

# THE Freethinker

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PRICE TWOPENCE

*God doeth all things well, though by what strange,  
solemn, and murderous contrivances!*

—ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

## Whitaker Wright's Funeral.

WE do not propose to discuss the character of the late Whitaker Wright. A good many journalists have done that, some of whom may be honest enough, and others of whom probably never had his chances of going wrong. A good many pulpit exhorters, too, have improved the shining hour by holding up that "bold bad man" to general execration. This is one of the easiest forms of virtue, and is therefore extensively practised. Many a poor little drab-colored creature swells with moral pride as he dilates on the rascalities of some notorious villain. The preacher himself is not a great scoundrel. Oh dear no! He is never likely to be a great anything. Nature manufactured him on a small scale. For good or evil, he is a nobody—capable of nothing but sheer mediocrity. Not for us is it to join in that chorus. We simply take our stand on the plain facts. Whitaker Wright was found guilty by a jury of his fellow citizens on all the counts of his indictment; he was sentenced to seven years' penal servitude; and the preparations he made for committing suicide show that he knew fairly well what to expect. There can hardly be two opinions as to the main features of his case; indeed, they are so obvious that moralising is a waste of words. Whoever cannot see the plain moral of such a story is hardly worth the trouble of addressing.

It is not Whitaker Wright's character that we mean to discuss. For all practical purposes that is settled. What we want to discuss is something less unpleasant. We intend to deal with his funeral.

Personally we have no fault to find with the two Church of England clergymen who stood bare-headed in the rain in Witley churchyard and read "a special, shortened service" over the dead body of the doomed financier. We dare say they meant it all kindly, and kindness is never out of place over a coffin. The dead cannot injure us, and their cold stillness is a mute appeal to our charity. Whoever they are, and whatever they were, perhaps some woman, child, friend, or dependent loved them; and love is always a sacred thing, which only a blasphemer against humanity would touch with callous hands. Therefore, as far as those two clergymen acted with what consideration was permissible for the dead, and what tenderness was possible for the living, we raise our hat to them with sympathy and respect.

The Church of England does not allow full funeral rites in the case of suicide; unless, of course, the jury bring in a verdict of "temporary insanity," which leaves the act but clears away

the "criminal intention," and thus makes it morally no suicide at all. This used to be the practice in all cases of suicide, quite irrespective of mental condition. Who does not remember the immortal outburst of Laertes over the grave of Ophelia? The holy men bury her with shorn rites, and the half-maddened brother denounces their pious discretion.

Lay her i' the earth:  
And from her fair and unpolluted flesh  
May violets spring! I tell thee, churlish priest,  
A ministering angel shall my sister be,  
When thou liest howling.

A beautiful magnificent protest of passionate love! But incidentally rough on the priest, who was but carrying out the rules of his order and the traditions of his Church. Yet against the Church itself the protest stands splendid and unanswerable.

Poor Ophelia ought not to have been buried in sanctified ground, but that point was strained in her favor. Whitaker Wright was a positive, determined suicide, and after a lapse of four hundred years the same point was strained even in *his* favor. They buried him in consecrated ground; so he will share in whatever advantage *that* yields on the morning of the resurrection—which must be very consoling; although our own belief is that the dead man did not care the snuff of a candle about the whole matter.

While the dead body of Whitaker Wright lies awaiting the blast of Gabriel's trumpet, we may be pardoned for noting the anxiety displayed by his friends and relatives to secure for him some sort of Christian burial. We presume that he was a Christian himself, at least by profession; at any rate, no one has suggested that he was a Freethinker. Most of the great financiers who have come to grief were Christians. We need not print a dull list of them; Jabez Balfour may serve as a specimen. Not one of them ever had the slightest connection with Freethought. And the most striking fact of all is that this phenomenon never excited the slightest attention. That great scoundrels should be professed Christians seems to be taken as a matter of course. It is the contrary that would make people sit up. Newspapers would jump at such a headline as "An infidel in the dock." For a Christian to be there is too common to be noticed.

Far be it from us to play the pharisee. We do not pretend for a moment that Freethinkers are necessarily (that is, naturally) better than other people. All we are concerned to maintain is that they are not worse; that Christian statements about the "lives of infidels" are all moonshine; that there is nothing in Christianity, or any other form of superstition, to raise men and women ethically; that religion has no real connection with morality; that what a man believes is no criterion as to whether he is to be trusted; and that the ground and guarantee of "righteousness" are to be found in human nature itself.



Incidentally, however, religion makes people worse rather than better, by teaching fictitious duties, and preaching impossible ideals. The man who is anxious not to eat meat on a Friday is not the man who is most likely to act honorably on Thursday or Saturday. Part of his moral strength is wasted on an absurdity. Nor is the man who talks about loving his enemies the most likely to be just to his friends. And the man who talks about the sinfulness of resisting evil, and the virtue of asking people who strike him on one side of his face to smack the other too, is just the man who is most likely to be found brawling. We see the outcome of all this in the fact that it is the followers of the Prince of Peace who keep up the great armies and navies, build the great battleships, manufacture the big guns and the millions of rifles, and invent all the deadly explosives.

Here we propose to let Whitaker Wright rest. We shall not follow the example of Mr. W. T. Stead, who came out on the day of the funeral with a blazing article on "Where Is Whitaker Wright To-Day?" Was he in heaven, or hell, or purgatory? Where was he? What had become of him? What was the fate of his immortal soul? Mr. Stead seemed to be anxious on the subject, and he hoped the clergy would be anxious about it too. For our part, we are *not* anxious about it. If we were, we might ask Mr. Stead why he does not answer the question himself: What has become of his famous "tips from heaven"?

G. W. FOOTE.

## Herbert Spencer: The Man and His Work.

### VI.

IN dealing with Spencer's treatment of sociology there is one significant feature worth noting. This is that very many of those who accept his exposition of the philosophy of evolution dissent from his conclusions concerning the scope and function of government and the relation of the individual to society; while, on the other hand, many who accept his conclusions dissent from his general philosophy. This would seem to show a curious incongruity in either the conclusions themselves or in the minds of the readers; and it may be said at once that in the opinion of the present writer the fault lies very largely with Spencer.

Spencer rightly says that the most significant thing about Mackintosh's famous saying, "Constitutions are not made, but grow," is that it should ever have been thought significant. Its being thought so is reminiscent of a phase of thought when social constitutions, like organisms, were believed to be more or less miraculously created full grown. And although the comparison of society to an organism was made before Spencer—it can be found at least as far back as Plato—yet no one before had traced out the analogy with such care and detail, and in such a manner as to make it a useful working phrase to students of sociology. Under his treatment of the subject, social development alone would be almost enough to demonstrate the truth of the principle of evolution. There is the same growth from small to large aggregates; the same division of labor, represented in the animal world by the development of new organs; and, what is extremely important the same integration, or dependence of parts upon the whole, as is found in individual organisms.

Want of space prevents one going fully into this really fascinating portion of Spencer's work; but one generalisation must not be passed over unnoticed. This is his division of social groups into two extreme types—the military and the industrial.

In the former there is centralised control, the will of the individual ranking as nothing compared with the will of certain officials. Compulsory co-operation is the prominent feature. And with this goes great religious development; hierarchies of an elaborate description, and religious doctrines of a more or less repulsive kind. It is also pointed out that any revival of the belligerent spirit involves a decrease in the spirit of individual independence and of the religious type corresponding therewith. On the other hand, the industrial type makes for voluntary instead of compulsory co-operation; democracy succeeds despotism; and peaceful pursuits, engendering milder feelings, involves a corresponding break up of the powers of priesthoods and the falling away of the harsher aspects of religious teaching.

A thoughtful reader will be able to supply many illustrations of the truth of the above, as well as many other details not mentioned. One need only now point out how the more military nations of Europe are still the most religious, that in the past military enthusiasm has invariably been accompanied by the blessings of religious leaders, and that during the recent revival of the military spirit in this country, there has been a corresponding revival of religion. Happily, other forces have been strong enough to act as a counter-agent, but the association of the two is unmistakable.

It is at the point where Spencer deals with the functions of government, and the application of natural selection to social life that many of his disciples join issue with him. And this dissent commences with his law of equal freedom, which is the assumed kernel of all his strictures upon governmental action. This is laid down in *Justice* as follows:—"Every man is free to do that which he wills, provided he infringes not the equal freedom of any other man." Objection has been taken to this on the grounds of its ambiguity; but without discussing this point it is evident that in framing this "law" what Mr. Spencer really had in mind was not the relations between individuals, but the relations between the individuals and the State. What he really means is that the State has no right to interfere between citizens save in such cases where the action of one individual threatens the liberties of other individuals. Now one would be inclined to agree with this were it not for the extremely ambiguous nature of what is meant by "an aggressive action," which is the only kind of action that Mr. Spencer believes government is justified in troubling itself over. If one man punches another's head, that is clearly an aggressive action. So also is the case of a man dropping poison into public drinking water. Or if one were to organize a party of desperadoes and exact toll of weaker individuals. In each of these cases, Spencer would agree that government was justified in interfering. And if aggressive actions were confined to acts of physical violence, Spencer's position would be impregnable. But what he loses sight of is the simple fact that the aggressive actions of human nature during the course of evolution have been undergoing a change from a physical to a psychological character. Self aggrandisement by means of superior physical force is no longer possible within a civilised community to any very great extent. But self-aggrandisement by means of superior brain power of a certain type *is* possible, and is practised. In one direction it is seen in "rigging the markets" and giving a fictitious value to the necessaries of life. In another, by sending up the price of land or rents, and compelling overcrowding with all its attendant evils. And in yet another by utilising the pinch of hunger or the dependency of wife and children to compel men to labor under conditions and for a wage such as they would never accept if they enjoyed anything like genuine freedom.

Now I for one fail to see any substantial difference between this species of aggression exercised by some members of society towards other members, and that of an earlier period when sheer brute force was the power employed. Social



conditions no longer admit of direct physical enslavement, or of forays by robber lords; but social conditions do admit of men by tricks of law, by cunning, and by the exercise of various forms of mental force, aggrandizing themselves at the expense of the community at large, and so exercising an anti-social influence. In other words, we are dealing with the old anti-social aggressive spirit modified to meet new conditions. And whatever reason there is for saying that self-aggrandisement in virtue of superior muscle shall not go unregulated by the State, must be equally true of mental force. Both kinds of force may and do, when unregulated, make for social harm; and society in taking steps for the regulation of the one, as well as the other is merely taking steps to adapt itself to the new conditions. Mr. Spencer, apparently would confine the State to a recognition of the biological factor, and quite ignores the later psychological one.

This is really the cardinal fault in Spencer's application of his own principles to social problems. He deals with them from the point of view of biology alone. I have no space to multiply quotations on this head, but the following will be enough to make this plain:—

"Concerning individual organisms, nothing is more certain than that advance from lower to higher is marked by increasing heterogeneity of structures and increasing subdivision of functions. In both cases there is mutual dependence of parts, which becomes greater as the type becomes higher; and while this implies a progressing limitation of one function to one part, it implies also a progressing fitness of such part for such function."

