

The Secular Chronicle.

A MONTHLY JOURNAL,

ESTABLISHED TO PROMOTE FREE ENQUIRY INTO SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND THEOLOGICAL QUESTIONS, AND AS
A RECORD OF FREETHOUGHT PROGRESS.

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HALFPENNY.

"He who will not reason is a bigot—he who cannot is a fool—and he who dares not is a slave."

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NOTICES.

TO SUBSCRIBERS AND CORRESPONDENTS.

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TO OUR READERS.

WE offer this, the first number of our little periodical, to the Secular party and general public, in the hope that it will meet with their approval and support.

Our columns will be thrown open for the discussion of all questions affecting the well-being of society, especially of those subjects which are excluded from the English press by the "despotism of custom." Theologians and anti-Theologians, Republicans and Monarchists, Malthusians and anti-Malthusians, advocates of Financial and Land Tenure Reform and defenders of Government Finance Accounts and our present Land Laws, will, so far as our space allows, be afforded facilities for publishing their views.

As advocates of an unpopular cause, we do not expect to escape censure, neither do we desire it. When our opponents praise us, we shall begin to suspect we are neglecting our duty. We shall

pursue an open and independent course, and shall reap our reward in the consciousness of the fact that we are doing something, however little, to help on the cause of Freethought progress.

PRINCIPLES AND AIMS OF SECULARISM.

BY G. H. REDDALLS.

IF a reason were required for entering into an exposition and a defence of secular principles, it would be sufficient to point out the erroneous impressions existing in society with reference to them, arising from the misrepresentations of opponents and from the well-meaning advocacy of friends who are but imperfectly educated in the principles they hold.

The believers in Christianity have not yet learned that men may reject their creed, and yet have a passionate reverence for truth and virtue. They have been so long blinded by the dogma of justification by faith that they cannot perceive that unbelief and immorality have no connection with each other. Their Bible places unbelievers on a level with liars and murderers, and they are taught in their Sunday Schools that unbelief is the one unpardonable sin against God. It is no wonder that men, educated in such a creed, should sincerely regard Secularism—which ignores Christianity, and teaches that earnest scepticism is as commendable as earnest faith—as a system invented by the devil to lead men astray. Knowing little or nothing of the principles of Secularism, having only a vague idea that they are opposed to everything they had been taught to believe good and praiseworthy, they feel justified in following the bad example set them by the Bible, and condemn as immoral and degrading that which they do not understand. These are some of the reasons why the statements made by our opponents find so ready an acceptance in the Christian world. In the eyes of believers, "Infidelity is a disease of the heart, and, in proportion as it increases, the general morals decline;" "Secularism justifies any means for the attainment of any end, and a Secularist could even justify murder to suit his own purposes;" and by ignoring the Bible, we "give the reins to the domination of every passion,

and thereby contribute to the introduction of the public insecurity and of the private unhappiness, usually, and almost necessarily, accompanying a state of corrupted morals." These opinions, and the intolerance and bigotry naturally resulting from them, we cannot afford to ignore. It is alike our duty and our interest to show their inapplicability to Secularism, by placing clear and unmis-takeable expositions of our objects and principles before the public mind on all suitable occasions. It is the more necessary to do this, that those who are continually joining the Freethought ranks may have a just appreciation of the object of life, right principles for their guidance, and pure motives as their incentives to action. To the neglect of this positive work, is due, to a great extent, the indifference to secular work manifested by "mere unbelievers,"—men who have thrown off the swaddling clothes of orthodoxy, but have clothed themselves with the strait-jacket of selfishness, which prevents them doing anything for others without some worldly gain for themselves. The influence of early Christian teaching remains upon them after the Christian creed is abandoned. An intolerant believer will become an intolerant unbeliever, if he be not taught principles affecting his conduct as well as his faith.

All these reasons combine to show the necessity of keeping our positive work in the foreground, while, at the same time, we do not neglect the iconoclastic work required to destroy that which is inimical to the objects of Secularism.

What, then, is Secularism? What are the objects it seeks to attain? What are the means by which it proposes to attain them? What are its principles of morality? What are the motives it furnishes to live a virtuous life?

The writer will endeavour to answer these questions as clearly and concisely as possible. He claims no merit for originality. He simply repeats what he has learned, though in a somewhat different form.

A statement of Secular principles was published years ago by Mr. G. J. Holyoake, an earnest friend to the Freethought cause. To that publication the writer is much indebted, and generally agrees with the principles there laid down, though upon a few minor particulars he is compelled to dissent.

