and by his having been elected (without standing) by three departments to the French National Convention. The man who had no claim to be considered an American citizen had just the same right as Washington himself. Before the war, all Americans had been subjects of King George. After the war, all who remained in the country were necessarily American citizens. Paine fought in the war on the American side, and he remained in the country after the Declaration of Independence. It is a bit odd to assert that the man who was publicly thanked by Congress, and who was presented by the State of New York with a farm of three hundred

acres, was not an American citizen. On the whole, it is pretty clear that Roosevelt wrote about Paine like a malicious bigot.

The tallest Yankee story of the season has been ventilated in the *London Express*. A harmless necessary fowl—a hen, of course—at Blum, in Texas, has laid an egg with the words "The end of the world is at hand" inscribed in raised letters on the shell. It must be a lineal descendant of the rooster who waited outside that court of justice in Jerusalem to crow at Peter. The wonder is that it did not lay eggs in the service of our Prophet Baxter.

The flagellation mania has broken out again in Southern Italy. Young men paraded the streets of Verbicaro scourging themselves. The magistrates have imprisoned some of them for a fortnight in order to stop the scandal.

Christian Science, which is so widespread and successful in America that it has engaged the serious attention of Mark Twain, appears to have effected no inconsiderable lodgment in England. The sect is most numerous in Manchester, where it is building a Christian Science church, which will seat 400 persons, and will cost about £5,000. The moving spirit there is Lady Victoria Murray, a daughter of the Earl of Dunmore. There is a woman at the bottom of most things, if you only get far enough to find her.

During a Whit-Monday service in the village church at Attendorf, Maehren, lightning struck the high altar. A child was killed, and twelve members of the congregation were rendered unconscious. Had such an accident occurred at a Freethought meeting it would have been a theme of pulpit eloquence all over Christendom; if the lightning had struck the lecturer's desk, or the chairman's table, it would have been regarded as a heavenly warning to the wicked infidels; and if anyone had been killed, it would have been considered a most certain "judgment."

More "Providence." Last season the cod did not turn up at their accustomed haunts off the Norwegian coast. These fish are not supposed to reason, but to be led by instinct; which, of course, in the language of orthodoxy, is but another word for providential guidance. What the idea of "Providence" can be is a secret to everyone. But this is the result. Cod-liver oil has so risen in price that several of the London hospitals are obliged to stop supplying it to patients. This will be a sad disadvantage to a great many children, and to sufferers from various forms of tuberculosis.

Much has been written about the shocking and fatal fire at Eton College, in which two unfortunate lads were burnt to death, their escape having been cut off by barred windows. But the gem of all appears in a special memorial number of the *Eton College Chronicle*. After an obituary notice of the first victim, Lionel George Lawson, born on March 23, 1889, there are the following lines:—

"He slept, but God's all-seeing eye
Vigil of mercy kept,
And gathered him to immortality
Tenderly while he slept."

Good God! This is enough to take one's breath away first, and make one's blood boil afterwards. Fancy the "mercy" of any being who could watch that poor lad fighting the flames for dear life without rendering him the slightest assistance! And just think of the humbug of that "tenderly while he slept" in such tragic circumstances! Surely a parson must have done this. It is hard to believe that a man of any other profession could be guilty of such caunting absurdity.

The second victim, James Kenneth Horne, was born on April 22, 1889. After his obituary notice the writer pens the following silliness:—"In the eyes of the foolish, they seemed to have died, and their departure was accounted to their hurt, and their journeying away from us to be their ruin; but they are in peace." Of course they are in peace. All the dead are in peace. But this fact is little consolation in cases of premature and terrible death. Only a "foolish" religionist could think otherwise. This particular "foolish" religionist actually suggests that the burnt-to-death lads were quite fortunate. According to his ideas, the sooner the rest of the Eton boys are "gathered to immortality" in another fire the better it will be for them, and also for their fathers and mothers, if they only look at the matter in a proper light.

What a lot of cant there is in loyal Christian England! Many newspapers have had a conspicuous paragraph headed "The Queen's Benevolence." The paragraph itself simply announced that the Queen had made "a magnificent gift of £5,000," not out of her own pocket, but out of "her Majesty's

War Fund," which had, of course, been subscribed by the general public—for providing free apartments for the widows and daughters of officers, on the same system as those granted by the King at Hampton Court and Kensington Palaces. Will somebody explain where "the Queen's benevolence" comes in?

Poor old Noah's Ark! The biggest ship in the world of romance is being beaten in the world of reality. The Cunard Company have ordered two new high-speed ships, to do twenty-six knots, with a length of 760 feet, beam of 85 feet, and a displacement of 35,000 tons. These ships are not only bigger than Noah's Ark, but tremendously more complex; and they will be built in a short time, whereas Noah's Ark took a hundred and twenty years.

Glasgow Corporation administers ten city churches. There are 9,890 sittings in them, and 4,943 are unlet. We do not hear that the Torrey-Alexander revival show has had any effect on these statistics.

The Parks Committee of the Newcastle Town Council, as a result of being waited upon by a large and representative deputation, have decided to recommend to the Council that permission be granted for bands to play music in the public parks on Sundays. This will come before the Council in a few weeks' time, when it will be voted upon; and we hope that the Council will be sensible enough to agree unanimously to the Committee's recommendations, and so put itself in line with London, Manchester, Bradford, Cardiff, and most of the other large towns in the kingdom. Gateshead has enjoyed Sunday music now for over ten years, and just recently has commenced Sunday evening programs in addition to those in the afternoon. Newcastle affects a tone of superiority in regard to its poor sister, but it is evident that, as far as Sunday music is concerned, Gateshead can give it points.

Meanwhile, this proposed innovation is giving birth to the usual crop of pious epistles in the local press. The Newcastle *Daily Leader* has been specially favored. Once more we hear of "the torrent of Sabbath Desecration"; once more we hear of "the thin end of the wedge"; and once more we are referred to what we are bound to arrive at by these inflections of "divine law"—the "Continental Sunday."

The Sabbatarian's stock-in-trade consists of phrases. Take away his phrases and he is a lost man. Everyone who is at all conversant with the Sunday question must come to the conclusion that the opposition to a free Sunday arises from the clerical dread of competition. The small amount of public opinion that is against a more cheerful Sunday is that which is clerically controlled. We have said this many a time before, and we say it again. Those who cannot see this should consult an eye specialist.

Education spells infidelity in Russia. We see by the papers that a young Russian, who bought an Algebra, was arrested; and, although he was acquitted by the authorities, they warned him not to buy books which tended to make him an anarchist and an infidel. Good old land of the White Czar! Holy paradise of Mr. W. T. Stead! What a beautiful place it must be to live in! What with the Government, and the Greek Church, and the bitter weather, it must be about as nice a place as the Christian heaven. We mean the heaven of angels in nightgowns, seated on damp clouds, and blowing cold trumpets.