And thus a striking fact, and the one that renders division of labour of use, the subordination of the parts to the whole, is quite ignored. Yet no one has shown how this takes place in the animal world, more clearly than Mr. Spencer, and one wonders why the analogy was not carried out to its logical end with social organisms, and why government may not be taken as a centre of social consciousness, answering the growth of the brain in the animal organism?

Mr. Spencer evades this logical implication by pointing out that society is a mere abstraction, and only exists for the benefit of the individual. This is perfectly correct, only it is open to the retort that the individual is as much an abstraction as is society. After all, every individual is what he is because of the social life that preceded and surrounds him. Society gives the individual language, customs, protection, and all the thousand and one influences that go to make up the individual as we know him. Take all these away, and the individual disappears. So that, from the standpoint of strict logic, one may hold that the individual, as individual, is quite as much an abstraction as is society. As a matter of fact, both are two aspects of the same thing. Society is a general expression of individual life, and the individual is a concrete expression of social life. It is quite arbitrary to separate the two.

The same may be said of Spencer's description of society as an aggregate of individuals. It is that, of course; but it is something else in addition, else it would be idle to call society an organism. The essential quality of an organism is that, in virtue of its structure, a result is produced that cannot be obtained by the adding together of its parts. And in the same way the mere fact of men living in groups, acting together, and dependent upon each other in a growing measure, gives us something that cannot be obtained by the mere summing up of separate personalities. That people do collectively things both good and evil that they would not do singly is one of the commonplaces of life, and there is surely proof here of something more than mere aggregation.

Mr. Spencer's analogy of the social with the individual organism I believe, as has already been said,

to be essentially sound. But it is certain that division of labor, or differentiation of parts, is perfectly useless in the absence of integration and of some organising centre. In the animal organism we have the nervous system. And in society we have, obviously, government, which Mr. Spencer has pointed out, does correspond more or less accurately with the state of society at any time existent. Now, what solid reason is there against government as such in the light of the philosophy of evolution? I can see none; although Mr. Spencer offers two reasons. The first is that "the belief that faulty character can so organise itself as to get out of itself a conduct which is not proportionately faulty is an utterly baseless belief." Now, this is obviously but one form of the statement that the organisation of social units gives nothing but a mere multiplication, which is not true. If society has to choose between the existence of two evils, A and B, it may be a distinct advantage to have B in place of A, or the reverse. Organisation may make things better or worse, but it cannot leave them as they were. And the social organisation that spreads an evil over a larger area is itself one of the conditions of its diminution. For productive labor to have to support an army and navy, and a host of officials of various kinds, is in itself an evil; but if an army and navy are necessary, it is far better that their cost should be spread in as fair a measure as is possible than that they should be imposed as an intolerable burden upon the few by the many, or even upon the many by the few. It is, indeed, exactly this principle of the diminution of an evil by its organisation and dispersion over a wide area that is at the base of life, fire, and all other forms of insurance.

The second reason is the long list of Government enactments he cites, as being admittedly bad, and the cost of officials to administer those which are generally held to be good. Of the first-class it need only be said that there is no valid reason why we should not expect human beings to make mistakes in Governmental matters as well as in other things. We reach success through failure in Art and Science; why not in Government? Why should failure in Art and Science be taken as a fresh reason for further trial, and failure in governing as a sufficient reason for abandoning the task as hopeless?

And of the second, any who will read the list given by Spencer in his *Study of Sociology*, will see that the whole case breaks down unless the evils produced in the working of an Act of Parliament are at least the equivalent of the evils it removes. Mr. Spencer nowhere proves this. He everywhere takes it for granted. A Building Act compels people to build houses of a certain kind, makes small houses unremunerative, and leads to overcrowding. An Act to prevent overcrowding, leads to an increase of vagrants. Or there is called into existence an army of officials who have to be maintained by the labor of peasant and artisan.

No one need dispute these statements. We have to pay a price for most things in this world, and it is unreasonable to expect that the evils of badly built houses, overcrowding, or insanitary areas, can be adequately dealt with unless we pay something for the work. And unless it can be shown that the evils produced by an Act of Parliament are as bad as those it removes, one is justified in regarding the former as the price society has to pay for the latter.

Not that there would be any disproof of the validity of State action, even though particular Acts could be shown to be wholly bad. Indeed, unconsciously, Mr. Spencer establishes this validity. For so long as it is shown that State action produces some effect, good or bad, any complaint can only be against its *direction*. That State modifies social life, proves that social forces can be modified by human intelligence. And if *unwisely* directed State action produces evil, there is certainly reason for believing that *wisely* directed it may produce good.

C. COHEN.

(To be concluded.)



### Archdeacon Wilson and the Bible.

It is a well-known fact that Archdeacon Wilson is an advocate of the Higher Criticism of the Bible, most of the conclusions of which he heartily accepts and stoutly defends. Consequently, to him the Holy Book is not only fallible, but often historically untrustworthy and ethically crude and childish. The other day he delivered the fifth of a series of lectures now being given in Manchester on "Is Christianity True?" His lecture bears the title, "Is the Bible the Word of God? Why I answer, 'Yes.'" It is indeed a strange production—clever, ingenious, eloquent, but painfully vague and practically useless. He admits that the Sacred Volume bristles with mistakes, contradictions, obscenities, and false teaching, but explains their presence there by saying that they "represent what is now, thank God, a far bygone stage of religious evolution, in which the divine in man was struggling to express in less and less imperfect form its yearnings and cravings for its Origin." That looks eminently plausible; but it is anything but orthodox.

And yet, by a curious, anomalous presumption, the Archdeacon speaks in the name of all Christians. "In this light (of evolution) we see the crudity—I do not like to call it ignorance or unfairness—of stringing together quotations from the Old Testament and asking scornfully, 'Can these be the words of God?' Of course they are not. *Nobody says they are.*" One does not like to call it ignorance or unfairness on the venerable gentleman's part, but without a doubt he has no right to speak for all, even within his own communion. Has he never heard of the society called the Bible League, instituted in 1892, the object of which is "to promote the reverential study of the Holy Scriptures, and to resist the varied attacks made upon their inspiration and infallibility as the Word of God?" Has it never come to his knowledge that this pietistic institution held a Conference at Oxford in 1902, presided over by Dr. Wace, the Dean of Canterbury, and that the addresses delivered by distinguished Christian scholars were published in a volume, entitled *Criticism Criticised?* Most of the speakers at the Conference were well-known dignitaries of the Church of England, and the central proposition on which they were all agreed was that the Bible is historically true and ethically authoritative, and that it is a religious duty to believe in and teach its infallibility. Here is a fine specimen of the teaching:—

"Will you allow me to say I have spent nearly five years in the study of the first chapter of Genesis, and have carefully examined every Hebrew word, and endeavored to inform myself, as far as time and ability would permit, upon the various scientific subjects involved in it, and I have been unable to find a single mistake of a single word from beginning to end? Moreover, I have gone throughout the country, from the north of Scotland to the South of England, asking tens of thousands of people to find me any such mistake in that chapter, and have not found a single person able to do so; and I throw down the challenge here in Oxford to night (*Criticism Criticised*, p. 115).

The speaker was the Rev. John Tuckwell, M.R.A.S.; and he by no means stands alone. Dr. Torrey, the professional Revivalist, makes the same absurd claim. So far as the general doctrine of inspiration and infallibility is concerned, it is accurate to state that it has been the orthodox doctrine of the Church practically from the beginning. This is frankly admitted by Dr. T. M. Lindsay in his article on "Inspiration" in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. It is true that the Papacy has always held that the Bible is subordinate to the Church; but it is also true that it has ever been loyal to the doctrine of Inspiration. And yet Archdeacon Wilson has the audacity to assert that nobody says the Bible is a perfect book. Doubtful of its perfection there have always been; but they are known in history as dangerous heretics, as the Archdeacon and those who share his views are now known by the great majority in their Church.

But in what sense does the Archdeacon believe the Bible to be the Word of God? In a purely metaphorical one. "Now, to say that 'God speaks to man' in the Bible, or that 'the Bible is the Word of God to man,' is an attempt to convey in human language, by the use of a metaphor, some idea of that real communion of soul with the Eternal and Invisible, which, as a matter of familiar experience, does come to many of us through the Bible. The use of that particular metaphor, calling the Bible *the Word of God*, implies that men have felt a resemblance between the action of the Personality of God on men through the Bible, and the action of the personality of one man through the voice on another man." This is vagueness glorified, this is ambiguity on the throne. Wherein does the Bible differ in character from any other great religious book? If it is full of mistakes and contradictions, what distinguishes it from the Koran, or from any of the other sacred Writings, ancient or modern? What proof is there that it is *God* who speaks to men through the Bible? The Archdeacon produces none, except experience or feeling. "It is on experience," he says, "on the bedrock of experience, explained, confirmed, multiplied a million-fold by the felt, recorded, witnessed experience of others, that we rest our faith in the Bible as the Word of God to human hearts. There is no denying this evidence, and no evading it." But the evidential value of this experience is destroyed by the following admission:—

"Man's apprehension of God's message is limited by man's receptive powers. We do but imperfectly receive in our finite minds some small fraction of the Infinite Wisdom of God, and we can but imperfectly represent even that fraction in words. The Word of God, as we have it in the Bible, has passed through human minds, and has been limited by their capacity and their language. The Bible bears the obvious traces of the human limitations of every author and every age. We are right in speaking of the Bible as the Word of God, as we are right in speaking of Christ as the Word of God; but in both cases we must not forget the human limitations which condition the manifestations of God." (p. 15.)

Do not these "human limitations" remove every trace of the alleged divine origin of the Bible? If it is fallible like all other books, and contains no thoughts or ideas that completely transcend the human mind, how did the Archdeacon discover that it is a message from God to man? Had it been an infallible book, had its contents surpassed those of every other book in the world, it would have carried its credentials in its face, and they could have been read of all men; but being an imperfect, blundering, floundering production, what marks of divinity does it exhibit? The feeling that it is God's speech to man is no proof that it really is. Experience often tells Munchausen lies. Down to a certain date experience told mankind that the earth was the centre of the universe, and that the sun marched round it once in every twenty-four hours; but that experience was wrong all the time. The data for knowing the fact were not then accessible, and fiction served for truth. To feel that God speaks to men in the Bible does not prove that he does. If any man feels that God speaks to him through the Bible, the only verifiable fact is that he has such a feeling. The question to be settled is why or on what ground he feels as he does. He may have inherited a tendency to such a feeling through a long succession of ancestors, and he may have been persistently trained to cultivate it during childhood and youth; but such heredity and training do not guarantee that the feeling represents a truth.