WHAT IS SECULARISM? Secularism is the name given to a series of positive principles deduced from observation of the laws of nature and their relation to human happiness, and intended for the guidance of those who do not accept the teachings of Theology. It is the moral duty of man, deduced from considerations purely human, and having reference to man's relation to his fellow-man in this world alone. It is the policy of life to those who reject Theology. An Atheist must be a Secularist if he possess any moral principle. A Deist may be a Secularist, but he must strictly follow out the

teaching of Confucius, the Chinese philosopher, "Respect the gods; but keep them at a distance."

The object of Secularism is the promotion of human happiness in this world. Knowing nothing of, and expecting nothing from, a future life, looking upon death as "the undiscovered country, from whose bourne no traveller returns," the Secularist is content "to do the duty nearest hand." He does not regard this life as a probation state, "a vale of tears," where man must fast and pray to fit himself for happiness in another life. He believes the surest way of obtaining heaven is to make one here. All his hopes rest in nature and in man, and he works with an earnest faith for the coming of the time spoken of by the poet Shelley in his "Queen Mab":—

"A brighter morn awaits the human day,
When every transfer of earth's natural gifts
Shall be a commerce of good words and works;
When poverty and wealth,—the thirst of fame,
The fear of infamy, disease, and woe,
War, with its million horrors, and fierce hell,
Shall live but in the memory of time,
Who, like a penitent libertine, shall start,
Look back, and shudder at his younger years."

[To be continued.]

REASONS FOR NOT BEING A CHRISTIAN.

IT is every one's duty to be able to give a reason for the faith that is in him, be he Christian or Jew, Mahometan or Buddhist, believer in one God, or believer in no God. It is to be regretted that the bulk of mankind never take the trouble to have a faith, or to give a reason for not having one. Some four or five years ago, a number of meetings were held in Birmingham and other towns, to enquire why people did not attend places of worship—to ask people for a reason for the faith that was not in them. And a curious anomaly of reasons were given, mostly frivolous and ridiculous. Many of the speakers at these meetings were professors of religion, and gave their reasons for going to worship. These professed to have received great good from going to such places,—good sufficient to have changed them from the vilest of the vile (to use their own expression) to well-conducted and upright men. When they said this I have no doubt they spoke truly, and think it quite probable that many persons do derive benefit from their association with religious bodies. As to whether or not they had received a knowledge of the forgiveness of their sins, as they professed, no one can say; it is a matter of individual experience, which may be asserted, but is impossible to be proved. No one in his senses would wish to advise persons to discontinue going to places that had been so profitable to them. But they should remember that their experience is not everybody's, and not that of even a majority of those who profess religion. There is

only a small number of those believing in Christianity who make any such profession, and they are the least intellectual. They profess to believe that this great good is to be attained by every sincere believer. I can assure them that I am an individual instance to the contrary. I went to chapel among the Methodists when a boy, because I had been early sent to their Sunday School, and grew up to it as it were. At first I had no will and no conviction in the matter, but went because my parents sent me. Thus Methodism became my religion, and the Bible my principal book. I endeavoured to become one of the elect,—one of those who boasted of the proud consciousness of having their sins forgiven. I had never to my knowledge, been a very great sinner, as “converted” people are fond of representing themselves; but I was taught like the rest to consider myself such, and greatly in need of a Saviour. This I tried to do as best I could. I was told to pray earnestly and faithfully,—in fact to never cease praying—until I had gained what I was told was the greatest of all blessings, the knowledge that I was a new creature, that I had ceased to be a child of the devil, and was now an inheritor of heaven. I prayed long and fervently. I strove to believe I had achieved success occasionally; and then again the conviction would be forced on me that I was the same as ever. My religious advisers told me that I lacked faith, or that I hugged some particular sin in secret, and would not give it up. Again I strove with the Lord, as they term it, and again I was unsuccessful. This lasted for weeks and months, and even for years; and though I prayed and believed as heartily as I could, I never received the glorious conviction that my sins were forgiven. And I believe that if I had continued praying till now no greater success would have crowned my efforts. I was still told that the fault lay with myself—that I did not exercise sufficient faith. I prayed for more faith as I was told, and did not get it.

Now in my case, as far as I can see, there was no reason why I should not have become as changed as those men who made such large professions. Whose fault was it? Religious men will say mine, even though I tell them that I did everything in my power to attain the end desired, and that, naturally, I was anxious to reach the high religious standard set before me. I was told to seek and I should find; to knock, and the door of mercy would be opened unto me. I sought with all the power of my nature, and did not find; I knocked,—as prayer is called—and the door of mercy was not opened to me. Now what was the result of it all? Just this: that the conviction gradually dawned on my mind that either there was no reality in all these professions, or that God, in my case had proved himself to be—what the Bible says he is not—a respecter of persons. Our religious friends

will perhaps say this was through infidelity. Let me assure them it was nothing of the kind; for all I had then heard of infidelity was from the pulpit, and there it was always painted in the *deepest*,—and I am forced to say also, the *dirtiest* black. Salvation then in my case was a failure. I did not desert the Christian religion; it deserted me. And my case is that of thousands; I suppose bearing out the Biblical statement that “many are called but few are chosen.”