Last week we gave an extract from Mr. A. G. Hales's account of the Derby Day saturnalia. Whit-Monday came along soon afterwards, and everybody knows the vulgar fashion in which myriads of Londoners enjoy themselves on that Bank Holiday. The following extract from a *Daily News* correspondent shows that they do some things a great deal better in "infidel" Paris:—"Last Monday I took one of the crowded boats up the Seine to Suresnes, and walked back to Paris through the Bois de Boulogne. The whole of this vast pleasure ground was alive with picnickers. Under the shadow of almost every tree there was a merry group of revellers of both sexes, all ages, and various degrees of social caste, but all alike in the childish gaiety with which they delivered themselves up to the simple pleasures of the forest. There was no divorce of the parents from the children in their frolics. Father and mother took their turn as "blind man" with the rest. Nothing in all the glad scene struck me more than the faculty of the French to enter naturally and delightedly into the irresponsible play of the youngsters. In all the walk—and I think I covered six miles—I did not see a solitary shooting gallery, or Aunt Sally, or swing, or,

indeed, any of the customary adjuncts of a Hampstead Heath festival. There was little drinking and no drunkenness—nothing, in short, but a measureless gaiety, as free from vulgarity and squalor as it was picturesque and wholesome. I think I can count myself a true Briton and a good patriot, but in the mirror of Monday last I saw some of the less lovely aspects of our life with unpleasant vividness."

The Shoreditch section of the *Daily News* religious census for London shows that district to be entitled to the twenty-sixth place in the list; the twenty-seventh, and worst of all, being Fulham. With a population of 115,796—including 56,739 males and 59,057 females—there were only 15,878 attendances, both morning and evening, at all the various churches, chapels, and mission halls. One person in seventeen went to a place of worship in the morning, and one person in twelve in the evening. The proportions for the men were: in the morning one in twenty-three, and in the evening one in nineteen. Evidently religion is very much at a discount in Shoreditch.

Here again, as in so many other London boroughs, the Church of England comes out an easy first in the competition. It beats all the Nonconformist Churches combined. The figures are: Church of England, 7,033; Nonconformist Churches, 6,994; Roman Catholic Churches, 1,409; Other Services, 442.

The appeal of the ministers of Montclair, New Jersey, for a better observance of Sunday surprised the Editor of the *Truthseeker*, who, as he said two weeks ago, was at a loss to know what could be doing in that commuters' paradise to so excite the parsons. People living near Skeetside, which is within the limits of Montclair—south-east corner, next to the woods—could give the Editor information on that subject, or he could have got it at first-hand by dropping around there on the Sunday that the appeal was read in the churches. A busy scene, of an agricultural nature, was then presented to view. A horse that once galloped before the hosecart of the local volunteer fire department, but had now got over his hurry, drew a plough through the soil of my garden and chewed stolen mouthfuls of grapevine. A neighbor, who owns the horse, followed the plough and chewed tobacco. At one side stood the neighbor's wife, holding a baby, which chewed its thumb. Strung on the wire fence were a number of small children, chewing the last pieces of their breakfast. Soon, not far away, God's hired men would stand in their pulpits, chewing the rag of Sabatarian controversy. It was a clear case of Sunday law violation, and a constable happening along would have caught the gang with the goods on. But I had my defence prepared. The work was one of necessity and charity: the garden needed ploughing and the man who ploughed it needed the money. I doubt if the ministers could have put up as strong an argument as that for ploughing the atmosphere with their noses.—*George Macdonald (New York "Truthseeker")*.

Most of the men of God who attended the annual meeting of the Northamptonshire Baptist Association at Olney were teetotallers. They thought there was no danger while they kept off intoxicants. But there is deadly peril sometimes in cold water, and nine-tenths of the Baptist exhorters were attacked with severe stomach troubles in the night—when they were "alone with God."

High Wycombe has a New Testament which has been used at coroners' inquests since 1798, and is still in good condition. During its 105 years of service it has been kissed more than 100,000 times. How many lies have been told over it is not stated.

We got off our penny omnibus the other day, and walked along Holborn Viaduct on our way to the *Freethinker* office. Passing the City Temple, we saw two gentlemen come out and enter a nice-looking brougham. One of them was the Rev. R. J. Campbell, successor to the late Dr. Parker. There was no mistaking the prematurely grey hair—greyer than our own—nor the "wonderful eyes" that don't after all look particularly manly. Dr. Campbell's tall figure suggests Euclid's definition of a line. We shall be much surprised if he continues to attract the attention he has lately been enjoying. His reputation does not seem to us as well-built and safe as his brougham—in which he perhaps ponders the text, "Blessed be ye poor!"

"Leave it alone and it will die." This was said of the Christian superstition by a prominent Free Religionist more than a generation ago. The leave alone policy was adopted more or less by the Free Religious Association,

and the Christian superstition has flourished and the Association is on its last legs. It has been demonstrated that to build up ethics does not tear down theology. The other method is the right one. Human conduct is not determined by faith, or lack of faith, in God. The morals which have a theological foundation may suffer in their ecclesiastical display when men outgrow or discard the superstition that heaven is the reward for going to church and obeying the priest, and hell the punishment for manly independence, but the results of human experience cannot be altered by the death of a thousand theologians. The way to kill superstition is not to fight something else.—*Boston Investigator*.

The Great Republic of the West is not exactly a free country all round. During the recent visit of President Roosevelt to San Francisco the police kept some seventy "undesirables" under lock and key. No charge was made against them, but it was felt that they were better in custody. One of these persons was named Czolgosz. He was no relation to the man who assassinated President McKinley, but he bore the same name, and that was enough for the San Francisco police. One trembles to think of the consequences if the next assassinated President is killed by a man called Smith. Locking up all the Smiths on the line of the Presidential tour would be a very big enterprise.

The Catholic (Dublin) for June has an article by the Rev. S. Chadwick, of Leeds, on "Systematic Giving." This gentleman tells some wonderful stories of the piles of money he receives from people who go into business and promise to give the Lord (through his agents, of course), one half, or one third, or some other liberal proportion of their profits. He says he gets a cheque for £50 every month from one man who started this beautiful (and profitable) system when he was earning less than £2 a week. He prospers, all who do likewise prosper, and the Rev. S. Chadwick prospers; and everything is for the best in the best of all possible worlds.

Here is comfort for Christian congregations. The Missouri court of appeals held recently that a pastor has no legal hold upon his congregation for his salary.

Christian women in the United States are banded together in a special Union to unseat Senator Smoot, of Utah. His constituents are Mormons, and are supposed to go in for a plurality of wives—one legal and the others spiritual. This is denied, however, but the Christian women of other States don't believe it. The subject haunts them night and day, and they have sworn to put Senator Smoot out. What they have not done is to see whether the Bible justifies them. If they searched the Scriptures they would find nothing in it against polygamy from Genesis to Revelation.