To unbelievers the position taken up by Archdeacon Wilson, in this lecture, is utterly unintelligible, and yet the ostensible object of the lecture was to reply to recent attacks on the Bible. How such a style of reasoning can be helpful to anybody is a mystery; but it is a certainty that it only amuses Infidels. What this dignitary of the Church says, in effect, is this: "I cannot prove, I only feel, that the Bible is the Word of God. Arguments I have not, but I relate my experience to you." That the Arch-



deacon was conscious of the essential indefensibility of his position is evident from the following extract:—

"It may fairly be said to me, 'You admit, then, that the Bible contains exploded views of sudden creation; statements in historical form which now appear to be in part or wholly legendary; declarations of commands as coming from God which you regard as only provisional and as now superseded; in fact, you admit errors: how, then, can you ask men to say at ordination that they unfeignedly believe the Canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments?' " (p. 15).

To this he replies in the words of Bishop Gore: "The expression of unfeigned belief in all the Canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments can be fairly and justly made by anyone who believes heartily that the Bible as a whole records and contains the message of God in all its stages of delivery, and that each one of the books contains some element or aspect of this revelation." "On the whole" is a most ambiguous phrase. I suppose each one must interpret it to his own liking. There are myths and legends in the book, it is admitted by all the members of this progressive school; but what proportion of its contents may be so characterised is a matter of individual opinion. I fancy that the proportion to be so regarded would be considerably larger in the Archdeacon's opinion than it would be in that of Bishop Gore. Some believe more, and some less; but "on the whole," all progressive theologians are agreed, the Bible deserves to be accepted as the Word of God. This they know alone by experience; it is "on the bedrock of experience" that their belief securely rests.

Just here the Archdeacon touches a very delicate point: "Have all men this experience? I think so. But as the sense of touch in the fingers, or an ear for music, may be either dulled or educated; so it seems as if, for a time at least, some sensitiveness to God may be either lost or developed. Moreover, there are inborn differences in us all. Not everyone is a poet; and so it may well be that not everyone is touched by a parable of Christ, or by the story of the Cross. A man may therefore say, 'I know nothing of all this. Your experience is purely subjective, nothing but fancy; there is no reality in it. You do but see in the Bible, or in the light of setting sun, or anywhere else, your own fancies projected there, like your own shadow on a cloud. It is all nonsense. Give me hard facts.' And so, with a wave of the hand, he will dispose of the deepest experiences of a hundred or a thousand generations of men as only fancies, mere nonsense. The Bible is not the Word of God to him as yet; therefore it is not the Word of God to anybody." Surely that is not an accurate statement of the Infidel's case. What he doubts is not the genuineness of the Christian's experience, but the reality behind it. He has studied psychology quite as profoundly as the Archdeacon himself, and he possesses a fairly extensive acquaintance with religious history, and what he wants to know is what proof there is that the Bible is legitimately entitled to be regarded as the Word of God; but absolutely no evidence is forthcoming, save the feeble, unconvincing, 'I think,' 'I believe,' 'I feel,' that it is. Where is the sceptic that will be convinced by that? We all respect the experiences of honest people, whatever they may be, but that respect does not prevent us from expressing our conviction that many such experiences are only subjectively true. We are convinced that the Bible is not the Word of God, and we are prepared to justify our conviction at the bar of reason. Archdeacon Wilson is convinced that the Bible is, on the whole, and in a vague, ambiguous sense, the Word of God; but he is not prepared, he positively declines, to justify his conviction at the bar of reason.

Such a lecture as the one now under consideration is bound to do the cause of Freethought incalculable service. At any rate, "let us not be frightened at noisy and confident bluster with its veneer of earning."

JOHN LLOYD.

## Jonah.

THAT remarkable work, the book of Jonah, has undergone many vicissitudes. Once it was history, pure and simple, with a real live whale, in whose interior the prophet made an extended journey, whiling away the tedium of the voyage by composing and signing psalms. We understand that the editor of the *Christian Advocate* still adheres to that view. The story has also been presented for our consideration as a sun myth, the prophet representing the sun and the whale personifying winter, which swallows up the orb of day. Evidently neither of these interpretations satisfies the editor of the *Boston Congregationalist*, who says the expositor of Scripture should teach that "Jonah stands for God's people fleeing from duty to which they were faithless, and that the monster is Babylon which swallowed them and let them go forth again." The editor of the *Congregationalist* casts doubt on the historical character of the Jonah story by remarking that the song written by the prophet in the belly of the sea monster "is mainly a mosaic of sentences from the Psalms, some of which were written centuries after Jonah's time." In behalf of those who stick to the orthodox historical interpretation of Jonah, it is due to remark that the Boston editor's explanation ignores an important passage in the New Testament. We refer to Matthew xii. 40, where Jesus says: "For as Jonah was there days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." How does that accord with the notion that Jonah was "God's people," swallowed and afterwards let go by Babylon? And how does the period of three days and three nights coincide with the duration of the captivity? It won't do. Whether the whale swallowed Jonah or not, the Christian must swallow the story or deny that Jesus knew what he was talking about.

—*Truthseeker* (New York).

SUCCESSFUL REMINDER.—A small church was sadly in need of repairs, and a meeting was held with a view to raising funds for the purpose. The minister having said that 500 dols. would be needed, a very wealthy and stingy member arose and said he would give 1 dol. Just as he sat down a large piece of plaster fell from the ceiling and struck him on his head, whereupon he jumped up hastily and said that he had made a mistake, that he would give 50 dols. This was too much for an enthusiastic deacon present, who, forgetful of everything, called out fervently: "O Lord, hit him again! Hit him again!"—*Mount Morris (Ill.) Index*.

The new chaplain of the United States Senate is a distinguished writer, a man of learning and piety, a most admirable new chaplain of the United States Senate; but there are some things that he cannot hope to accomplish, some tasks to which his powers are not equal. For example, he attempted the other day to induce the members to repeat after him the Lord's Prayer. Not a mother's grandfather of them uttered a sound! The story that Senator Blackburn, ever anxious to oblige, actually did begin with "Now I lay me down to sleep" is so obviously a variant of an old and well-known yarn as hardly to merit attention. It is true, though, that when the reverend gentleman, unmoved by his failure, had recited the prayer to the end, Senator Depew said to a member near by that he had heard it before, and better told.—*Ambrose Bierce*.

Social science affirms that woman's place in society marks the level of civilisation. From its twilight in Greece, through the Italian worship of the Virgin, the dreams of chivalry, the justice of the civil law, and the equality of French society, we trace her gradual recognition, while our common law, as Lord Brougham confessed, was, with relation to woman, the opprobrium of the age of Christianity. For forty years earnest men and women, working noiselessly, have washed away the opprobrium, the statute books of thirty States have been remodelled, and woman stands to-day almost face to face with her last claim—the ballot. It has been a weary and thankless, though successful, struggle. But if there be any refuge from that ghastly curse, the vice of great cities, before which social science stands palsied and dumb, it is in this more equal recognition of women.—*Wendell Phillips in 1881*.

For Weakness, in freedom, grows stronger than strength  
with a chain;  
And Error, in freedom, will come to lamenting his stain,  
Till, freely repenting, he whiten his spirit again;  
And Friendship, in freedom, will blot out the bounding of  
race;  
And straight Law, in freedom, will curve to the rounding of  
grace;  
And Fashion, in freedom, will die of the lie in her face.

—*Sidney Lawier*.



### Obituary.

I have to record the interment on Friday last, January 29, of another old veteran Secularist, Mr. Watts Balmforth, at the age of seventy-eight. He had been ailing for some time, but was able to get about up to within a week or so of his decease. He was one of the old Chartists, and a disciple of Robert Owen. He was also one of the founders of the Old Huddersfield Secular Society and Sunday School. His familiar face and figure rarely missed attending the lectures, and if opposition was lacking from the Christian standpoint our good old friend, by his questions, could be relied on to arouse some discussion. He lived and died up to his Secular principles. He had, by dint of hard work, careful prudence, and forethought, been enabled to live on his means for over twenty years. His aged widow and family have the satisfaction of knowing that he had lived a useful life and died respected by all classes of citizens.—W. H. SPREY.

### Humanity.

NATIONS arise! and turn your hearts from bloodshed,  
Let perfect peace prevail from sea to sea.  
Sheath now your swords; dispel your giant armies,  
And let your watchword be "Humanity."  
War and battle leave behind,  
One wish only in our mind,  
Welfare to all human kind.  
Humanity! Humanity!  
Gladness to mankind.

Take thou no heed of ancient-built cathedrals,  
Emblems of pride and false humility.  
Turn free your thoughts from superstition's terrors,  
Be not afraid of Gods or tyranny.  
Free yourselves from heaven's chain,  
Only earth will then remain.  
One thought then in every brain.  
Humanity! Humanity!  
Ever will remain.

Nations may dwell in peace and joyous concord,  
If men are left to work their destiny.  
Dogma and priest but sow the seeds of discord;  
When these are vanished men will brothers be.  
No need then for cruel war.  
Thoughts, like guns, can carry far;  
See that *these* in freedom are.  
Humanity! Humanity!  
Swords then shall not scar.

W. G. W.

### YE BALLAD OF WILLIAM BROKER.

Bill Broker was a godlie man,  
As all mankynd recalle;  
He labored in ye lyttel streete  
Whych bears ye name of Wall.

He was a shearer of ye sheepe,  
And, eke, ye soft-eyed lamb;  
He clipped them close, and kept ye wool  
Of sheeplet and yts dam.

"For," as ye gentile Bill remarked,  
"Ye Lorde doth temper wynd  
To mutton which hath loste yts coate,  
See yt will never mynd."

A Preacher-Man once sayd to Bill,  
"My friend, you shoulde not lay  
Uppe for yourself this earthly pelf  
Whych moths wille frette away."

Butte Bill replyde in aksents myld:  
"I'd scorn to work for wealth.  
This is earth's greatest wat'ring-place;  
I'm just here for my health."

—W. E. P. French, in "Life."

### Acid Drops.

We regret to see the announcement that Mr. Will Crooks, M.P., is to join the Rev. R. J. Campbell and other professional exhorters in talking about "The Attitude of the Working Classes Towards Religion" at the annual gathering of the National Free Church Council at Newcastle-on-Tyne in March. We should have thought that Mr. Crooks had quite enough legitimate platform work without going so far from home on such an errand. Can it be that he has fallen into the mistake of supposing that the Nonconformists and the Liberal party are the same thing? If so, he is likely, some day or other, to be rudely undeceived.

The *Daily News* says it is "hoped" that Mr. John Burns, M.P., will join Mr. Crooks in this pious palaver at Newcastle. We trust, however, that this is merely a case of the wish being father to the thought. It is difficult to imagine Mr. John Burns droning in the synagogue. He has kept clear of all that sort of thing hitherto, and we hope he will do so to the end of the chapter.

"Colonel" Lynch's pardon, even under ungenerous conditions, was better than nothing; and we can quite believe that it was more owing to good-nature on the part of King Edward than to any good sense on the part of the Government. Mr. Lynch ought never to have been kept in prison for a single day. Supposing it were right that he should be technically made a prisoner, his pardon should have followed in less than twenty-four hours. As the world goes now, he had committed no real crime, and his punishment was merely a display of vindictiveness. He was an Irishman, he had fought for the Boers, he had been elected for Galway, and he was a Freethinker. To the average Jingo, of course, this is a frightful complication of villainy.