As I have said, this was not through infidelity, as I had then no knowledge of it, other than as a wicked and depraved state of mind into which some men were allowed, by God, to fall. Neither was it from an inclination to leave the “fold of the Good Shepherd;” as I had been brought up with religious associates and found pleasure in their company and pursuits. My conscience told me I had failed in attaining the desired end, and finding Christianity in my case a failure, I naturally began to enquire if it was really as potent for good as its professors pretended. I observed the conduct of religious men to see if it was so much superior to that of others, and found it much the same. I read my Bible thoughtfully, and began to examine the writings of men about it, other than those whose interest it was to have it believed in. This led me into scepticism, which continued enquiry and thought soon strengthened into positive unbelief. Paine’s “Age of Reason,” and the *National Reformer* landed me in Secularism.

But you will say: What is all this to show? It is to show how the Christian system begets the infidelity you so much despise, how its failures induce men to look after the evidences of the faith that has been instilled into their minds before they were capable of thinking for themselves, and how they are generally convinced that those evidences will not bear the light of reason and common sense. It is to show you that men lose their faith in your religion, even after it has been implanted in them in their childhood, from no fault of their own, and even sometimes against their wish. It is to show you that men can be honest and conscientious in their rejection of the Christian religion; that they can become unbelievers without becoming bad men, as you have been always taught to believe in churches and chapels.

Honest, conscientious, intelligent conviction, whether it leads to Christianity or away from it, is always to be respected and obeyed. If Christianity proved to me its superiority over all other religious systems, which it does not, I should still have good reason to think it a failure, and reject it, as, after centuries of preaching and millions of money spent in propagating it, the world is as full of vice and misery, and its very professors as vile as those who never profess to have come under its influence.

T. EVANS.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

WE heartily thank our friends in Birmingham, Bristol, Dudley, Glasgow, Huncley, Leicester, Newcastle-on-Tyne, Northampton, Nottingham, Sheffield, Stalybridge, Stockton-on-Tees, Walsall and other towns, for their efforts to secure a large circulation for the first issue of the *Chronicle*. Orders for the September number should be forwarded early.

"D. KIRKWOOD."—Thanks for your article, which we received too late for insertion in our present issue. Shall appear in next.

"T. C."—The report, which you wish contradicting, that "On one occasion, upon a public platform, Mr. Bradlaugh put a Bible under his foot, and called upon the audience to do the same," is another of those absurd calumnies to which the advocates of an unpopular cause are subjected. We should never think of asking Mr. Bradlaugh whether the statement was true, for anyone acquainted with that gentleman's character must know that he is incapable of committing such a silly act.

The Secular Chronicle,

AUGUST 1, 1872.

Notes of the Month.

THE Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol has presented a photograph of an early M.S. of the Athanasian Creed to the Convocation of Canterbury. The M.S., which contains the damnable clauses in their perfection, is said to have been discovered in the public library at Utrecht. The Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol believes it to be a very early copy, as early as the seventh century at least. The *Spectator* says that "Canon Swainson does not think it so old, but if the opinion of the paleographer who assigns it to the seventh century be confirmed, as we believe it will be, we suppose nobody will have the courage to object to clauses which go back as far as the seventh century. The Right Rev. Bench would, we fear, almost prefer to be damned under a creed as old as the seventh century to being saved under one of later date. But the world in general is not so obsequious to dates."

THE *Medium and Daybreak*, a weekly journal "devoted to the history, phenomena, philosophy and teachings of Spiritualism," invites Mr. Chas. Watts and "other victims of Secularistic superstition to come out of the Newgate in which they have incarcerated themselves, and mental freedom will be its own introduction to the whole realm of human existence, as far as their standing in the scale of development will serve to place them." We confess our inability to understand the meaning of the latter part of the invitation. If "the victims of Secularistic superstition" are not already in the "realm of human existence, as far as their standing in the scale of development will place them," we should like to know where they are! But the philosophy of Spiritualism, like the peace of God, "passeth all understanding." It is somewhat of a change to be called superstitious. We have been generally charged with believing too little, but it now appears that we believe too much. Stranger still appears the charge when we consider for a moment the character of the paper which makes it. Nothing is too incredible for the readers of the *Medium*. Tables dance round a room or rise to the ceiling without being touched by human hands. Accordians are played by the spirits. Gloves, hats and umbrellas are conveyed from one room to another. Spirits on some occasions go up the chimney, come down again, and black the faces of those present with soot. Mediums are elongated several inches, and floated about in the air like balloons. We are even assured, upon the testimony of a highly voracious gentleman named Mr. Benjamin Coleman, that a Mr. Herne, a medium, was on one occasion transported from the middle of a street into the house of another well-known medium, Mrs. Guppy, the doors and windows being closed. The spirits in attendance upon Mrs. Guppy were not, however, to be outdone, and shortly after they conveyed that lady from her own