THE RELIGION OF STUDENTS.—Josiah C. McCracken, secretary of Earl Hall, Columbia University, has instituted an inquiry, with a view to ascertaining the religious affiliations of students in all departments of the University. The following statistics are based on the facts concerning 900 students: Protestant Episcopal Church, 16.4 per cent.; Presbyterians, 11.4 per cent.; Methodists, 9.2 per cent.; Jews, 6.9 per cent.; Roman Catholics, 6.2 per cent.; Baptists, 5.8 per cent.; Congregationalists, 5.4 per cent.; Lutherans, 4.1 per cent.; various other organisations, 3.6 per cent. Nearly one-third of the students, according to the returns, are not members of any religious sect or denomination.—*Evening Post* (New York).

"De trouble wif dis hyah church," said the colored deacon of a little Southern church, "is de contributory negligence ob de congregation." "De contributory negligence ob de congregation?" repeated the pastor, "what yo' mean by dat?" "I mean jes' what I sez," replied the deacon; "w'en the plate am passed aroun' nearly all of dem neglects to contribute."

"THE longer I live," sighed the sage, "and the more I learn, the more firmly am I convinced that I know absolutely nothing." "I could have told you that twenty-five years ago," said his wife, "but I knew it would be of no use."

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE.—Bertwhistle: "I thought you Christian Scientists never died, yet I see you are laying out a cemetery." Christian Scientist: "Oh, that is only for our members who think they are dead!"

CLERGYMAN: "There is no death." Parishioner: "Still, I'll bet you carry life insurance."—*New York World*.

Mr. Foote's Lecturing Engagements.

(All Engagements suspended for the present.)

To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—Address, 241 High-road, Leyton.—June 14, m. Kingsland, a. and e. Victoria Park; 21 and 28, Newcastle-on-Tyne. July 5 and 12, a. and e. Victoria Park; 19, m. Kingsland.

WE cannot take notice of letters without the writer's name and address.

C. PAINE.—Thanks for your trouble in the matter. We had already dealt with it in last week's *Freethinker*. Our statement was perfectly correct in the previous week's issue. The letter had not been inserted when that number went to press. It was inserted in the Thursday's *Daily News*. The *Freethinker* went to press the morning before, and was on sale in the afternoon. It is quite possible that a copy was seen at the *Daily News* office in time to slip our letter in the next morning; indeed, it is conceivable that our letter had gone into the wastebasket, and that our contemporary had it set up from the printed copy in our journal.

D. S. CURRIE.—Pleased to hear you so appreciate our articles, though we would rather not print your compliments. The phases of the moon depend upon its position in relation to the earth and the sun. It would always be full moon if the earth never got between the moon and the sun. When you see a half moon, the other half is of course there too, but is obscured by the earth's shadow being thrown upon it. You will notice that the segment line of the moon is always curved. That is because the earth being round, its shadow is round too. You ought to have found this clearly explained in Sir Robert Ball's book.

J. CHICK.—We agree with you that Utopia is not going to be realised yet awhile; in one sense, it never *can* be realised, any more than you can overtake the horizon. But things do go forward a bit every century. History furnishes the proof. When you say you regret that Mr. Cohen (or any other man) is so altruistic, you really say you wish him other than he is. But we don't suppose this is what you mean. No man ever did or could win a prominent place in the Freethought movement without being built on out-of-the-common lines.

MANCHESTER FRIEND.—Thanks for copy of the *Evening Chronicle*. We do not intend to give any further attention for the present to E. Kay Robinson. He is dishonest and slippery, to begin with. We asked him to give us the reference to a pretended quotation from Darwin. He has not given it—and for a very sufficient reason. Now he practically admits, in reply to a correspondent, that Darwin never said what he alleged; but he has not the decency to say so openly. As to Darwin's not being an Atheist, but an Agnostic; we defy anyone to show any substantial difference between the two—that is, if Atheists are allowed to define "Atheist" and Agnostics are allowed to define "Agnostic." Darwin admitted, in a conversation with Büchner, that Agnosticism, as he understood it, was the same thing as Atheism as Büchner understood it.

OLD ADMIRER.—It is the inevitable penalty of being something. Positive and negative run through nature. The only way to escape them is to be nothing. It was the fine sentence of a great writer—"He will never have true friends who is afraid of making enemies."

A. T. FRENCH.—The real name of the American humorist who wrote as "Dod Grile" is Ambrose Bierce. He is still living. His writings show he is a Freethinker, and the fact was demonstrated by his defence of Ingersoll after the great Freethought orator's death. There are some warm things in *The Friend's Delight*. From his last book, *Fantastic Fables*, extracts have been given from time to time in our own columns. They are philosophical, and cover a wide range of observation and reflection. *In the Midst of Life* is not humorous, but terrible. It displays great psychological power. We know nothing of *Can Such Things Be?* or *Black Beetles in Amber* except the titles, and don't think they have found their way into England yet.

G. ALLAN.—Criticism which is mere fault-finding, or a mere display of the cleverness of the critic, is our abhorrence. In writing on Emerson we tried to explain him, and to excite interest in his works. We appear to have succeeded, at least as far as you are concerned; and such knowledge is our best reward. The edition of Emerson we use is the one edited by John Morley in six volumes. There is a cheaper edition, in smaller but legible type, in three volumes, in Bohn's Library.

THE COHEN PRESENTATION.—*Third List*:—Dr. Laing £2 2s., Mr. Howarth 5s., H. Barber 2s. 6d., J. Robinson 2s., D. S. Currie 2s. 6d., J. Chick 5s., C. Bowman £1, Mrs. Daniel Baker £1, Dr. R. T. Nichols £1 1s., R. E. D. 5s., E. Jones 5s., J. Umpleby £1 1s., J. Jones, 10s., Paul Rowland 5s., J. Barry 5s., R. W. Dowding 5s., R. Carroll 10s., F. Rogers 1s., W. Stewart 2s. 6d., R. Childs 4s., A Friend £2 10s., R. W. Dowding 5s., J. R. Webley 5s., Mrs. Stevens 5s., C. D. Stephens 5s., C. Shepherd 2s. 6d., J. G. Dobson 2s. 6d., W. Brodie 2s., Mr. and Mrs. Spiers 5s., W. Turnbull 5s., J. Wilson 5s., P. Gorrie 5s., D. Baxter 2s. 6d., J. Allan 2s. 6d., Mrs. R. Turnbull 2s. 6d., Greenock 4s., J. Stanway 5s., J. Hockin 1s., T. Jones 4s. *Per V. Roger*: R. Wharrier 2s. 6d. (omitted last week), W. Wright 2s. 6d., F. Wood 2s. 6d., J. Enyon 2s. 6d., V. R. 2s. 6d. Total to date, £43 4s. 6d.

JOHN ROBINSON sincerely hopes a good sum will be realised in appreciation of Mr. Cohen's valuable services.