Dr. Clifford's case seems quite hopeless. All he can find to say in reply to the Archbishop of Canterbury's direct challenge, which has already been referred to in our columns, is this: "Even supposing that we are inconsistent, that will not prove that Passive Resistance is wrong and that the Archbishop is right. By the confession of many of its members the Anglican Church is a large conglomeration of inconsistencies." What an answer for a public man! It is worthy—or is it worthy?—of Colney Hatch. The Archbishop's point was a very simple one. He wished to know why the Nonconformists, while objecting to pay for religious education approved by the Church of England, were ready to make Agnostics, Jews, and Secularists pay for religious education approved by Nonconformists. Dr. Clifford has never mustered courage enough to answer that plain question—and we believe he never will. And the poor old battered bully of the Passive Resistance movement actually fancies that people do not see through his "thrasonical brags." The truth is that they do. His own people are beginning to see through him. He has taken up a false position, and he sticks to it—for John Clifford cannot be wrong; and in the end he will be left clinging to it—alone.

Dr. Townsend is a little more courageous than Dr. Clifford. He has attempted a reply to the Archbishop of Canterbury. "The Archbishop," he says, "suggests that we are inconsistent in refusing to pay our rates for denominational teaching in the national schools, and yet that we propose to give Bible teaching in the public schools, while expecting Agnostics, Jews, and Catholics to contribute to the rates. I reply that the almost unanimous voice of the country is in favor of the children being taught the foundation principles of religion and morality as set forth in the Bible." Dr. Townsend adds that there is a Conscience Clause for those who object to such teaching. Yes, and there is the same Conscience Clause for Nonconformists who object to any other form of religious teaching.

What we should like to ask Dr. Townsend is this. Where did he hear that "almost unanimous voice of the country?" He refers to a certain manifesto of the Amalgamated Societies of Engineers, but he takes precious good care not to mention the overwhelming vote of the last Trade Union Congress in favor of Secular Education. Surely the 1,032,000 votes recorded by the workers' representatives against Bible teaching are a very serious discount off that "almost unanimous voice of the country."

But there is something more to be said. The discussion of a principle has nothing to do with numbers. If the Nonconformists say it is wrong for them to pay for religious teaching which they disapprove in the public schools, how



can it be right on their part to make *one* Agnostic, Jew, or Catholic pay for religious teaching which *he* disapproves in the same establishments? That was the practical substance of the Archbishop of Canterbury's question, and Dr. Townsend has only evaded it; unless, indeed, he deliberately means that the right or wrong of any proceeding is entirely a question of counting heads, and that if (say) only ten per cent. of the citizens are oppressed and injured it may be reckoned as perfectly legitimate.

It will be seen, therefore, that Dr. Townsend's logic and morality are on a par with his arithmetic. And we can fancy the smile on the Archbishop's face as he watches this gentleman's wriggling.

Clericals are apt to spoil everything they touch. There is the Rev. Mr. Tyrwhitt, for instance, who has been preaching against "the Devil in the Potteries," and rolling his eyes over the "awful immorality" of the factory hands. His jeremiads are now met by a resolution passed by the Mayors of Stoke, Longton, Hauley, and Burslem, the Chief Bailiff of Tunstall, and the Chairman of the Fenton Urban Council. These official gentlemen say that Mr. Tyrwhitt's sermons and statements, and the resolution of the clergy, are "unwarranted and unjust towards the inhabitants at large, and misrepresent the conduct of their lives, and amount to nothing less than slanderous accusations which are unjustifiable and untrue."

Can anyone understand the relation of Freemasonry to the Established Church and the Government? It is said the majority of the present Cabinet are Freemasons; and as a fact, Freemasonry, and not Anglicanism, is being treated by it as the State religion, for it is not long since a barracks was opened by the Government with Masonic—and not Church—rites! Now the Freemasons of West Lancashire have decided to build a chapter-house for the new Liverpool Cathedral. What have they to do with a Christian edifice?

A very considerable amount of Freemasonry is perfectly open—its paraphernalia are exposed for sale in shop windows. One need only go to Great Queen-street to see vestments, incense-pots, lunette incense boats, wine jugs for libations, and a variety of symbolised objects of a very simple-minded character, whose *inner* meaning can only be mysterious to the very young, the very unsophisticated, or—the very imbecile. Not long since a drawing of the interior of a Masonic Temple at Edinburgh appeared in the *Building News*, which showed a hall got up as a bastard Egyptian temple, covered with figures of Egyptian gods cribbed from a well-known work on Egyptology; and, moreover, there is an authorised work by a writer named Preston, which, with the chapter on Freemasonry in *Secret Societies*, suffices to demonstrate that, while Masonry is neither philanthropic, political, nor progressive, as the late acting Grand Master the Earl of Zetland so painfully assured the world, it is an occult religion hashed up from all and any incongruous sources, and wholly incompatible with the Protestant Episcopal religion as by law established. The reverencing of the gods of Egypt and the worship of "Lodges," etc., etc., cannot by any stretch even of the credulity of the average religionist be made compatible with the "Formularies of the Established Church."

Surely Jesus Christ is quite enough god for any practical rational nation to work with, without digging up the pantheon Constantine was good enough to bury for us. And surely the Thirty-nine Articles are mystery enough to quarrel, and bicker, and fanaticise, and persecute over without having the occult wisdoms of a combination of Jew actors, licensed victuallers, statesmen, moneylenders, bookmakers, Prime Ministers, Lord Atkinsons, and policemen! If Freemasonry has become a State religion, it is high time the State be informed of the fact.

Most of our readers are fully aware of the general character of "conversions" from Freethought to Christianity. In the vast majority of cases they are mere downright inventions. Quite recently, for instance, an anonymous correspondent of the *Church Times* reported that the late Mr. George Gissing, the novelist, was reconciled to the Christian faith in his last days, and died in communion with the Church of England. This report was immediately challenged by Mr. Morley Roberts, who, of all men living, had a right to challenge it; and up to the present we are not aware that his challenge has been answered.

More recently still we stated our refusal to believe that the late Mr. Thomas Holstead, of Bolton, died, as represented, in the Christian faith. He was a very old man, and at the end must have been quite helpless, and absolutely at the mercy of his domestic surroundings, which had always

been bitterly hostile to his Freethought. Since then we have received a letter from Mr. William Collins, who informs us that he and Mr. Hampson waited on Mrs. Holstead and told her that her husband wished them to see that he had a Secular funeral. She replied that he had changed his opinions. They told her that they did not believe it, and asked her why she did not send for some of his Secular friends to hear from his own lips what he had to say. She replied that he only wanted to see his family—who had been anything but angels to him for ever so many years. They told her that there was a will in which he had provided for a Secular funeral, and left £200 for Secular purposes. She replied that this was cancelled, with the exception of the five pounds for the funeral—which was a flat contradiction to what she had said before. Mr. Collins adds that he has been a Secularist himself for forty-eight years, and that he had known Mr. Holstead all the time as an earnest, active, and open Freethinker.

A tall, elderly, solemn man of God, with white hair and beard that made him look somewhat venerable, boarded an electric car and stood up just inside the door. As the car was very narrow between the seats, the reverend gentleman blocked the whole passage. The conductor therefore asked him to take a seat—and there were plenty. "I am getting down presently," said the long exhorter. Half a minute later the car swept round a corner and stopped. Several people wanted to get in, and a few wanted to get out. But the long exhorter never budged, and business was entirely suspended. "Will you take a seat, sir," said the conductor, this time a little sharply. "No, I will not," almost shrieked the clerical obstructionist. "Then go outside, or get off," said the conductor, looking as if he meant business this time. The man of God hopped off in a passion, without a thought for the people he had been hindering and annoying, and the exhibition he had made of the value of his own preaching.

The solemnity of the ceremonials recently performed in Westminster Abbey and in St. Peter's for the consecration of King Edward and the Coronation of the Pope, does not appear to be obvious to the Americans. At the New Year's Parade of the clubs and societies in Philadelphia they burlesqued them by putting the club captains in preposterous royal robes—with trains which took the whole width of the roadway, held up by scores of liveried pages. One, judging by the photographs given in the Philadelphia *North American*, must have been greatly more than a hundred feet long and was borne by sixty persons.

The way in which we gravely continue the traditional idiocies in connection with our State system is a curious instance of the manner in which we take ourselves as a general gauge of all that is rational. A king with twenty-four feet of velvet attached to his shoulders is dignified and solemn. A club captain with a hundred and twenty-four behind him is a Bedlamite absurdity. The Pope in a white hat with three exaggerated hat-bands is awe-inspiring, and civilized Europeans faint, go mad and stab themselves in ecstasy at the spectacle—but a nigger chief in a black hat with three brims, is an utterly impossible and irredeemable savage. A Lord Mayor, a Lord Chancellor and a Parish Beadle are terrible in a hat a hundred years out of fashion, but a poet who attired himself in an obsolete dress for sanitary reasons was voted a charlatan, while a philosopher who walked down Regent Street in riverside costume was put in prison. A century ago the Sultan of Turkey wore the hair that grew on his face and shaved off all that grew on his skull except one tuft. Then to us he was little better than a savage. Now, however, he is civilized; more, it is insisted he is a gentleman, for he allows all the hair of his skull to grow, but shaves off that which grows on his face except the tuft over his mouth. Our gauge for barbarism and civilization is that of the most stultified peasant—solely the resemblance to or difference from ourselves.

Surely the Philadelphians are right in their decision—how can cloth enough for a dozen suits, worn as one garment, be anything but an evidence of mania? How is the grey wig of a young barrister different from the false wrinkles painted on the face of an inexperienced Houron brave? We tolerate these imbecilities from sheer mental sloth. We should see nothing unfit if the King styled himself "Holy Omnipotence" instead of "Sacred Majesty;" nor anything absurd were he to be attended by a Braces-Queen-at-Legs in place of his present Garter-King-at-Arms; a Silk-Umberella-in-Haste instead of the Gold Stick-in-Waiting and a Sergt. Public Postage Stamp in place of the Lord Privy Seal; nor if, instead of knights of the Garter, Bath and Thistle he were surrounded by nobles of the Orders of the Chickweed, the Copper and the Choker. The titles are exactly parallel; it would only be their novelty that would be absurd.



Bishop Gore's Bampton Lectures are being shortened by the Rev. Dr. Fry—a good name for such a bit of cooking!—and will soon be published in a shilling volume by Mr. Murray under the title, "Why We Christians Believe in Christ." There never was a case in which a book and its title were further apart from each other. Bishop Gore's principal reason for believing in Christ is at least *substantial*. What does John Dryden say?

For 'twas their duty, all the learned think,  
To espouse his cause by whom they eat and drink.