home to that of Mr. Herne, a mile or two distant, and deposited her upon a table, around which eleven persons were sitting at a dark seance, all the windows and doors being fastened. Mrs. Guppy was only partially dressed, and had a pen in one hand, and an account book in the other, in which the word "onions" was partly written down. These are a few samples of what Spiritualists call the "phenomena of Spiritualism," and which they firmly believe. They are continually telling wonderful tales of what the spirits have done, but they systematically evade all rational tests of the truth of their statements. For self-delusion, wilful deception and superstition, the Spiritualists are without parallel.

THE July number of the *Contemporary Review* contains a communication from Professor Tyndall, in the form of a letter which he had received from a friend, entitled "Prayer for the Sick," and in which a proposal is made to give "quantitative precision" to the action of the supernatural in Nature, by means of statistics. The writer proposes that "one single ward or hospital, under the care of first-rate physicians and surgeons, containing certain numbers of patients afflicted with those diseases which have been best studied, and of which the mortality rates are best known, whether the diseases are those which are treated by medical or by surgical remedies, should be, during a period of not less, say, than three or five years, made the object of special prayer by the whole body of the faithful, and that, at the end of that time, the mortality returns should be compared with the past rates, and also with that of other leading hospitals, similarly well managed, during the same period." We should like to see this experiment tried, but we are afraid the Christians of to-day have not sufficient faith and courage to accept this chance of "demonstrating to the faithless an imperishable record of the real power of prayer," and, at the same time, risk losing another of their cherished superstitions. Independently, however, of the truth or falsity of the belief in a special Providence, the experiment would afford some valuable data for deciding some of the questions raised by psychologists, as to the influence of imagination, hope, faith, and other passions upon the human body. The *Christian World* is inclined to believe that the proposal was made seriously, and that it was not intended, as the *Spectator* asserts, "to poke fun" at religious people "by thinly disguised scoffs at their most profound and intimate faiths." At the same time it holds that the proposal "illustrates most forcibly the extent to which religion has lost influence over certain minds in the present day. No Christian could entertain the proposal, and that for reasons far too many for us to specify. The very idea of subjecting the proceedings of the Infinite God to experiment presents itself as blasphemous irreverence, to any one who has not *habituated* his mind to disbelief in the Divine existence. The express teaching of Christ, both by precept and example, forbids Christians to 'tempt the Lord their God.' In point of fact, the proposal made by Professor Tyndall's friend is substantially identical with that made by Satan to Christ, only that Satan added a Scriptural reason why our Saviour should accede to his suggestion of casting Himself from the pinnacle of the temple. Satan quoted the letter of Scripture correctly; Professor Tyndall's friend might have quoted fifty passages to prove that Christians are to expect and to watch for answers to prayer; but the whole spirit of Scripture is against the suggestion. It was Satanic then, and it is—we speak theologically, and mean no personal insult—Satanic now."

A NEW Madonna has recently appeared on the confines of the Venetian and Trentino territories. She has been arrested by the Carabinieri, with two priests who worshipped her, and who, in order to obtain alms, taught others to adore her. Miraculous accounts were circulated over the adjacent country, and in a single day at least 6,000 people came to Primolano to offer their homage. The Bishop of Verona, however, refuses to recognise this new divinity.

ON THE PROSPECTS AND PROPAGATION
OF FREETHOUGHT.

I DO not know that at any other period the prospects of Freethought were more encouraging than they are at present. Certainly, the number of open and avowed Freethinkers was never so large as it is now. Not only are the lower classes deeply imbued with the spirit of religious scepticism, but even the upper classes have succumbed to its all-pervading influence. The number of books written by really able and talented men against the popular theology, and circulating in the highest ranks of English society, is so alarmingly on the increase that even the Premier himself has been forced to publicly lament it. Take for instance Lumisden Strange's volume on the Bible, or Winwood Reade's "Martyrdom of Man," or the Duke of Somerset's "Christian Theology and Modern Scepticism,"—works which attack Christianity on all points and, in Scriptural phrase, "smite it hip and thigh." The damage these and similar publications are doing to orthodoxy is incalculable. Most of our newspapers and magazines, too, are frequently subject to sceptical moods. Read the theological articles of the *Westminster Review*, and occasional leaders in the *Telegraph*, or even the *Times*, and you will soon get an idea of the progress Freethought is making. The efforts of the Christian Evidence Society, supported as they are by enormous funds, are confessedly ineffectual. Unitarian and Church of England ministers have come forward to defend their faith, but have only succeeded in displaying still more its natural weakness. Several debates between Christian and Freethought advocates have been lately arranged and held, but have only resulted in fresh reinforcements to our ranks. The circulation of the *National Reformer* is constantly on the increase, while the eloquent lectures of Mr. Bradlaugh, the *N. R.*'s Editor, attract larger and more influential audiences than ever.