H. BARBER.—Shall appear in our next. Thanks.

J. G. STUART.—Glad to know you have found our Emerson articles "instructive and interesting."

J. JONES.—We hope, of course, with you, that the Cohen Presentation will be something approaching to adequacy. We are not surprised at what you say on the other matter. There is next to no real care for education amongst the Church and Chapel combatants. Their real interest is religious rivalry.

J. UMPLYBY.—Pleased to hear from you again. In your great old age it should be some comfort to know that you have the esteem of your fellow Freethinkers.

R. E. D.—Pleased to hear from you once more. We are quite aware that the Isle of Man is a very godly place—except when godliness conflicts with business, in the holiday season.

F. S.—Thanks for the cutting, which takes the cake. See "Acid Drops."

W. P. BALL.—Thanks again for your welcome batches of cuttings.

T. H. ELSTON.—We are obliged. See paragraphs. The difficulty with E. Kay Robinson is that he appears to contribute to a number of papers, and we are quite unable to catch him up in all of them.

T. HUTCHINSON.—Thanks for paper. We invited E. Kay Robinson to tell us *where* Darwin said that his doctrine "necessarily presupposes the existence of that 'Architect' of the Universe, whom religion calls God." When he gives us the reference to this pretended quotation he will be worthy of further notice—and not until then. For the rest, it is enough to say that Darwin began as a Christian, went on to be a Deist, and finally became an Agnostic. He expressly says so in his Autobiography. Any ignorant or unscrupulous person could represent Darwin as a Christian or a Deist by simply quoting from him at one or the other stages of his development. Hundreds of religious apologists and preachers still do this, and trust to the ignorance and laziness of their audiences for safety against exposure.

F. ROGERS.—It is good of you to send a shilling out of your meagre and precarious earnings, but we should not like to see your example followed. The giving should be done by those who can afford it; and they are numerous enough, if they only came to the front. We were never anxious to secure the widow's mite.

W. T. CARPENTER.—You are mistaken. There is not a special "man who writes the 'Acid Drops' in the *Freethinker*." The paragraphs mostly come from our own pen. We have only occasional assistance, instead of the regular assistance we had when the late J. M. Wheeler was our sub-editor. This week, for instance, we are responsible for all the "Drops" except a couple quoted from exchanges, all the "Plums," and all the "Answers to Correspondents," in addition to our signed article. Mr. T. P. O'Connor says in his *Weekly* that 300,000 words a year is a large turn-out for a journalist who puts any head into his work. We reckon that we contribute some 600,000 to the *Freethinker* alone. And we do a lot of other work as well. So much for our "taking it easy." Fortunately we had help from Mr. Cohen with the Conference report.

H. HARRINGTON.—Pleased to hear our publications are appreciated. We know nothing of the wonderful new American preacher. So many pious marvels come from the United States! But the compliment is returned. Some of our pious marvels go over there and find a grand reception—and dollars.

J. STANWAY.—Glad to read your good opinion of Mr. Cohen. Some Freethought missions may be undertaken in several districts when the N. S. S. has funds at its command—which will probably be soon.

"A FRIEND" sends us £2 10s. for the Cohen Presentation and the same amount (which we have forwarded) for Mr. F. J. Gould of Leicester.

T. ROBERTSON.—Your second list of subscriptions to the Cohen Presentation from Glasgow goes into this week's general acknowledgments. Thanks for your kind inquiries. We are as well as we are likely to be until we can get a good long holiday.

RECEIVED.—Humanitarian—Boston Investigator—Two Worlds—Progressive Thinker—Herts Leader—Blue Grass Blade—Newcastle Daily Chronicle—News and Courier (Charleston, U.S.A.)—Islington Gazette—Morning Advertiser—Newcastle Daily Leader—Newtownards Chronicle—La Raison—Aldershot Military Gazette—Norwich Mercury—Public Opinion (New York)—Torch of Reason—Lucifer—Freidenker—Truthseeker (New York)—Manchester Evening Chronicle—Wallssey News—Birkenhead News—The Catholic—Free Society—Liberator (Melbourne)—Grays Gazette—Morning Advertiser—La Justice Internationale.

THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY'S office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., where all letters should be addressed to Miss Vance.

THE SECULAR SOCIETY, LIMITED, office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

LECTURE NOTICES must reach 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

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

ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., and not to the Editor.

PERSONS remitting for literature by stamps are specially requested to send *halfpenny stamps*, which are most useful in the Freethought Publishing Company's business.

THE *Freethinker* will be forwarded direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.

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

Sugar Plums.

The South Shields *Free Press and Advertiser* devotes three columns and a-half to a report of the National Secular Society's Whit-Sunday Conference.

The *Newcastle Daily Chronicle* of June 1 gave a brief report of the N. S. S. Conference on Whit-Sunday at South Shields. The next day's issue of the *Chronicle* contained a leading article on the subject, which we reproduce in full in another part of this week's *Freethinker*. We see no reason to complain of the general tone of this article, but we venture to offer a few comments. We cheerfully concede that some of the things Freethought strove for have been accomplished; nevertheless, much remains to be done, and the mission even of practical Freethought is very far from being exhausted. It is not quite true that persecution has ceased; it has rather passed from the public to the private sphere, and has taken the form of ostracism instead of imprisonment. By this means Freethinkers suffer without the compensation of advertisement to their cause. It is quite true, however, although the *Chronicle* does not mention it, that the Christian Churches have absorbed a great deal of what was once popular Freethought; the so-called Higher Critics are teaching Biblical theories as advanced as any propounded in the old days by Bradlaugh and Holyoake; and there is proverbially little business to be done by carrying coals to Newcastle. With regard to the "mental calibre" of the Freethought advocates of to-day, and that of the advocates of twenty or thirty years ago, we confess that we do not care about the topic, but we need not evade it when it is introduced. Setting aside Bradlaugh, who was a phenomenal personality, we have no hesitation in questioning our contemporary's judgment. It is considerably more than thirty years ago since Mr. Holyoake took an active part in Secular propaganda; moreover, he is still living, and we would rather not discuss him in this connection. Whoever else were "some of those" our contemporary refers to, our own recollection goes back more than thirty years, and we are confident that they were not superior to their successors of to-day. Certainly the amount of brain work put into the *Freethinker* by its various contributors need not fear any comparison with that displayed in the older Freethought journals. There is always a tendency to praise former times at the expense of the present. But it is a fallacy of perspective in political and social affairs, and we believe it is equally so in the particular matter of our contemporary's observations.

Perhaps a point may be added. It has been said of some great artistic performances that they only required age to be classics. In the same way, it is never the fashion to give much credit to Freethought leaders until they are dead or obsolete. Bradlaugh has been a great man since his death, and Mr. Holyoake has been a great man since his retirement.