Mr. Labouchere used to be part owner of the *Daily News*. Some time ago his interest in the paper was disposed of. It is now the property of the (Cocoa) Cadbury combination. This explains the effort made by the *Daily News*, the day after the Whitaker Wright inquest, to represent *Truth* as a financial satellite of the great Company promoter.

Mrs. Bridges-Adams deserves warm thanks for initiating a discussion on Secular Education on the moribund London School Board. The resolution she moved on Thursday, January 28, was as follows:—"The School Board for London declares that, in the interest of education, it is essential that all State-supported schools should be under full public control; that the education in all State-supported schools should be secular; and that the religious denominations be left free to impart in their own way, at their own cost, and out of school hours, such religious instruction as parents may desire for their children."

There was one mistake, however, in Mrs. Bridges-Adams's speech. She said she would distinctly retain the Bible in State schools; but she would have it kept only as a standard work of literature. This seems to us to overlook the essential facts of the case. The Bible was not placed in the schools as a book of literature, but as a book of religion; and while it is regarded outside as a book of religion it cannot be treated inside the schools as a book of literature. Mrs. Bridges-Adams is, indeed, however unwittingly, playing into the hands of the more cunning Bibliolators on this point. She uses their argument without perceiving their object.

Mrs. Bridges-Adams's resolution was seconded by the Rev. Stewart Headlam, who went over for practical reasons to the "Progressives" and the "Compromise," but has always been at heart a believer in Secular Education. Mr. Headlam said he felt that a number of Churchmen were anxious to find their way to some kind of arrangement on the subject. He was followed by Mr. Thompson, who moved the previous question. He did not want to discuss it, but he held that religious instruction was a necessary part of education, not only out of school, but in school. Mr. Creswell seconded, and such an amendment had naturally the support of Mr. Sydney Gedge and the Rev. Scott Lidgett. But some people will wonder why it was supported by Dr. Macnamara. This gentleman appeared to be most anxious that "working-class children" should receive some religious education, and he seems to have thought that they had small chance of obtaining it unless they were regularly dosed (two table-spoonfuls at least once a day) in the State schools. The truth is, of course, that Dr. Macnamara is the "kept" representative of the National Union of Teachers, the majority of whom desire to teach their pupils religion as well as other subjects. When that majority becomes a minority Dr. Macnamara will play a different tune.

On the previous question being put it was carried by 39 against 5. Certainly it was a big majority. But, for our own part, we are far from being dismayed. It is something to find even five members of the London School Board standing up for Secular Education. A very slight change in public opinion and sentiment would soon multiply that five several times. For there is often a vast difference between principle and policy.

There is a very charitable Passive Resister at Wellingborough. His name is William Shelford. Being summoned before the magistrates on account of his unpaid rates, he denounced the Education Act in a most Christian manner. "I conscientiously object to this wicked Act," he said, "and I pray God that those who made it may soon be annihilated." This pious gentleman must have been reading the cursing Psalms.

Midnight services are the latest sensationalism of Non-conformity. But there is much to be said against them—even from the point of view of common decency and morality. They may also prove dangerous in other ways, especially to young women. Elizabeth Emma Craig, a Kingston-on-Thames cook, set out from her sister's home for one of these midnight services. Three weeks afterwards her body was

found, badly mutilated, in the river. A Coroner's jury is now trying to find out "the cause of death."

That eminent Passive Resister, the Rev. F. B. Meyer, continues his midnight marches and meetings in Lambeth. On Saturday, January 30, he is reported to have done amazingly well with "pledges." "A well-known Socialist leader in the district," the *Daily News* says, "attempted some opposition, but he, too, ere the close, with some thirty others, signed the pledge." What a notion of Socialist leaders these soul-savers must have! And what was the name of the one in question?

Gipsy Smith, a roving professional soul-saver, is going off to South Africa. He seems very fond of plastering the walls with his portrait where he happens to be conducting a "mission." We don't know what he is really like in the flesh, but his portrait suggests a converted potman, or something of that sort. Perhaps it doesn't do him justice.

The Bishop of Stepney is a very delicate and scrupulous gentleman. Preaching lately at Christ Church, Lancaster-gate, he referred to a father who "damned" his son for going to be confirmed; and the report says that the Bishop "apologised for using the expression in its integrity." Good God! What next? Surely "damned" is a common Bible word. Jesus Christ himself was not above using it. And why should the Bishop of Stepney be more squeamish than his Savior?

Curates are finding themselves "too old at forty." You see they have to preach to and visit ladies mostly, and ladies don't find men of God so interesting when they pass a certain age. Jesus "snuffed it" in time. Dying in the very prime of his life (between thirty and thirty-five), he did not give the rich women who ministered unto him of their substance an opportunity of looking round for a fresher fancy. Curates might take the hint.

William Carter, a Norfolk farmer, was found dead on the Breydon mud flats at Yarmouth. Amongst the things found in his pockets were a bottle of spirits and a hymn-book. Suppose the hymn-book had been Paine's *Age of Reason*, or Ingersoll's *Lectures*, or a copy of the *Freethinker*—what a rumpus the religious journals would have made!

Judge Addison, at the Southwark County Court, was recently asked by a barrister to observe that a public-house stood at a certain spot. "Yes," said the judge, after searching the map, "I see a church, so there must be a public-house close by." He knew them.

### Wisdom in a Missionary College.

HERE are a few of the answers given by the students of a Missionary College at a recent examination:—

What was the chief event of Solomon's reign? He died.  
Name some of the early Christian fathers? Jerome, Oxigen, Ambrosia.

What are the enduring remains of Egypt? Pyramids and obsequies.

In what Christian tenet did the Egyptians believe? The immorality of the soul.

What was the religion of the Britons? A strange and terrible one—that of the Dudes.

Where is the earth's climate the hottest? Next the Creator.

What can you tell of Ben Jonson? He survived Shakespeare in some respects.

What is the form of water drops? Generally spherical, for reasons known only to the gracious Providence who makes them.

What is the spinal column? Bones running all over the body; it is very dangerous.

Of what is the surface of the earth composed? Of dirt and people.

What is the function of the gastric juice? To digest the stomach.

Define interloper? One who runs away to get married.

Name twelve animals of the arctic zone? Six polar bears and six seals.

Define vengeance, and give a sentence using the word? Vengeance is a mean, spiteful desire to pay back. "Vengeance is mine and I will repay, saith the Lord."

Define hireling? One who is bribed. Teachers are hirelings of the Government.

—Life.



### Mr. Foote's Lecturing Engagements.

Sunday, February 7, Secular Hall, Brunswick-street, Glasgow : 12 noon, "How the Clergy Answer Mr. Blatchford"; 6.30, "The Last Christian Statesman: a Candid Review of Mr. John Morley's *Life of Gladstone*."

February 14, Queen's Hall, London; 21, Queen's Hall, London; 28, Coventry; March 13, Liverpool; 27, Birmingham.

### To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—Address, 241 High-road, Leyton.—January 31, Glasgow; February 7 and 14, Birmingham; 21, Newcastle; 28, Liverpool; March 6, Queen's Hall, London.

J. LLOYD'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—February 14, Camberwell; 21, Birmingham; 28, Queen's Hall; March 6, Glasgow; 13, South Shields; April 3, Sheffield.

MRS. COLLINS.—We always feel special pleasure in seeing ladies support the Freethought cause.

ATHOS.—Acknowledged as requested. Thanks for your personal good wishes.

W. H. F.—The Rev. George Bishop, as to whom you inquire, was a Secularist some thirty years ago. Of course he was a very young man then, and not exactly a Secular "leader." Yet it appears that Christians still talk of his "conversion," although "mum's the word" with them in regard to the recent case of Mr. John Lloyd, a really able man, who has come over from the Christian pulpit to the Secular platform.

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

J. CHICK.—Glad to have your good wishes, as well as subscription, for the New Year's Gift to Freethought.

W. C. SCHWEIZER.—Much pleased to hear that you are "booming at Liverpool."

G. BRADY, sending a guinea to the New Year's Gift to Freethought, says: "I trust there are hundreds more like myself who have been procrastinating, and that the total will be a pleasant surprise to you."

F. ROGERS.—Yes, every little helps, as you say. But how many there are who forget it!

C. D. J.—Mr. Foote is writing you as requested. The joke you send has been afloat a good while, though it is not exactly a "chestnut."

W. YOUNG.—Thanks for your enquiries and good wishes.

PLYMOUTH.—You say you will be happy to subscribe 10s. towards the expenses if Mr. Foote can visit his native town again for the purpose of lecturing. He will be happy to do so if a few of the "saints" will combine to look after the local arrangements.

W. ROBERTSON.—It would be enough if all did what they could.

HUGH HOTSON, sending £1, says:—"I beg to hand you my mite towards the expense of printing a supply of your recent article 'God at Chicago' for distribution at the Torrey-Alexander meetings. I think the suggestion an excellent one. And it is also a good opportunity for circulating reprints of your scathing exposure of Dr. Torrey's slanders on Thomas Paine and Colonel Ingersoll—although a religious lie, fairly started, takes a good deal of overtaking."

JOHN BLAND thinks that "men in the movement who do not work much in its behalf ought to give something." This correspondent has always given something himself for the last twenty years.

A. G. LEVETT.—Thanks, but we have a full report of the Rev. J. M. Gibbon's sermon in pamphlet form. W. Gregory's letter in the *Hackney and Kingsland Gazette* is brief, terse, and pointed; and, we fancy, a good deal more than the reverend gentleman will ever answer.

A. G. LYE (Coventry) writes: "I was about to ask for some up-to-date tracts. If the article on 'God at Chicago' is printed as one, I promise to purchase a few hundreds, and if a loss is sustained I will contribute a mite towards it."

S. LOVETT, sending us a cutting about Jacob Popp, the High Wycombe barber, who is regularly fined for disposing of superfluous hair on Sunday, thinks that a visit to the town by some N. S. S. representatives might have a good effect.

T. POUNDALL, C. BOOKER, AND W. BROMLEY.—Thanks for the Rotherham papers with reports of the Rev. Mr. Drummond's addresses in answer to Mr. Blatchford. We should judge, as you do, that there must have been a good number of Freethinkers listening to the reverend gentleman. With regard to a Branch of the N. S. S. being started at Rotherham, perhaps the best thing we can do at present is to ask any of our readers in the town, who would like to take part in such a movement, to communicate as promptly as possible with the first of you, Mr. Poundall, at 46 King-street, Masbro.'

G. D.—Pleased to have your "good wishes for the toughest fight in the world."

H. PERCY WARD.—See "Sugar Plums." We wish the Liverpool Branch all success. But why not keep to the N. S. S. statement of Principles? That statement was drawn up by order of one Conference and adopted by another Conference—the sub-committee consisting of Mrs. Besant, Mr. J. M. Robertson, and Mr. G. W. Foote. Very likely it is not perfect, but there is something in unity. Neither is the Liverpool statement perfect. A good many Secularists would take exception to the statement that "human improvement can be promoted only by material means."