In all this there is much cause for self congratulation. Yet there is no reason in it for a relaxation of our efforts. We have done much, but much more remains undone. We have set the ball rolling, but it has not yet reached its goal. The position of our party is open to improvement. The number of our lecturers might be very well increased; the circulation of our publications might be still more extended; and our halls and clubs might be advantageously enlarged. While Christianity is taught in grand cathedrals and churches, Freethought should not be confined, as in several cases it is, to small, inconvenient, ill ventilated, and badly situated halls, or what is still worse, exist in a town without a place of meeting at all. Some of our lecturers, though honest and earnest enough, lack that culture the presence of which is so greatly attractive in Christian

preachers. At one or two of our halls the audiences might be considerably increased, and several of our institutes ought to be enabled to pay their way better than they do. All these things, and others of the same character, are deserving of serious attention, and afford ample opportunity for the display of that zeal in the cause which every true Freethinker ought always to feel. United, vigorous action, I do not doubt, will soon put them right.

Every individual, however humble his ability, can aid the cause very effectively if he but possess the desire. It is not absolutely necessary that every sceptic should devote himself to lecturing or writing. There are other ways of serving the cause besides this. A few fitly-spoken words to a friend, for instance, may set a mind enquiring, and, in due time, result in a valuable convert to our views. The loan of a Freethought pamphlet may cause a man to think who never thought before; and the denizens of a whole workshop or warehouse might be won over with a little judicious management. Obtrusiveness or importunity is quite unnecessary. Hundreds would purchase Freethought books, and attend Freethought lectures of themselves, if a few words were but dropped as to the existence of the one and the character of the other. Every Freethinker is able, and ought to be willing, to aid the cause in this manner. Over on the enemy's side all hands are called out, and everyone is made to contribute to the mass of evil; surely, the children of light should be wiser than they.

Nothing great or grand can be accomplished or attained without downright hard, persistent labour. Freethought will never gain a complete ascendancy until its adherents are prepared to perseveringly and unselfishly work in its cause. The price of success is *labour*, and the nature of our duty is to *pay down*. If we would gain the mountain's height, we must first painfully toil up the mountain's side; if we would erect a mansion, we can only do so by slowly piling brick upon brick; and if we would establish the truth, there is but one way in which to do it, and that is to labour for it persistently, energetically, judiciously and disinterestedly.

FRANCIS NEALE.

It is with turnpike roads as with governments: the worse the road, the heavier the tolls; the worse the government, the more oppressive the taxes.—*Southey's Common-place Book*.

A man is a fool if he be enraged with an ill that he cannot remedy, or if he endures one that he can. He must bear the gout, but there is no occasion to let a fly tickle his nose.—*Ibid*.

The knot that binds me by the law of courtesy, pinches me more than that of legal constraint, and I am much more at ease when bound by a scrivener than by myself. Is it not reason that my conscience should be much more engaged when men simply rely upon it? In a bond my faith owes nothing, but it has nothing lent it. Let them trust to the security they have taken without me; I had much rather break the walls of a prison, and the laws themselves, than my own word.—*Montaigne*.

WHERE ARE THE CHRISTIANS?

PEOPLE go about preaching and calling on their neighbours to accept the true faith and become Christian. The mere fact of disinterested persons devoting their time and abilities to such a purpose, would in itself be sufficient justification to the ordinary man of the world for believing that there is, after all, in existence, somewhere, some people who answer in every particular to the description found in the New Testament of what a Christian is.

My experience over the past twenty years leads me to the conclusion that this apparently reasonable supposition is, like many others, void of foundation in fact. My opinion is that there are no Christians: only people who call themselves, for various reasons, by that name, but are no more entitled to it than I am. A Christian should be able to "cast out devils;" but the Christians of to-day don't know the devils, much less do they know how to cast them out. Many of them believe in only one devil, and his name and address it is impossible to obtain with sufficient accuracy to invite him to an evening party. They talk of him and call him the "old gentleman," but really they don't know anything about him of a reliable character. Christians can "drink any deadly thing and it shall not hurt them;" but there are no people to-day who will swallow half a pint of prussic acid to convert an infidel! Instead of this they give him a tract on "Where are you going to?" or some other equally impertinent question.