We would draw the *Chronicle's* attention, finally, to the fact that thirty years ago there were no Sunday attractions in England except the church, the public-house, and an occasional Freethought lecture. Some of these attractions have multiplied enormously. Sunday Societies, Labor Churches, Socialist Societies, and all sorts of other bodies, open their doors to the public on "the Lord's Day." The result is that the Freethought lecturer who, thirty years ago, had a kind of monopoly, has now to face a fierce competition. Perhaps this has as much to do with certain phenomena noted by our contemporary as all the other causes it assigns put together.

Mr. Foote got through the rather trying work of the Annual Conference, at South Shields, better than he expected, and much to the satisfaction of those who knew how ill he had been. Although he spoke last, as usual, at the

evening public meeting in the Royal Assembly Hall, his strength kept up fairly well to the end, and his voice had recovered a good deal of its old tone. By resting from platform work during the present summer, and recuperating his nervous energy away from London in healthy surroundings, he will probably be quite fit for a thoroughly active winter campaign.

"There is no better pen in England," the New York *Truthseeker* says "and no more eloquent voice than that of George William Foote, editor of the London *Freethinker* and president of the National Secular Society. To make American Freethinkers acquainted with this fact we have imported a long list of Mr. Foote's writings, the titles and prices of which will be found in our advertising columns. The popularity of this author will increase here as his works become better known."

"Race Week" at Newcastle is always the occasion for some special outdoor lecturing being undertaken by the local Branch, and those who have come to look upon Mr. Cohen's visit at that time as an institution will be glad to know that he is engaged to lecture as usual on Sundays, July 21 and 28. For the information of those who have been accustomed to hearing Mr. Cohen on the Quayside, we would mention that such meetings will be abandoned this year, and all the lectures will be given, morning and evening, on the Town Moor. It was felt that the character of the Quayside audience was not such as to warrant the exercise of Mr. Cohen's energies and abilities.

We are informed that Mr. M. J. Charter, who is a member of the Newcastle Branch, is making a special "line" of our literature at his stall in the Bookmarket in Newcastle. He will supply the *Freethinker* and *Pioneer*, and any of our publications, to order, and we trust that our readers will pay his stall a visit whenever they require anything in the Freethought line.

A gentleman whose letter is type-written, but whose signature we cannot make head or tail of, informs us that he has been elected secretary of the Liverpool Branch, in the place of Mr. Tom Pacey, who has removed from the Alexandra Hall. This gentleman says that he finds letters from the N. S. S. secretary (Miss Vance) and the "Cohen Testimonial" matter unattended to. He adds that he is now receiving subscriptions for this Fund, which will be remitted in a lump. Also that the Branch has started an open-air propaganda fund, with a view to retaining Mr. Ward's services during the summer.

Mr. G. L. Mackenzie's pungent verses on "Thank God" have been reproduced from our columns in the *Truthseeker* (New York) and the *Liberator* (Melbourne).

Mr. Joseph Symes's *Liberator* (Melbourne) reaches us very irregularly. Sometimes we do not get it for several weeks together. This has happened lately, and we began to fear that our old friend's tribulations had been too much for him at last. However, his May 2 issue reached us a few days ago—single, solitary, alone, as the wordy reporters would say. Evidently our worst fears were unfounded, and we are glad of that. But we are sorry to read that there was nearly a breakdown on April 24, when our gallant old colleague had no money to buy paper to print his journal on. Fortunately some money came from a good friend through the post just in the nick of time. A pious editor would have called it providential. We hope there are other good friends at the antipodes who will rally round Mr. Symes and give him the financial support which he needs and deserves.

According to one of our American exchanges—*Public Opinion*, New York—the New York state superintendent of public instruction reports that there has been a great increase during the last year in the number of protests received by his office against reading the Bible in the public schools. We are glad to hear it, and hope it will continue.

The June number of the *Humanitarian*, the organ of the Humanitarian League, reprints a portion of the correspondence which appeared in the *Freethinker* on the ethics of Vivisection. We are glad to see that our brave contemporary is so much above the cowardice which prompts so many periodicals to boycott the very name of this journal. We say *cowardice*, for it is often not *bigotry*. Most pressmen, at any rate, are able to recognise the mental work put into the *Freethinker*; only they dare not say so, at least in public.

Mr. Augustine Birrell delivered an interesting discourse at Essex Hall on June 2, his subject being the place and influence of Ralph Waldo Emerson. Mr. Birrell said that whether Emerson's influence were to last or to fade, it was something that had made all the difference in the world to many a mind. Emerson was a fearless and convinced optimist. He refused to believe in a hell for any man. His optimism was based upon his theory of compensation. He believed that everything good and bad, missed or gained, had its compensation, that Nature abhorred monopolies and exceptions, and you must pay or receive your entire debt. This belief was now dismissed as a whim; but it was really "the pulse of the machine." In every fibre of his being, too, he was an individualist who could not see the sense of the theory that if a host of miserable units are added together the result is happiness. He had no theology, strictly so called, holding that faith based upon authority ceased to be faith. Prayers he considered a disease of the will, creeds a disease of the intellect. Above all he was an emancipator, not of black bodies, but of the souls of white men and women, and at no time did the luckless race of man stand more in need of Emerson's spirit than it does at this moment. His splendid courage, his determination to quake at nothing, his spiritual independence and individuality, his lofty sense of the brotherhood of man, his undying cheerfulness, his sincerity, his peace, are qualities of which we stand sorely in need.

Mr. George Macdonald, only brother, we believe, of Mr. Eugene Macdonald, the able editor of the New York *Truthseeker*, sometimes enlivens that journal with a certain pawky humor which seems to testify to his Scotch extraction. His contributions are modestly headed "Observations." We give a specimen of them in this week's "Acid Drops." Unfortunately "brother George" doesn't write as frequently as he should in the *Truthseeker*. The word "should" refers to the appreciation of his readers, not to any dereliction of duty on his part. He has business matters to attend to, and probably writes as often as he can.

American Freethinkers seem to think that hardworking editors of their party ought to have a good long summer holiday, and that money ought to be found for the purpose. Editor Moore, of the *Blue Grass Blade*, Lexington, recently enjoyed a trip to the Mediterranean, Egypt, and Palestine. We now see that the friends of Editor Washburn, of the *Boston Investigator*, have subscribed three hundred dollars, with more coming in, for his trip abroad, which will last until the autumn. Mr. Washburn, whom we met at Boston in 1896, and whom we hope now to meet again in London, engaged a passage on the *Saronia*, which was to sail from the "hub of the universe" on June 2. By the time this paragraph sees the light of publicity he should be in England.

The June number of the *Pioneer* contains a good supply of interesting articles and paragraphs. We hope our friends will do their best to push it into circulation amongst their acquaintances. Our object in starting it was to provide a penny paper with a non-aggressive title that might find its way into circles that were closed against the *Freethinker*. A wide circulation of the monthly is a most effective advertisement of the weekly organ.

