

Jesus of Nazareth.

In giving the time of the birth of Jesus, and the account of Herod causing all the little children to be killed on account of him, there is a marked discrepancy. Luke says he was born in the time of Cyrenius, when Augustus Cæsar made the order that all the people should be taxed. Now Cyrenius succeeded Archelaus, who reigned 10 years after the death of Herod. Here is a contradiction that cannot be explained away. The almost exact day of Herod's death is known as shown by Josephus, who says on the night preceding the death of Herod there was an eclipse of the moon. In calculating to the time of this eclipse, it is found to have occurred on the 4th of March, 4 years before Christ, another perplexing discrepancy.

Matthew says Christ was born in the days of Herod, and John says it was in the days of Cyrenius, 14 years afterward. Again; Mark and Luke say Jesus began to be 30 years of age in the 15th year of the reign of Tiberius. Now, the very day of Tiberius' accession is known, and by counting back, we find Jesus must have been born 4 years before the Christian era, and disagreeing entirely with the statement of Mathew, a bad presentment, indeed for divine historians. Can both of these statements be true? Is not such history very unreliable and incredible? Is it not an uncertain foundation upon which to base the salvation and eternal happiness of the world? In view of all the difficulties and discrepancies of the story, it can be appreciated why the learned Mosheim, an eminent Christian writer, should declare that "the Apostolic history is loaded with doubts, fables, and difficulties," and that the numerous pretended histories which were current in the early centuries, were filled with "pious frauds and fabulous wonders." H. D. BURROWS.

Marriages and Funerals.

The article on marriages and funerals of last week suggests the need of notaries public being authorized to "solemnize" (?) no, perform marriage ceremonies. Notaries are usually persons of fair intelligence, ergo, not very religious and usually have an eye out for business. And they are as liable to be around handy as preachers. Notaries don't depend on the preachers for their positions nor continuance therein. Being appointed by the governor, it is a matter of business only. There being no politics, or religion in it, no "pull" is required; only reasonable business capacity. Hence they are very suitable to do the marrying business as well as to make deeds, mortgages etc.

As to the funerals, Freethinkers by providing a little ahead for such events, may often cheat the preacher out of a pleasure he fre-

quently enjoys, viz., that of lying about a person to their face when they can't talk back. And the conditions and surroundings are such that the dead person's friends cannot well defend him either. I have seen very much of this.

I have my funeral prepared for in this respect, if only a suitable person is called to execute it.

F. S. MATTESON.

From Vale.

VALE, OR., Dec. 14, E. M. 296.—To the Editor: Thinking that a letter from this part of the country would be welcome, I thought I would try and write one.

At a recent election of the M. C. S. U., the following officers were elected: M. Johnson, president; R. O. Wicklund, vice-president; Edwin Johnson, secretary; Chas. Gunder-son, treasurer, and Lillian Johnson, librarian.

Times are very hard here at present, and it is very hard to do anything financially, but we will try to keep our Union together and do what we can and perhaps times will brighten up after a while.

As the members of the union are living somewhat scattered, we can not meet as often as we would like to, but we have arranged to have our regular union meetings in the evenings of the first and third Saturday of each month. We have also organized a Secular Sunday school to meet at 10 o'clock on the second and fourth Sundays of each month. Our Sunday school has met twice, and the members are all well pleased with it, and very much in earnest; but of course we are all unexperienced and any information or advice regarding the conducting of it would be gratefully received.

Everybody that sees the TORCH seems well pleased with it, and as for myself, I was agreeably surprised to see a paper of that size and price, and think the contents are all that could be wished, and you may be sure that every word is read and appreciated here.

That the TORCH OF REASON may live long and that its light may help to dispel the myths of superstition is the wish of the M. C. S. U. Yours for truth and justice.

J. E. JOHNSON.

Sec'y. M. C. S. U.

The Whale Again.