Christians should be able to "lay hands on the sick" and make them "recover," but to-day people die of consumption and small-pox in the presence of persons who have the impudence to say they are Christians! They are either deceived or deceivers. It is written that "the prayer of faith shall save the sick;" but there is no one alive to-day who can say the prayer. It is true that the people prayed to save the sick Prince of Wales, but they paid the most eminent medical men large sums of money to save him, as though they had not the least reliance on the effect of their prayers. The nation did not give the "prayer of faith" a fair trial in this case. Who were the Christians who prayed for the Earl of Chesterfield about the same time? and why was he allowed to die? In the sight of a just God one man is as good as another if he be as virtuous. The Christians of to-day subscribe to hospitals and medicine men—why do they not pray instead of pay? The answer is simple: they are only Christians in name! Anybody who attempts to act like a true Christian in this matter is now called "peculiar," and gets committed to prison. The fact is, there are no Christians; there are only people who say they are. The Christians who believed in Christ were to do "greater works" than he did. Yet where

are the people who can feed more than five thousand on less than five loaves and two fishes? If we have a million of paupers in this country there would be no necessity for poor rates if we had any Christians amongst us. If they can do "greater works" than Jesus, why can't they feed the million of paupers on five loaves and two fishes? There are no Christians: no body of men and women could refuse to do this if they had the power. *Perfect* Christians would sell all and give to the poor, but no such people exist. If they did sell they would un-Christianize the poor, and the poor would have to sell out and give to some other poor. If everybody sold everything they would work a miracle, because "nobody" can hardly be considered a customer in a Christian sense.

A Christian would "take no thought for his life what he shall eat, drink or wear;" but those who call themselves Christians to-day are members of Life Assurance Societies, Clothing Clubs, and many of them look after the butcher and the baker with as much concern as an "Infidel." They talk about imitating the "lilies of the field," but they look after the potatoes and cabbage with enviable zeal. They say how difficult, nay, how impossible it is, for a rich man to enter heaven, but they risk damnation to their souls with as much equanimity as any Secularist "on 'change."

The fact is, there is a good deal of human nature in man, and adding the name Christian does not alter the fact. The professedly Christian man is one of the most inconsistent animals in creation, and his impudence is equal to his inconsistency. He actually denounces people as infidel for not being what he is not himself! Poor creature: he would send me to hell for not being, like himself, a living proof that there are no Christians on the face of the earth! CHRISTOPHER CHARLES.

LIBERTY AND PATRIOTISM.

WHILE thousands are ready enough to extol Liberty and Patriotism, how few there are who do anything, to promote the one, or to reward the other. To speak in enraptured terms of the first or to applaud the latter may be all very well on the part of those to whom liberty is but a doll, and patriotism an amusement. But, something more than this is needed to secure emancipation, or to promote reform. The warfare against tyranny, ignorance, credulity, prejudice, wrong and imposture, is as perilous as it is arduous and protracted. The contest against the serried ranks of delusion and oppression requires a soldier's stamina, a hero's intrepidity and a martyr's resolution. They who undertake to champion the cause of justice must be prepared to suffer and endure. He who loves not liberty for its own sake should make no pretensions to patriotism; and

those who are not proof against the corruptions of Courts, the seductions of office, the blandishments of those in power, the half-hearted support of friends, the reproaches of kindred, and the obloquy of others should never join the army of Reform, or seek a place in the vanguard of Freedom. Of the Reformer it can rarely be said that either "his ways are ways of pleasantness," or that "his paths are peace;" his never failing heritage is censure, calumny and contumely.

"In the world's broad field of battle,
In the bivouac of life,"

It is more profitable to serve the rulers than the ruled; and to espouse triumphant error, than to advocate unfriended truth. Then let honour be paid to those who, despite the bigot's curse, or the tyrant's power, peril all in the service of the people. Such have been "hung and strung," racked and maimed, robbed and martyred, "their limbs strung to city gates and castle walls, to sodden in the sun," yet the work of redemption still goes on, and the wheels of progress are still in motion. The serf has proclaimed his rights, and the artisan his power. The slaves of the soil are asleep no longer, the masses of the towns are improving. Their brains are thinking, their thoughts are turning, and their efforts tending rightly. Let them learn to thoroughly comprehend their political and social rights, and to discharge aright their public and private duties, and their emancipation will be complete and their triumph secure; liberty will permeate our laws, and patriotism leaven all our legislation.

H. V. MAYER.

Monthly Reports.