As the long-expected summer is now actually coming along, and Freethinkers will be holidaying more or less, like other people, we venture to suggest to them that they should take a little Freethought literature with them wherever they go, and judiciously place it in the hands of persons they meet, to whom it may be an introduction to a new intellectual life. Some may take copies of the *Freethinker* or the *Pioneer*; others may take a few pamphlets. Then there is the six-penny edition of Paine's *Age of Reason*. Copies of this wonderfully cheap volume can be obtained from our office at trade price for free distribution. The price of a dozen copies at this rate is only four shillings and sixpence. For that trifling sum the immortal masterpiece of the greatest of English Freethinkers may be brought to the attention of twelve persons who might never have seen it otherwise. Fancy saving twelve souls at a cost of fifty-four pence! Fourpence halfpenny each! Isn't it worth trying, anyhow?

Almost every scientific advance or social reform has been opposed by Christians. We could mention that when the art of printing was discovered, the Bishop of London said, "We must in some way destroy this infernal art, or it will some day destroy us." We could quote John Bright, who said, "The bishops of the Church of England have seldom aided legislation in the interest of humanity"; Macaulay, who says, "The Church of England for a hundred and fifty years was the steady enemy of public liberty"; Lange, who says, "Education and enlightenment, as a rule, go hand in hand with the decrease of the clergy."—*Robert G. Adams.*

The National Secular Society's Annual Conference.

SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT.

THE adoption of the Financial Report for 1902-3 was moved by Mr. Dewar (Edinburgh) and seconded by Mr. Peggy (Manchester). The Glasgow delegate called attention to the fact that his Society's contributions to the General and Benevolent Funds appeared in the report as one. The balance-sheet was not sent out sufficiently early to give Branches a chance of considering it before the Conference. The Secretary expressed herself quite willing to do this if only the Branches would send up their accounts in time. As it was they were not sent up until the last moment with the result that the preparation of a balance-sheet at an earlier date became an impossibility.

Mr. Robertson (Glasgow) also thought that under present circumstances Branches could not expect to receive the Financial Report at an earlier date. Mr. S. M. Peacock (South Shields) regretted the waste of time taken up each year on this question. The Birmingham delegates gave notice that at the next Conference their Branch would move a resolution on the subject.

ELECTION OF PRESIDENT.

Mr. S. M. Peacock, President of South Shields Branch, occupied the chair during the election of President for the forthcoming year. Mr. T. Thurlow, on behalf of the Finsbury Branch, moved the re-election of Mr. G. W. Foote. He said that during the time that Mr. Foote had held the position of President of the N.S.S. the Society had made all reasonable progress, and his career had fully justified the selection made by Mr. Bradlaugh on his retirement from the Presidency of the N.S.S. Mr. Allan, of Glasgow, seconded the motion, which was supported by Mr. Pegg, on behalf of the Manchester and Northern Branches. The motion was then put and carried unanimously.

Mr. Peacock, in handing back the President's hammer to Mr. Foote, regretted that during the past year the President's health had been far from what might be desired, and trusted that the members of the Society would show all consideration to one who held what was at best a very trying position, and which recent circumstances had made more than usually harassing.

[Mr. Foote's reply was printed in last week's *Freethinker*.]

NEW VICE-PRESIDENTS.

At this point, the suspension of the Standing Orders was moved by Mr. S. M. Peacock in order to nominate Mr. Middleton, of North Shields, for the position of a vice-president. The meeting having given its consent, the name of Mr. Middleton was put to the vote and carried unanimously. The President said that, as the Standing Orders had been suspended for one name, he would suggest another—Dr. Nichols, of Ilford. Dr. Nichols was already a member of the Board of Directors of the Secular Society, Limited; and, as it was important that the members of that Board should be in close touch with the N.S.S. in order that the interests of the older Society might not be overlooked, there was every reason for his election. Carried unanimously.

The Chairman next suggested that, as the time for the adjournment of the morning sitting was close at hand, it might be as well to take Motion 9 next, in place of number 8, on which there would probably be a lengthy discussion. This was agreed to. In moving

"That Branch secretaries, and individual members in places where no Branches exist, should be requested to forward to the General Secretary in London the names and addresses of unattached local sympathisers with Freethought,"

Mr. Victor Roger said that, in his opinion, this resolution was valuable and important. It would enable the Society to make a complete register of its friends and sympathisers, and thus furnish the opportunity for circularising, or otherwise communicating with them should occasion arise. The resolution having been seconded, Mr. Pegg expressed the fear that it might have a tendency to draw away from local Branches certain subscriptions that might otherwise come to them. In Manchester they found it very difficult to get subscriptions, and they would not like to do anything that would increase this difficulty.

Mr. Peacock warmly supported the resolution. Speaking from an experience of many years, he said that the bulk of subscriptions came from sympathisers who were not connected with the Society; and this resolution, if carried out, could not fail to give the Society a new source of support. The Birmingham delegates also thought the resolution a long step in the right direction.

Mr. Cohen thought that too much was made of the fear that this resolution would divert subscriptions from local

Branches to headquarters. There was a great deal in the mere habit of giving, and people who were let alone for a long period were really less inclined to give than those who were asked at reasonable intervals. Besides, if Branches found it next to impossible to get subscriptions from local Freethinkers, then it seemed all the more reason for the Executive having a try. The Society would also benefit by these outsiders having brought before them the existence of a national organisation for the spread of Freethought, and that it was their duty to do something for its support.

Mr. Robertson (Glasgow) thought this was a much larger question than it looked. He found on going over the books of the Glasgow Society that there were hundreds of Freethinkers who passed through the Society, and these were in many cases lost sight of. They did not give up their Freethought, but they did lose touch with the organisation, and this resolution might be the means of remedying this deficiency. Mr. S. J. Bartram (Newcastle) also supported the resolution, which was carried unanimously.

At this point the Conference adjourned for luncheon.

AFTERNOON SITTING.

The Conference having re-assembled, the President, on behalf of the Executive, formerly moved Motion 8:—

(a) Fresh Report of Executive Sub-Committee, in pursuance of resolution passed at last and previous Conference—"upon the whole question of Branches, subscriptions, and membership, with a view to securing an increased revenue and a more satisfactory list of adherents."

(1) That payment per member by Branches be abolished, and that in its stead two collections be taken annually—one for the General Fund and one for the Benevolent Fund—and forwarded to the General Secretary before the last day of January of each year. In cases where no regular meetings are held the local secretary shall undertake the collection of member's donations by means of visiting or circularising.

(2) The minimum subscription for each member joining the Society through the Central Executive to be 2s. 6d. per year.

(3) That all members of the Society, whether joining through a local Branch or by the Central Executive, shall have a card of membership, signed annually by the General Secretary, without which no one is to be counted as a *bonâ fide* member of the Society.