II. C. SHACKLETON.—Pleased to hear you are so much indebted to the *Freethinker*, and that you exert yourself to promote its circulation. If all our readers did a little in that line we should soon be in a better street.

T. WILLIAMS.—Your letters in the *Aberdare Leader* are very good; much better written, in fact, than the Rev. H. F. Short's. That man of God seems very bigoted for a Unitarian. It is fanaticism to talk as he does about "filthy pictures and paragraphs" issuing from the Freethought press. You dress him down capitally. The other matter shall be seen to.

TRUTHSEEKER.—The trouble arises through treating words like "infinite" as *positive*, whereas they are *negative* as far as they are conceivable.

C. G. QUINTON.—Good men are never too plentiful. We hope your health is satisfactory again.

A. HEAPE "hopes a good sum will eventually be realised" for the New Year's Gift to Freethought.

J. C. McMURRAY.—The difficulty with collecting cards is the trouble of getting them in over the whole kingdom. The "God at Chicago" tract will be followed by the Torrey exposures as soon as possible. We are supplying at a very cheap rate for propagandist purposes. See advertisement.

A. TYRRELL.—Pleased to know that you first knew of this journal through our advertisement in the *Clarion*, and that you now look forward to it every week. Your suggestion shall be considered.

G. J.—Thanks for cuttings. We must agree to differ about the points you raise.

H. SILVERSTONE.—We hope the East London Branch's annual meeting will be as well attended as you wish it to be. Perhaps the local "saints" will bestir themselves a bit in the new year.

R. DENNY, 1 St. Mary's-place, Lancaster, will be glad to hear from local Freethinkers who would like to meet for their mutual benefit or to form a Branch of the National Secular Society.

S. BURGON.—Change of address noted. Glad to hear you were so delighted with Mr. Foote's lecture at Manchester on Sunday afternoon. It would be nice for him if all your good wishes were realised.

JAMES KNOX.—We take your letter to be humorous. Your friends who threaten you with hell because you read what they don't want to read ought to be in heaven. That is the worst we wish them; and we are afraid it is quite bad enough—if we are to believe the Bible. The company there must be shocking.

D. MACKINTOSH.—You must see on reflection how impossible it is for us, in addition to our already too heavy work, to write controversial Freethought letters in the local newspapers up and down the country. Of course you only suggest *one* paper, but other readers suggest other papers, and if we once begin where would it be possible to end? The Ceylon gentleman who referred to the "Behold a virgin" passage in Isaiah as antedating the supposed virgin birth of Buddha, is evidently a sorry ignoramus. A mere glance at the Revised Version of the Bible would have shown him that Isaiah said nothing about a "virgin" at all. That word was put in by the old translators to bolster up the "prophesied Messiah."

THE National Secular Society's 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.

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

### The New Year's Gift to Freethought.

#### FIFTH LIST OF SUBSCRIPTIONS.

W. Young £1 1s., G. Brady £1 1s., F. Rogers 2s., W. Robertson 1s., A. J. Watson 2s. 6d., Plymouth 2s., W. C. Schweizer 5s., J. Kelsey 2s., J. Chick 5s., Athos 5s., Mrs. Collins 2s. 6d., Dr. Laing £1 1s., H. Thornell 1s. 6d., C. Martin (for *Freethinker*), F. Dupree 2s., H. A. Lupton 10s., Joseph Bevins 10s., P. Rowland £1, C. Martin (for N. S. S.) 2s. 6d., E. Jones 4s., J. Charter 2s. 6d., W. Wright 2s. 6d., T. H. Elstob 2s. 6d., W. H. Harrap 2s. 6d., A. Corley 2s. 6d., J. Bullock 1s., J. Stanway 2s. 6d., A. Sellvidge 2s. 6d., G. T. 1s., A. Heape 5s., G. C. Quinton 2s. 6d., M. Stitt 3s., G. D. 2s. 6d., John Bland 5s., J. C. McMurray 2s. 6d., J. C. 1s.



### Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote lectured as announced at Manchester on Sunday, and was very warmly welcomed by excellent audiences, the Secular Hall being crowded in the evening, and the criticism of the Central Hall clerical lectures on "Is Christianity True?" being heartily enjoyed. Several questions were asked, some of them obviously by total strangers. Friends were present at the meetings from Oldham, Bolton, Blackburn, Wigan, and other South Lancashire towns; many of whom shook hands with Mr. Foote and expressed their delight at seeing him on the platform again.

Mr. Foote delivers two lectures to-day (February 7) in the Secular Hall, Brunswick-street, Glasgow. His subjects should attract two large audiences. At twelve o'clock noon he will deal with "How the Clergy Answer Mr. Blatchford," and at half-past six with "The Last Christian Statesman: a Candid Review of Mr. John Morley's *Life of Gladstone*." "Saints" who want to be sure of a seat in the evening should take the precaution of being early.

The February number of the *Pioneer* contains an article by the Editor entitled "A Word to Mr. John Burns," which may be commended to the attention of all Freethinkers and reformers, as well as to that of the gentleman to whom it is addressed.

London Freethinkers who wish to see the Queen's (Minor) Hall crowded on Sunday evenings, February 14, 21, 28, and March 6, when a fresh course of special lectures will be delivered by Mr. Foote, Mr. Cohen, and Mr. Lloyd, should apply to Miss E. M. Vance, at 2 Newcastle-street, London, E.C., for a supply of waistcoat-pocket advertisements of the course for distribution amongst their friends and acquaintances. This advertisement is something very neat and might be circulated with advantage.

We are pleased to hear from Mr. H. Percy Ward that during his year's location at Liverpool the membership of the Branch has increased by at least fifty, that the lectures are all well attended, and that financially both ends are now about meeting. Perhaps we should take this opportunity of stating that the Secular Society, Limited, made a grant of £10 a few weeks ago to the funds of this hard-working Branch.

In connection with the Liverpool Branch a Rationalist Debating Society has been started. Its meetings are held at the Alexandra Hall on Monday evenings at 8. Admission is free, and strangers are welcomed. All sorts of subjects are discussed—from Labor Representation to the Mystery of Radium; and we see that the members intend to have a Dinner on April 25, the discussion of which will no doubt be absolutely harmonious.

Last week's *Yarmouth Mercury* contained another long and able letter by Mr. J. W. de Caux on "The Crucifixion and Ascension." It will take some answering. Up to the present the local champions of the faith are fighting very shy of Mr. de Caux on this tack. When it comes to facts and evidence they have remarkably little to say.

Mr. H. C. Shackleton has an excellent letter in the *Keighley News* in reply to the Rev. Mr. Withrington, who foolishly asserted that the revolutionary French Assembly declared that "henceforth there is no God." The editor saves the reverend gentleman's face—and it wanted saving—by closing the correspondence.

We sent down 10,000 copies of the reprint in tract form of our "God at Chicago" article to Birmingham, and the Branch "saints" distributed a lot of them outside Dr. Torrey's show on Sunday afternoon. This appears to have alarmed the Yankee soul-saver. In the evening the police stopped the distribution. On Monday morning Mr. Partridge and other "saints" saw the Deputy Chief Constable, who justified his action by referring to the bye-law, which he was too high and mighty to show them. It was pointed out that Dr. Torrey's people had been giving away literature for a fortnight uninterruptedly, and that there was no thought of interference until the Secularists joined in the game; and the Deputy Chief Constable admitted that the police would not have moved if there had been no "complaint." Consequently it is easy to see what influence is at work. For our part, we have written to Mr. Partridge to say that if the "saints" distribute the Tract and get fined we will see to the fines ourselves. No doubt we shall have more news on this subject next week.

### In Search of the Seven Sacraments.

THIS is a record-breaking age. Whenever anybody does anything in five minutes, someone else tries to do it in 4min. 30sec., though I could never for the life of me find out who got the 30 secs. that were saved: whether they were kept for future consumption, or given to the deserving poor. Now, Moses, like most of the chosen race, thought himself mighty clever; and he got ahead of posterity in a peculiarly underhand way; for when he came down from Mount Sinai he threw down the two tables of the Law, and thus *he broke all the Ten Commandments at once*. It was a mean sort of trick, because none of the pottering sinners of a later period have been able to break more than three or four at a time; and so they haven't had a ghost of a chance of winning the belt.

However, Moses could not capture *all* the records. He left some for the twentieth century. While engaged in absorbing the intellectual fare provided by that striking monument of the efficiency of School Board education (at a rate of one halfpenny in the pound), I mean the *Daily Mail* of January 19, 1904, I came across the case of a Swiss girl at Genoa who received the Sacrament of Baptism, the Sacrament of Confirmation, the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, the Sacrament of Matrimony, and the Sacrament of Extreme Unction—all in one hour! She missed Penance because they did not give her sufficient time to sin after baptism; and she missed Holy Orders through her confounded female obstinacy in being born a girl instead of a boy. But still, it was a brilliant record. She's dead now. These examples of youthful genius always die young. But she'll make Moses feel blue when she appears before the cerulean throne.

Speaking of the Seven Sacraments, I once took part in a pilgrimage to find them. It was not a romantic undertaking like the Quest of the Holy Grail; but, like Old Mother Hubbard, we got there; and, unlike that nursery heroine, we found them. The circumstances were these. While staying at Cromer we struck up an acquaintance with Mr. Maple. "I see you are interested in old churches as an antiquarian, Mr. Egan," said he. "Now, we are Catholics; so I go round and visit them, to see how readily they can be restored to their original uses. This part of Norfolk is peculiarly rich in churches that have never been touched for three hundred years, but still retain many of their old fittings, such as rood-screens and fonts. I have now visited every church in Norfolk, with the exception of Sustead, Felbricke, and Gresham; and we might make up a party and see them together."

Accordingly, next day we chartered a curious local conveyance called a governess' cart. It appears that these governess' carts were built on the lines of the Ancient British war-chariots, in order that governesses might give their pupils practical illustration of the modes of locomotion employed by the Ancient Britons. You enter the vehicle from the back; and, as it only possesses two wheels, the occupants participate in all the movements of the horse, and are shaken tightly together. We started by packing the ladies in front and the gentlemen behind; but as this tilted up the shafts, and lifted the horse off his feet, we had to change the arrangement. For until flying machines reach a greater state of perfection, a horse is far more useful with his four feet on the road than with his hoofs in the air. So Miss Maple being the lightest, she was put at the back; and, as the seats slope backwards at a sharp angle, and the jolting of the horse throws the passengers towards the rear, she was compressed to such an extent that she was visibly thinner in the evening than in the morning. She said that for the first time in her life she realised that Queen Boadicea had a real grievance in being compelled to travel in a war-chariot of *that* pattern.