BIRMINGHAM.—The Secular Club and Institute here has been opened three years, and has met with a fair measure of success. It is the biggest venture the Secular Society ever made, and it succeeds the best. We have a hall, capable of seating four or five hundred persons, and a club room that will hold about forty. The hall is used on Sundays for lectures and discussions, and during the week for penny readings, dancing and dramatic entertainments. To make this possible we have a good stage, with proscenium, and scenery, which we fitted up at considerable expense. We have an excellent Dramatic Club, composed of members of the Society, who produce an entertainment every few weeks. We have had a lecture or discussion every Sunday since the hall has been opened, by our own lecturing staff, interspersed with courses of lectures from Mr. Bradlaugh, Mr. Watts, Mrs. Law and Dr. Sexton. Our local lecturers are well known away from home, several of them as far as Freethought literature extends. Christopher Charles, David Kirkwood, H. V.

Mayer, G. H. Reddalls, T. Evans, J. Morris, E. Burns, J. Mahony and several casuals forming the staff. A pianoforte is kept in the hall, on which a good musician discourses most excellent music at the beginning and end of every lecture. There is free admission to all the ordinary lectures. The other rooms, four in number, connected with the hall are used as dressing rooms, and for the residence of the hall keeper and family. The club room is used for ordinary club purposes, such as reading, chess, draughts, dominoes, &c. A good little library is here for the use of the members, to which Mr. J. S. Mill presented copies of the whole of his works. It is a properly constituted Working Men's Club, and keeps all kinds of refreshment for the use of its members. No case of excess has ever been known during the three years it has been open. We have had two visits from the Rev. H. Solly, to see how the club worked, and he expressed himself highly pleased with it on both occasions. It is a club established and conducted entirely by working men. We are quite satisfied, from experience, that it is best to keep ale and the like for those members who use it; because when the public-house incentive to drink is taken away, all are found to use it as moderately and harmlessly as tea and coffee. Every new member has to pass the Committee, by being proposed and seconded by existing members. Terms of membership, 8s. per year, 2s. per quarter, 8d. per month, or 2d. per week, payable in advance. T. EVANS.

NOTTINGHAM.—The Secularists in this town have been very active during the Summer. Open-air lectures have been delivered in Sneinton Market-place, on Sunday mornings and evenings, when the weather has been favourable. Besides the open-air meetings, which are still being carried on, the members have a discussion class in the afternoon, at the West End Club House, and meet for short readings, &c., in the evening, after leaving Sneinton Market. There is an excellent library, consisting principally of Freethought works, in connection with this society. At the half-yearly meeting, held during the past month, the following officers were elected:—President, Mr. Stanley; Secretary, Mr. Howes; Corresponding Secretary, Mr. Judge; Treasurer, Mr. G. H. Reddalls, sen.; Librarian, Mr. Gordon; Assistant Librarian, Mr. Wallace; Committee: Messrs. Card, Green, Wakefield, Morley, Dale, Wilson, Stones, and Taylor. The attention of Societies may be directed to the fact that Mr. James Hooper, who conducts the meetings in Sneinton Market-place, is open to engagements to deliver lectures, either open-air or in-doors, on political or theological subjects. J.

Speaking of the sloth, Sydney Smith says: "He moves suspended, sleeps suspended, and, in fact, passes his life in suspense, like a young clergyman distantly related to a Bishop."

BIRMINGHAM Secular Club and Institute, St. George's Hall, Upper Dean Street. The following is the programme of Sunday evening lectures for August:

- Aug. 4, "Representation" Mr. W. Pratt (Walsall)
 " 11, "The doctrine of Hell and eternal torments Scripturally and morally considered" Mr. H. V. Mayer (Dudley)
 " 18, "Secularism: an Exposition and a Defence" Mr. G. H. Reddalls
 " 25, "Robert Burns" Mr. D. Kirkwood

Chair taken at Seven o'clock. Admission free. Discussion invited. Any person desirous of becoming connected with this Club and Institute, must be proposed by an existing member. Names of the applicant and proposer to be given to the Secretary, previous to or at the close of the lectures. Subscription 2s. per annum: paid weekly, monthly, or quarterly, in advance.—ERNEST BRUNS, Secretary.

BRISTOL Secular Society, St. George's Hall, Castle Green Rooms, Castle Green. The following is the programme of Sunday evening Lectures for the month:—

- Aug. 4, "Has man an Immortal soul" Mr. Lucas
 " 11, "Prophecy a Delusion" Anonymous
 " 18, "The Book of Joshua" Mr. Bishop
 " 25, "Is Christianity a Religion of Love" Mr. J. D.
 Sep. 1, "The Development of Nervous Structure," illustrated by diagrams Mr. Young

Chair to be taken at Seven o'clock. Admittance free to all the above. Christians invited.