(4) In the event of a poll being demanded at the Annual Conference, the voting power of each delegate to be in the proportion of one vote to every ten Branch members whose names are registered before the last day of March preceding the Conference.

(5) A complete list of names and addresses of members to be forwarded to the Central Office before the last day of March of each year.

This was seconded by Mr. Cohen.

Moved by the Birmingham delegates, "That the Motion be considered clause by clause." This, on being put to the vote, was defeated.

Mr. R. Chapman (South Shields) thought that the Society would lose by abolishing any of the methods or ways of membership. M. Victor Roger pointed out that under the scheme the Branches would have all the existing advantages with none of the disadvantages. The Sub-Committee had thought the matter out very seriously, and had decided that the only way of benefiting the Branches was by abolishing the subscription per member. This left the Branches free to levy their own membership fees, and spend them in the locality in which they were raised.

The Birmingham delegates said their Branch did not think it wise to abolish the fees to the Executive, and moved the resolution standing in its name:—

"That all Branches shall pay 5s. for every twenty-five, or fraction of twenty-five members, on its books; and that no Branch be allowed to vote until such contribution be paid"

as an amendment to Clause 1 of the motion. Discussing the amendment, Mr. Allen feared that if the Executive abolished fees it would not be able to procure sufficient funds to carry on its work. His Branch had instructed him to vote against the resolution.

Mr. Pegg opposed the proposal to apportion the voting power of delegates in the ratio of one to every ten members, on the ground of it robbing the individual member of his power.

Several delegates having expressed some fears that the collections to be sent up in lieu of subscriptions would in most cases be small, Mr. Cohen protested against the habit some delegates had of treating Branches as though they were always seeking a method of evading their obligations to the Society. Our Society was a voluntary one, and we could no more force members to pay an annual subscription

than we could compel them to send up two annual collections. We could only trust to the honor and enthusiasm of our supporters, and while we were a voluntary organisation we were safer and wiser in appealing to these than continually expressing fears that our members would evade their legitimate obligations. Delegates had to further bear in mind that the membership fees from Branches were always small, and necessarily so. Branches which were active had usually all they could do to make ends meet, and it was not fair to expect a hard-working local organisation, finding it a difficulty to carry on its own work, to send a portion of its membership fees up to the Executive. As a matter of fact, Branches either did not do it at all, or did it inadequately. The result was that the Executive not only did not get the fees, but it did not get a complete register of its own members. It was worth while sacrificing the former to get the latter. Messrs. Peacock, Barton, and Thurlow also spoke against the amendment.

The President said he was bound to support the Executive's proposals, and they had his entire concurrence. At present the Branches were supposed to pay 1s. a year for each of their members. Only a few of them did so. Very little money reached the Executive through this channel; it was so little, indeed, that it did not compensate for the trouble, friction, and even bad blood caused by official efforts to collect it. It would be better to let the few pounds go altogether, and trust to the honor and generosity of the Branches to make the two annual collections as good as possible. If they did their best, a large collection would be valued in itself, and a small collection as a sign of the Branch's good intentions. By far the greater part of the Executive's income had always come from other sources; this particular source was not at all important; moreover, the Branches wanted every penny of their members' subscriptions for their own work, and the Executive proposed that they should keep them. Yet this proposal was looked upon by the three largest Branches—Birmingham, Manchester, and Glasgow—as if it were something sinister and overreaching! They contended that the Branch subscriptions were necessary to the Executive, and ought to be retained; yet, at the same time, they proposed to reduce the Branch subscriptions to 5s. for every 25 members. The 1s. per member realised so little in practice as not to be worth the cost of collecting. Very well, said the supporters of the amendment, we will make the amount 2½d. per member, and that will improve things! He (the President) found it difficult to take them seriously. He did not believe they had thought out either the Executive's proposals or their own amendment. He hoped the Conference would regard the Executive's proposals as carefully thought out and prompted by a desire to remedy a most unsatisfactory state of things.

The President then put the amendment, which was lost on a show of hands by a large majority. The Birmingham delegate demanded a poll. The demand was supported by Manchester. A poll being taken, it was found that a majority of three were in favor of the amendment, which thus became a substantive resolution.

Motion 8, then being put to the meeting in its revised form, was declared lost. The whole matter, therefore, remains precisely where it stood before the Conference.

Motion 10 being of a non-controversial character, and the time at the disposal of the Conference being short,

"That in addition to whatever co-operation is possible with the general English Committee, arrangements should be made for a special representation of the N. S. S. at the International Freethought Congress at Rome in 1904"

was formally moved by Mr. Roger, and carried unanimously.

In moving No. 11 on behalf of the Camberwell Branch—

"That this Conference is of opinion that the principal part of the religious difficulty in National Education is directly due to the illogical and recreant policy of the Nonconformists in supporting the State teaching of religion in Schools while denouncing the State teaching of religion in Churches; and this Conference further declares that the only policy that is wise, just, and peaceable is the policy of Secular Education,"

Mr. Davies said he would not detain the Conference long, as the hour was advanced. They were all agreed that it was quite hopeless to expect any settlement of the education difficulty while religious instruction was given in State schools. Church and Chapel were playing their own game; neither were there in the interests of education, but solely in the interests of religious sectarianism. It was the duty of the State to abolish religious instruction in State schools, and it was the duty of the Freethought party to see that the public was kept alive to this issue. Mr. Peacock, in seconding the motion, said he could quite bear out Mr. Davies' remarks, as, during a long experience on the South Shields School Board, he had always found the Nonconformists to be the bitterest opponents to Secular education.

The next motion (12) stood in the name of Mr. Cohen:—

“That the Progressive parties in Great Britain should adopt the policy of the Republican parties in France and oppose the entire connection between Religion and the State; not only in regard to education, but also in regard to public worship, marriage, divorce, and all other civic functions.”

Mr. Cohen said he would make but a few remarks in moving this resolution. Perhaps there was not sufficient attention paid to this question by Freethinkers. It had grown to be looked upon as the exclusive property of the Nonconformists. Yet what these bodies were interested in was not the disestablishment of religion in general, but only the supplanting of one form of religion by another. There were numerous ways, both direct and indirect, in which the dissenting bodies received State support, and they would hang on these as tenaciously as do the Episcopalians. And quite as important as monetary grants in aid of religion, perhaps more so, was the assistance given to religion by its connection with civic and State functions. In all social and political and national functions in which religion took a part it gained the full benefit of the advertisement. People saw it brought prominently before them, and the bias in its favor, created during childhood, was in this manner strengthened and developed.

Mr. Victor Roger moved No. 13 on behalf the Executive:—

“That this Conference, while noting with pleasure the general growth of the sentiment of Sunday Freedom, is nevertheless of opinion that much legislative and other work remains to be done before the question can be brought to a satisfactory settlement; and that the Progressive parties should give this question their serious and immediate attention.”

This was seconded and carried unanimously.