However, in due course we arrived at Felbricke, and inquired of a little girl swinging on a gate where



we could find the key of the church. The young lady volunteered to fetch it, and swiftly disappeared, leaving us on the village green, reconnoitred by the villagers from behind their doors, and watching the horse flicking flies away with his tail. The driver entertained us with the life-history of the animal, which, it appeared, had just returned from South Africa; and he called our attention to the fact that, in consequence of its military training, the horse was in the habit of dislodging the flies by the same method as that employed by Lord Roberts in dealing with Cronje—namely, by a *flank movement*; for, when the insects got troublesome, the animal twitched his flank, and so got rid of the flies. While admiring this instance of equine sagacity, we began to grow uneasy at the prolonged absence of our messenger; but just as we had abandoned all hope she suddenly appeared running back along the road. "Please, sir," she panted, "the old woman says if you want the key you'll have to fetch it yourselves." We rewarded the young lady's services with the sum of one penny, and drove on. But the ladies thought that the pay was insufficient for the work done, until I pointed out that if they consulted any issue of the *Daily Twaddler* they would learn that exercise in fresh air was the best possible thing for the rising generation. Therefore the little girl's reward was not so much the disc of dirty bronze as the opportunity of exercising her muscles in the pure air of the countryside, which alone would build up a constitution calculated to resist the ravages of disease, and contribute to the formation of the sap and sinew of a strong and healthy population (*vide Daily Twaddler*).

We drove some little distance, for the houses were more or less invisible among the trees, and at length stopped at a lane. After some trouble, we unearthed the custodian of the key; a lady who had long passed the bloom of youth. "You can't have the key," said she. "I'm not going to let anybody have it any more; people get the key and promise to bring it back, but they never do. A fortnight ago I lent it to a party, and they never sent it back till next day, and they give the key to other people, so that I don't get my fee." We assured the good lady that, whatever might be the shortcomings of other tourists, we at least were persons renowned for all the public and private virtues. I, myself, was well known to the police; and Mr. Maple was not merely the companion of bishops, but of cardinals as well. "Well," she said, "if you pay me my fee now, I'll let you have the key, and if you put it under the door, you needn't bring it back, I'll find it."

Having secured the desired implement, we looked round for the church; but we had to drive back for about a mile a half, pass through some lodge gates, go along a private road for threequarters of a mile, and finally dismount and walk across a couple of fields, before reaching the dilapidated edifice. Evidently the one fault of the mediæval populace was its inconvenient anxiety to go to church—so different to these degenerate days, when Mr. W. T. Stead finds that the public-house is the real Sunday attraction—and therefore the architect had taken some pains to place Felbrigg Church at a distance from the village in order that the villagers might be induced to take that exercise in the fresh air of the countryside, which, etc., etc. (again see *Daily Twaddler*). However, the remoteness of the church had ensured the preservation of some very fine brasses; more especially a magnificent one to the memory of Sir Simon Felbrigg, standard-bearer to Richard II., the monarch who moons about the stage and talks of worms and graves and epitaphs, and stops tournaments and breaks looking-glasses, and plays the fool generally.

"You see this church is all ready for us, Mr. Egan," said Mr. Maple, "here is the place for the altar, and the sedilla and the piscina and every-thing."

But we had not found the seven sacraments.

The scene was changed; and we were outside Sustead Church, a ramshackle structure of no great

dimensions. Somebody remarked that it was in the Perpendicular Style. The *style* may have been all right, but the building itself was far from perpendicular. An aristocratic-looking lady approached from an adjacent house and admitted us into the edifice. The first thing that struck us was the chancel-screen (that is to say, it struck us figuratively—not literally). The old framework was there; but the panels had disappeared; and had been temporarily replaced by cardboard pictures of the "tuppence colored" variety. Our conductress proudly directed our attention to the blazing chancel roof, which had recently been restored and repainted according to the original design, as discovered by the architect. If I had been that architect I should certainly have tried to discover something else. The roof gave one the impression of an awful nightmare, produced by crossing an Italian ice-cream barrow with a Burmese pagoda. The color harmony was an æsthetic combination of vermilion red and peacock blue, with the emblems of the Passion in black; and as the three nails—disposed in the form of the Governmental broad-arrow—were the most conspicuous feature of the design, the next time the prison authorities require an effective uniform for convicts, Sustead chancel roof ought to be recommended for their earnest consideration. Withdrawing our dazzled eyes from this example of the bad taste of our forefathers, we inquired what the dedication was. The lady told us it was S. Peter and S. Paul (the poorer the church, the grander the dedication) and took the covers off two embroidered banners that stood in the choir. They had been subscribed for by the school-children, the boys giving Peter and the girls giving Paul, with the result that the sweetstuff trade of the locality had been completely ruined by this diversion of the juvenile pocket-money. It was evidently a case deserving the attention of Mr. Joseph Chamberlain. The good lady also removed the cover from a processional cross, and Mr. Maple was delighted to find that it was not a mere cross, but a complete crucifix.

"You see they're getting everything ready for the Catholics," he remarked to me. "There are the candles on the altar and a lamp over it. It only wants re-consecration and a Roman priest."

The lady next informed us that the walls were to be rebuilt, as they were condemned as unsafe; and that the roof was so decayed that it might fall at any moment. We removed ourselves outside; and Mr. Maple pointed out a notice to the effect that a service for cyclists was held every alternate Sunday.

"What a pity it isn't motorists," said he, "with a roof like that."

But *finis* was about to coronate our work. We next found ourselves in Gresham Church, before a large octagonal font. Virtue was rewarded, and we had at last discovered the Seven Sacraments. At least, the guide-book said they were there; but the puzzle was that there were *eight* bas reliefs instead of seven; and, as the mediæval sculptors were persons of little skill, it was not at all clear what they intended to represent. Although a zealous Catholic, Mr. Maple could not remember what the seven sacraments were; and appealed to me in vain for enlightenment. "It's no use asking *me*," said Mrs. Egan. And Mrs. Maple's memory failed her. It was therefore decided that as Miss Maple had been to school last, she ought to know; but as that young lady's thoughts had been more directed to hats and cats than catechisms, there was an interval before she quite recollected; and then she said:—

"There are seven sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Eucharist, Penance, Extreme Unction, Holy Orders, and Matrimony."

Fortified with this information, we set about identifying the scenes on the font; but the eighth remained unsolved. The gentlemen thought it was Holy Orders, the ladies that it was a baptism; and, as they were in the majority, they might have



carried the point, if I had not discovered that it was really three angels carrying a scroll.

"Speaking of sacraments," said Mr. Maple, "I was once at a church in Ireland where the bishop was examining the children in their catechism. Selecting a likely-looking girl, the bishop asked:—

'What is the Sacrament of Matrimony.'

'It's a state av probation where sowls suffer on account av their sins; an' are purifoid fer a better wuruld,' was the reply.

'Phwat dy'e mane by answering loike that, Eustacia O'Donovan?' cried the priest, 'That's the answer for Purgathory.'

'Whisht, Father Murphy,' said his eminence, 'Shure the ladies know better than we do upon such subjects.'

C. E.

### Jesus Ben Pandera.

MOST of the readers of this journal are aware that the Jews have an account of the life of Jesus differing from that contained in the four gospels, entitled the "Sepher Toldoth Jeschu" or Book of the Generations of Jesus. A version of this life—known as Wagenseil's edition, from being first translated by Wagenseil, of Altdorf, into Latin in 1681—has been edited by Mr. G. W. Foote and the late J. M. Wheeler, with an historical preface and voluminous notes; and so well did the editors do their work that, after nineteen years,\* there is very little of any value to be added to this very useful and scholarly booklet.

The Jewish life of Jesus places his birth about a hundred years before the time stated in the Gospels. In a book just published, entitled *Did Jesus Live One Hundred Years B.C.?*† Mr. Mead attempts to answer this interesting question, but with very indifferent success, for on the last page he confesses that "I feel at present somewhat without an absolutely authoritative negative to the very strange question, 'Did Jesus live one hundred years B.C.?' " However, the author partially disarms criticism at the outset by stating that the main object of the enquiry "is to state this problem, to show that in moderate probability for many centuries this was the Jewish tradition as to the date of Jesus, not to attack or defend it"; and modestly disclaims "the pretension of discovering any facts previously unknown to specialists," contenting himself with pointing out the difficulties of the subject "in the hope that some greater mind may, at no distant date, be induced to throw further light on the matter" (pp. 14-26). Mr. Mead considers himself quite a pioneer in the matter of introducing the subject to English-reading people, and supposes that some of his readers will say: "Why, we did not know even so much as that there was a Jewish Life of Jesus; where can we obtain any information on the subject in English?" He says: The subject has been boycotted even by the learned in English-speaking lands, and, "as far as we are aware, there is only one book in English which deals with the subject, and that, too, in a very superficial manner." This being *The Lost and Hostile Gospels*, by the Rev. Baring-Gould, who he accuses of taking much of his information from Clemen's *Jesus von Nazareth*, and von der Alm's *Urtheile*, without acknowledgment.

We are afraid that Mr. Mead will hardly escape the charge of superficiality himself, for both Lightfoot and Lardner dealt with the subject, and they were certainly "learned" men. More recently Mr. Gerald Massey considered the subject in his *Natural Genesis* and *The Historical Jesus and Mythical Christ*, and Mr. Mead will be surprised to hear that the Jewish Life of Christ has been translated into English and published in three independent editions, without counting the work of the Rev. Baring Gould. It was published—along with other matter—in

*Revelations of Antichrist*,‡ published in America in 1879; who, by the way, also supposed that he was the first to introduce it to the English-speaking world. But Messrs. Foote and Wheeler discovered a copy translated into English by a Jew, and published by Richard Carlile in 1823; Messrs. Foote and Wheeler's edition being the third.

As we have said, Mr. Mead leaves the subject very much where he found it, and, indeed, throughout his book betrays much indecision and vacillation, especially when dealing with dates. For instance, in dealing with the Gospels, he declares that "if there be any element in the whole narrative which bears on its face the stamp of genuineness, it is precisely the Pilate date." For, if it were an invention, "the Rabbis could have instantly replied: There was no such trial under Pontius Pilate! The Pilate story seems to have been in existence in written form not long after 70 A.D. This, of course, cannot be proved, for what can we *prove* concerning the Gospel narratives in the first century?" Now, there is no evidence that the Gospels, as we know them, were in existence until the end of the second century; and the compilers of the Gospels, writing 150 years after the time of Pilate, could feel every confidence in placing the death of their hero during his governorship of Judea without fear of contradiction, especially, considering the credulous and uncritical time at which they lived.

But, says Mr. Mead, the Four Gospels are based upon a "common document"; and he cites the opinion of van Manen that "perhaps it began somewhat as follows: In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea..... there came down to Capernaum.....Jesus....." (p. 43). Well, perhaps for perhaps, perhaps it did not mention Pilate. With all due deference to van Manen, we do not think it did. Mr. Mead himself points out that Marcion's Gospel did not contain this introduction, but began abruptly, "He came down to Capernaum" (p. 43), and notices "that the writer of the 'common document,' as seen in the simplest form preserved by Mark, puts all the blame of Jesus' condemnation on the chief priests, and says very little about Pilate" (p. 44). As to the date of the "common document," after stating (p. 44) that "We cannot date the autograph of the common document," we are told (p. 46) that "we may with very great confidence fix the very latest limit for our common document in the first years of the second century," and the earliest limit the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. And it is upon this tissue of perhaps' and assumptions that we are told (p. 47) that "the Pilate date has every appearance of being as strong an historical element as any other in the whole tradition." If that is the case, it does not say much for the historical character of the other elements of the story.