Lectures and Discussions every Sunday afternoon, at three o'clock, on Brandon Hill.

GLASGOW ASSOCIATION OF ECLECTICS.

INSTITUTED 1852.

DEFINITION.—By the term Eclectic is meant one who selects his political principles and moral sentiments. An Eclectic proves before he maintains, and judges before he believes.

CONSTITUTION.—Any individual, of any sect, denomination, or party, if Eclectic in spirit, may join this Association, whose members are banded together for useful, moral, and intelligible purposes; among others especially these following:—

OBJECTS.—To illustrate, on a broad and generous plan, the well known maxim, that knowledge is power. To encourage all in their search for wisdom, believing, as every Eclectic must do, that truth will set men free; that the volume of nature is open to all; and that none should fear either to read or judge it. To protest against the injurious connection between pure morality and dogmatic theology, so that the principles of ethics may no longer be confounded with the principles of religion, or any one class be forced to support the creed of another. To promote every wise educational, political, social, or industrial arrangement, no matter by what sect, party, or individual such arrangement may be proposed. To neglect no opportunity for self-improvement, enlightening the ignorant, strengthening the feeble-minded, or reclaiming the vicious, by unsectarian lectures, unbogged controversies, and such other legitimate means as are available.

Hall, 81, Wilson Street.—J. McClusky, Janitor and Librarian. Members and friends meet every Sunday, at 11:30 a.m. and 6:30 p.m., for Readings, Lectures and Discussions. Supported by members' subscriptions and voluntary contributions. Those anxious to assist the cause, may do so either by joining the Association or by forwarding contributions to the Secretary, which will be thankfully received and duly acknowledged. Library free to members and subscribers.—JOHN CAMERON, Secretary, 11, George Street, Glasgow.

GLASGOW Branch of the National Secular Society meet in the Democratic Hall, Neilson Street (City), first Sunday of every month.—D. Kilby, Secretary, 82, Caledonia Road.

LEICESTER Secular Club and Institute, 43, Humberstone Gate, meet every Sunday evening, at 6:30 p.m., for public Lecture, Reading, or Discussion.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE Secular Society meet at Weaver's Tower, New Bridge Street, on Sunday evenings at seven o'clock. Monthly meeting on the first Sunday of each month at 2 p.m.—G. A. Dougall, Pottery Lane, Forth Banks.

NORTHAMPTON Secular Society. Open-air Lectures are delivered every Sunday, in the Cow Meadow, by Mr. Geo. Bishop, late of London. An opportunity for discussion is afforded. A good choir is in attendance, under the direction of Mr. Driver.

NOTTINGHAM Secular Society, West End Club House, Parliament Street. Open-air Lectures are delivered on Sunday mornings and evenings during the summer months, in Sneinton Market Place, weather permitting. The Librarian attends at the Society's rooms on Sunday evenings, at 8 p.m., to change books, &c.

OLDBURY Secular Society, Freethought Temperance Hall, Portway Road, meet every Sunday evening at 6:45 p.m., for Lecture or Discussion.

SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE and East Worcestershire Secular Union. This society holds its meetings on the first Sunday in every month, at Mr. G. Perry's, Portway Inn, Portway Road, Wednesbury. Chair taken at 6:30 p.m. Terms of subscription, 5s. per month and upwards. Secretary, Mr. H. V. Mayer, 3, Wolverhampton Street, Dudley, to whom all communications may be addressed. On Sunday, August 4, a tea party will be held, to commemorate the anniversary of the society. Tickets 9d. each. Tea on the table at 5 p.m. Addresses will most likely be delivered by Messrs. Christopher Charles, David Kirkwood and G. H. Reddalls of Birmingham; and by Messrs. A. Holland and H. V. Mayer. A Testimonial to the latter gentleman, for his services to the society and the cause has been proposed. Distant friends desirous of contributing to the same, may do so by sending their subscriptions to the Treasurer, Mr. T. Battison, 5, Union Street, Wednesday.

STOCKTON-ON-TEES Secular Society, Temperance Lodge Room, Tennant Street, meetings every Sunday evening at six o'clock, for Lectures, Readings, Discussions, &c.—G. T. Forster, Hon. Sec., 6, John Street.

BIRMINGHAM. J. Morris, Coal and Coke Merchant, 154, Inkerman Street, Vauxhall, solicits the patronage of his friends and the public in general. Present prices: Best Deep Coal, 18s 6d; Shallow Coal, 17s 6d; Deep Cobbles, 16s 6d; Shallow Cobbles, 15s 6d; Kibbles, 13s 6d; Slack, 9s 6d to 12s 6d per ton. Delivered, 2½ per cent. for cash within one month. Goods removed and jobbing work done.

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