The President moved No. 14 on behalf of the Executive:—

“That this Conference desires to emphasise the fact that Secularism, until it is triumphant, is necessarily committed to a war against theology as a merely mischievous superstition; and also to deprecate all attempts—for whatever reasons—to obscure the honest implication of Secular principles.”

It was necessary, the President said, to emphasise the fact that the battle against superstition, instead of being over, might have to start again from the very beginning. The apathy and disguised timidity of many so-called friends of Freethought had been largely responsible for the wave of reaction which was sweeping over the country. Perhaps a fresh outburst of persecution would bring some of these people to their senses.

This resolution was seconded by Mr. Malfew Secklow, who declared that Secularism which gave up fighting for mental health against the disease of superstition might just as well give up the ghost altogether. The resolution was carried unanimously.

The President then dismissed the Conference. He hoped they would all work together for the welfare of the cause during the new year. It is impossible for all of them to see eye to eye with each other, but the hand of brotherhood and co-operation could be extended over differences of opinion.

Secularism.

THE annual conference in South Shields of the National Secular Society directs attention to a propaganda of which less is heard to-day than a decade or two ago. The avowed Atheist is no longer able to attract to his teaching the notice that was given to it in days not very far remote, and there is certainly no avowed unbeliever in this country who could to-day command the attention which the utterances of Mr. Bradlaugh and Mr. Holyoake used to call forth. It is true that this general attention by no means always meant acquiescence in the views expounded. Perhaps even the majority of those who listened to the discourses of these mighty protagonists of unbelief were firm believers in the teachings of Christianity, and came in a disputatious rather than an enquiring mood. Those were perhaps the days in which the extra-Parliamentary debate reached its highest level in this country; and no place in the land earned greater fame for public debate upon theological questions than our own city of Newcastle. To-day a debate upon the subject of Christianity *versus* unbelief would attract but a meagre amount of attention compared to that which would have been given to it a generation ago. We imagine that there are two or three reasons for the change. In the first place, with the greatest respect to some of the men on the Secular platform to-day, we do not believe that they have the mental calibre of some of those who did the work twenty or thirty years ago. A second reason for the smaller amount of popular interest in their propaganda is that persecution has ceased.

It is not so very many years since in this country honest unbelievers stood in a felon's dock for the utterance of their principles. We have become more tolerant, and the inevitable result has been that attention has been directed from these champions of free thought. And a third, and perhaps the most important, reason for the change is that very much of what these men contended for has been conceded. We do not mean that the nation has gone very far with these men in their efforts to wean it from a belief in the Christian religion. But that was hardly the most important part of their teaching. Assuming for the sake of argument that the attitude of the Atheist towards the problem of existence is sound, it would hardly be seriously contended that the sum of a man's happiness on earth would be increased by the fact that he did not believe. But the other portion of the program of the Secularists—that which was political, or quasi-political—did very intimately affect individual happiness and social well-being. It had to do with the freedom of speech, the freedom of the press, the right of secular education, the right of secular marriage, the removal of the obligation to take an oath which was meaningless, and other reforms justified by every consideration of justice. Nine-tenths of that for which these reformers contended has been rightly conceded. Speech is almost as free in this country as it can conveniently be made; the press, if not entirely free, has had most of its fetters removed; no child need be given religious instruction; and the civil marriage is just as valid as that performed by the priest. On the delicate and debatable question of Sunday observance, too, the Secularists of to-day see in practice much of that liberty for which they contended. And we believe that these reforms have been brought about without any increase in the number of dogmatic unbelievers. It is probably true that this is an age of indifference; and it may be that there has been some increase of Agnosticism as distinguished from Atheism. But the “Freethought” movement can hardly be said to make headway. The real achievements of the Secularists have been in that domain in which their propaganda has had the approval of nearly all enlightened believers in the Christian religion.

—Newcastle Daily Chronicle, June 2, 1903.

Correspondence.

TO THE EDITOR OF “THE FREETHINKER.”

SIR,—I have read your recent articles, and note as they have appeared during the last few weeks on the attitude of Nonconformists towards the question of national education, and whilst I agree, at any rate in the main, with your contention, I have never been able to settle in my own mind whether it is better in the interests of national progress, which of necessity must be slow, to ally oneself, at least nominally, with the most progressive of the religious systems or to sever one's natural connection altogether. The latter course would be the honest one. I am of opinion that there are many good men within what is called the Nonconformist Church, who are as desirous of educational advancement and progress as any other class of men whose reasoning powers will not allow them to associate in any ecclesiastical system or combination.

It has always appeared to me that it is better to advocate some semblance of religious, and certainly moral, teaching in connection with secular education, so as to remove the reproach of the dogmatic sectarians and of priesthoods that the progressive schools were godless schools, and thus allay misapprehension on the part of those who still cling to their superstitious beliefs, no matter how thinly veiled. I may say, Mr. Editor, in justice to myself, that I have had to pay the price of independence and freethought action so far as I am personally concerned, and I am not advocating double-dealing or insincere pretensions or professions; but your unqualified condemnation of those who represent and voice Nonconformist opinions and views in the education controversy is unmerited under the circumstances in which national life is developed and evolved. Does not the Nonconformist span in the bridge which has to carry our people from dense ignorance and superstition into the region of enlightened reason form a necessary part of that construction? I have yet to learn that there is another bridge of more modern and scientific construction, over which the great masses of the people can be led. You do not appear to appreciate the difficulties that enlightened Nonconformist opinions labours under. It is impossible for Nonconformist leaders to throw off the garb of religious belief and meaningless ceremony so long as they are to help forward the great battle of educational freedom, and if in any sense of the term there is duplicity, the end, in my opinion, justifies the means; and the evil is not greater than that which is the outcome of the great churches whose system is based on lying, trickery, and deceit.

N. DUXBURY.

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 postcard.

LONDON.

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road): 7, Miss M. McMillan, "Psychology of Crowds."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall, High-street): 11.15, Dr. Coit, "Maeterlinck's *Monna Yanna*."

OUTDOOR

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the fountain): 3.15 and 6.15, C. Cohen.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S.: Station-road, 11.30, R. P. Edwards; Brockwell Park, 3.15, R. P. Edwards; 6.30, R. P. Edwards.

EAST LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Mile End Waste): 11.30, R. Rosetti, "Easter & Christian Festival."

FINSBURY BRANCH N. S. S. (Clerkenwell-green): 11.30, F. A. Davies.

KINGSLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (corner of Ridley-road, Dalston): A Lecture.

STRATFORD GROVE: 7, W. J. Ramsey.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Hyde Park, near Marble Arch): 11.30, A Lecture; Hammersmith Broadway, 7.30, A Lecture.

COUNTRY.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S.: H. Percy Ward, 3, Wellington Column; 7, Islington-square. Monday, at 8, Edge Hill Lamp.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, Market-place): 7, Annual Meeting. Election of Officers.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, G. Berrisford, "The Bible and Science."

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