Mr. Mead next discusses the allusions to Jesus contained in the Talmud, a subject surrounded by many difficulties, and of which few can claim a first-hand knowledge,§ there being as yet no complete and authoritative translation of the Talmud available. In fact, Mr. Mead admits that this part of his

‡ We have not seen this interesting work, and believe it to be out of print. Our information is taken from the preface to Messrs. Foote and Wheeler's edition.

§ Mr. Mead says that "few Jews even, at any rate of German birth, have any longer any profound knowledge of the Talmud." And in a footnote he adds: "And in England real Talmudic scholars will not exhaust the fingers for their counting" (p. 110)—a state of things not to be wondered at when we consider that the Babylonian collection alone consists of "no less than twelve huge folio volumes, consisting of 2,947 folio leaves and 5,894 pages." Of which "The Mishna text stands surrounded by the Gemara text in unpointed Hebrew characters, a mystery often to those initiated into a knowledge of Hebrew. For, indeed, it is not only the voluminous nature of the material, and the wildness of an unpointed text, which are the only difficulties to be surmounted by the first-hand student of the Talmud, but in addition he has to be an adept in solving the countless puzzles of Rabbinic abbreviations, mnemonic technicalities, and ungrammatical forms, and to be, further, not only master of three different languages, but equipped with a philological intuition that few even of the most learned in this age of learning can be expected to possess."

\* It was published in 1885, and can still be had of the Free-thought Publishing Co., Ltd., for sixpence.

† By G. R. S. Mead; Theosophical Publishing Society.



work would have been rendered utterly impossible but for the fact that in 1891 Dr. Dalman, of Leipzig, printed a critical text of all the censured passages in the Talmud, which are said to refer to Jesus; to this H. Laible appended an introductory essay, in which most of the passages were translated. In 1893, A. M. Streane published an English version of this work, to which Dalman, Laible, and Streane contributed additional notes\*. With which, says Mr. Mead, "the non-specialist must perforce be content.....though a comparison with other translations of single passages makes one hesitate to accept its entire accuracy, and Streane himself admits in his preface (p. vi.) that occasionally some Talmud expressions with regard to 'our Blessed Lord' have been modified." However, Mr. Mead is assured "by a learned Talmudist" that it "is on the whole sufficiently reliable for all general purposes," and we must perforce accept it, until we have a literal and thoroughly reliable translation of the Talmud as a whole.

W. MANN.

(To be concluded.)

### National Secular Society.

MINUTES of monthly Executive meeting held at the Society's offices on Thursday, January 28, 1904; the President (Mr. G. W. Foote) in the chair. There were also present—Messrs. C. Cohen, H. Cowell, F. A. Davies, T. Gorniot, W. Leat, Dr. R. T. Nichols, T. Thurlow, and the Secretary.

The minutes of previous meeting were read and confirmed, and cash statement presented and adopted.

An application for assistance towards the expenses of lectures at Coventry was received, and a grant in aid was voted.

A letter was read from Mrs. Bridges Adams, announcing a Demonstration at Queen's Hall in February in favor of Secular Education, and the following resolution was carried:—

"That this Executive is willing to take an active part in promoting the success of a Queen's Hall Demonstration in favor of Secular Education, to provide a speaker or speakers, and to donate the sum of five guineas towards the expenses, and to hold itself ready to donate more if necessary—on condition that the Demonstration has the open support of the London Trades Council, or the Trades Union Congress Parliamentary Committee, or other adequate representative bodies."

The Secretary reported that the resolution passed at the last meeting, and which ran as follows:—

"The attention of this Executive having been called to certain statements, written by Mr. J. W. Gott, in the *Truth Seeker* reflecting upon the Society's conduct of its business in relation to the proposed formation of a branch of the N.S.S. at Leeds, and the Society's alleged ill-treatment of him at its annual Conferences, this Executive hereby calls upon him to withdraw such statements as false in point of fact"

had been duly forwarded to Mr. Gott, who replied to the effect that "if he had been unjust he would put the matter straight," and asked her (the Secretary) to give him particulars of the official correspondence between the persons who had proposed to form a branch at Leeds and herself. This she had declined to do, on the ground that Mr. Gott's duty was to have information before making charges, and not to seek for it afterwards. She had also pointed out to Mr. Gott that the Executive's resolution had been omitted from the printed report of its meeting; but if he intended to refer to it publicly himself she would have no alternative but to publish the resolution in the next report. To this letter, after some delay, Mr. Gott had replied that it would be best for her to do so. The matter was then discussed, and the following resolution, moved by Mr. Cohen, seconded by Mr. Gorniot, carried:—

"That the secretary be instructed to write Mr. J. W. Gott to the effect that certain statements having been made by him reflecting upon the conduct of the Executive, and on being requested to substantiate or withdraw them he had failed to do so, he be now informed that unless the required explanation be given before the next meeting of the Executive, it will have no alternative but to deal with the matter in the ordinary way."

The application from Leeds for permission to form a Branch, received November 10, 1903, was then dealt with, the properly signed forms not having come to hand, and a reasonable time having elapsed, the secretary was instructed to return the money to Mr. Pack.

It was formally resolved that Mr. Victor Roger be

\* *Jesus Christ in the Talmud*, Cambridge, 1893.

appointed as the official correspondent of this Executive for the Rome Congress.

The Secretary reported a highly successful Annual Dinner.

It was resolved that an Indoor Children's Party be given as early as possible before March, and Messrs. W. Leat, F. Cotterell, and S. Samuels were appointed as a Sub-Committee to carry out arrangements.

The meeting then adjourned.

EDITH M. VANCE,  
Secretary,

### Correspondence.

#### TAME DEER HUNTING.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Can you allow me to draw attention once more to the subject of tame deer hunting? We had a hunt of this kind near Wokingham on January 15, and, if I describe what happened at the finish, the public will see what this sport sometimes involves for the quarry. My description is based mainly upon an investigation made by an Ex-Metropolitan Police Detective.

The stag on being liberated from its van pointed towards Eversley. At this village it entered a pond followed by the leading hounds. Some affirm they bit the deer in the water, but I am not sure about this. The hounds expelled the animal from the pond and it then ran into Eversley-street. Being fatigued, it was overtaken here by the pack, but the hunt-staff came up and whipped the hounds off. There is much indignation felt that the deer was not taken at this point. It got away again, and, to use an on-looker's expression, "staggered" down the road towards Eversley Green. It passed across the green, then through some gardens and on to the Blackwater, a small stream. The stag got across the water, but the hounds were close upon it, and the horsemen had to make a detour. From this point the hounds did pretty much what they liked with their victim. Presently the animal gave in, and a frightful mangling scene occurred. When the hunt-staff arrived the quarry was nearly dead, and the knife had to be used upon it. A friend of mine saw the dead deer, and observed that one of its ears had been bitten off.

This carted-deer hunting is a barbarous, horrible sport, and ought to be stopped by the enactment of Mr. Corrie Grant's Spurious Sports Bill.

J. STRATTON.

### International Freethought Congress.

A RECENT number of *La Raison* contains the announcement of the Conference of the International Federation of Freethinkers, to be held at Rome on September 20, 21, and 22, 1904. It has been decided to hold this Conference at Rome, within sight of the Vatican, thus to signify to the most powerful of all priestly hierarchies that humanity no longer gives credit to its superstitions nor is subservient to its authority.

The Federation appeals for support to Freethought Societies, Masonic Lodges, and all societies interested in maintaining freedom of thought, and to individual Freethinkers in all parts of the world. International Committees are formed, or are being formed, in all the principal countries of the world.

The questions to be discussed are:—

- I. Religious Dogma in Face of Science.
- II. The Relations between the State and the Churches.
- III. The Organisation and Propaganda of Freethought.

In Section I. the most renowned representatives of modern science will, in specially prepared papers, show the present state of human knowledge, and show how religious dogmas stand condemned.

Section II. (the Relations between the State and the Church) will be considered under five headings:—

1. International Laws.
2. National Laws in Various Countries.
3. Education.
4. Public Charities.
5. Work of Religious Missions.

In Section III. the programme is still under consideration.

In all sections papers will be prepared by men who are making a serious study of their subject, and these papers will be available for all who attend the Congress.

If there is a life of eternal progress before us, I shall be as glad as any other angel to find that out. But I will not sacrifice the world I have for one I know not of.—*Ingersoll*,



**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.**

**NORTH CAMBERWELL HALL** (61 New Church Road, Camberwell): 7.30. Conversazione for Members and Friends.

**EAST LONDON BRANCH** (Stanley's Temperance Bar, 7 High-street, Stepney): 3.30, Annual Meeting; 7.30, F. A. Davies, "The Dying Faith."

**EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY** (Brnley Vestry Hall, Bow-road, E.): 7, H. Johnson, B.A., "Kipling and Watson Compared."

**SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY** (Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road): 7, Dr. Stanton Coit, "Herbert Spencer."

**WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY** (Kensington Town Hall, High-street): 11.15, Dr. Stanton Coit, "Whitaker Wright."

**WOOD GREEN ETHICAL SOCIETY** (Fairfax Hall, Portland-gardens, Haringay): 7.15, Earl Russell, "Divorce Reform."

**COUNTRY.**

**BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S.** (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broad-street): 3, C. Cohen, "Atheism and the Religion of the Future;" 7, The Case for Secularism."

**FAIRFAX SECULAR SUNDAY SCHOOL** (Pole-lane Fairfworth): 6, Half Yearly Meeting.

**GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY** (110 Brunswick-street): 12 noon, G. W. Foote, "How the Clergy Answer Mr. Blatchford"; 6.30, "The Last Christian Statesman: a Candid Review of Mr. John Morley's *Life of Gladstone*."

**LEEDS** (Covered Market, Vicar's Croft): 11, W. Woolham, "The Bible and Socialism"; Woodhouse Moor: 3, George Weir, "Secularism"; Town Hall Square: 7, H. R. Youngman, "Why I Cannot be a Christian."

**NEWCASTLE DEBATING SOCIETY** (Lockhart's Cathedral Café): Thursday, February 11, at 8, E. Copland, "The Logic of Protection."

**LIVERPOOL** (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 3, H. Percy Ward, "Crime and Criminals"; 7, "Was Adam the First Man." Monday, 8 p.m., J. Stead, "Phrenology."

**MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL** (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, J. B. Hudson, "Is Nunquam's Attack on Christianity Justifiable."

**SOUTH SHIELDS** (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, Market-place): 7, Business Meeting; Mr. Lloyd's Lectures.

**STOKTON-ON-TEES** (Market Place): Ernest Pack, 11, "Miracles"; 3, "The Sermon on the Mount"; 7, "Adam and Eve."

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