Anew the old question is being vigorously asked. "Was Jonah swallowed by a whale?" Last week at the revival meetings in New York the question was revived. There never were so many Nantucket fishermen after one whale as there has been rationalists flinging harpoons at this Mediterranean sea-monster; and from that one whale they have got enough oil to light ten thousand souls to perdition. A sceptic tells you that Jonah would have been

killed in the process of the swallowing and that he could not, anyhow, have lived three days in such close quarters, but would have been smothered by poor ventilation. Now the good Christians immediately go to work, and try to explain the whole thing by natural laws, so as to please the Rationalists, and say that the whale is an air breathing fish; that every little while it comes to the surface; and that the whale that swallowed Jonah did the same thing, and thus got a supply for itself and the prophet. Why not rather say that God can do anything—and he could take Jonah through the whale's throat, although the whale's throat would not have been half large enough, ordinarily to let him pass, and could have kept him alive in the whale five years without any air, if he had chosen to. Who made this whale? God. Who made Jonah? God. Then he could do anything he pleased with either of them.

The above is from T. DeWitt Talmage's own pen and it is surprising what little sense a man of his standing and natural ability, exhibits when it comes to the religious question. Ten thousand souls to perdition indeed; doesn't he know that the old idea of perdition has been exploded long ago? Yes, the poor victims are trying to be christians and still retain a little common sense. There is hope; people are beginning to use their reason a little.

"Why not rather say that God can do anything?" If there is a God that can do anything, it does not prove that he did cause the whale to swallow Jonah. It does not prove that this is not just an old myth and we believe that Mr. T. knows that he is trying to deceive the people. "Who made this Whale? God." Do you think that a real honest man would tell such a thing as a fact? Now DeWittie you don't know these things, do you? Ain't you just trying to fool us poor ignorant Nantucket fishermen?

Pay Your Dues!

At the 7th, annual convention of the Oregon State Secular Union, at Portland Oregon Sept. 20, 21, and 22, 1895, the by-laws were amended to read as follows: "All contributing members of Secular churches are by that membership constituted members of the O. S. S. U. All persons not members of Secular churches can become members of the O. S. S. U. upon payment of 50 cents a year in advance, beginning with January 1st, 1896."

By this it will be seen that we have over a thousand members of the Oregon State Secular Union who owe dues amounting to fifty cents each, which if paid, would enable us to pay for our printing out-

fit, and purchase much needed stock and material. Fifty cents is not much, but if a thousand persons would pay that much apiece it would place the Oregon State Secular Union in a position to do a great deal of good and it will not work a hardship on anyone.

An organization worth belonging to is entitled to financial support. Please think this over and send your dues to Josiah Kemp, Sec'y. Room 10, Cambridge Bl'k. Portland Oregon, and he will send you a certificate of membership.

Your's Truly,

P. W. GEER, President.

Secular News.

Our business manager was in Salem this week.

Do not forget that the Liberal University opens January 6th.

Miss Olds and our printer Mr. Coolidge will visit their homes at McMinnville Christmas.

As our work begins to prosper there are many false statements made about us. Don't believe everything you hear, but investigate for yourself.

Prof. Charles H. Chapman, president of the University of Oregon, will deliver a lecture on education at Liberal Hall sometime during the month of January.

Our devil, Mr. Frank Forward, is visiting friends in Salem and vicinity this week. Come back devil we can't run an infidel paper very long without your help.

A reverend divine visited our Sunday school last Sunday and he was so favorably impressed with our work that he immediately commenced telling falsehoods about us.

On account of much work we will not be able to get the new quarterlies out on time, but Sunday schools will be supplied with lesson leaves until the quarterlies are ready.

Mrs Hosmer's work in the public school closes to day. She has been paid the highest compliment a teacher can receive and that is the offer of her position next term, but we can not get along without her work in the University.

The revivalist sang a very touching little song in closing his Christian exercises at the "Camel" church last Saturday evening. The song will long be treasured in the hearts of the people of this place. It was entitled; "Puppa, Iz'e Lootin out for oo."

These are very busy times in Silver-ton. Christmas entertainments,—presents for children,—TORCH OF REASON,—Little Candle,—Desks, partitions, black-boards, book-case etc., for the University. Everybody is anxious to do their part however and many hands make light work.

We received a very encouraging letter from Mr. B. F. Underwood this week, and although some of us have not had the pleasure of meeting him, we are sure that he is our friend and hope to live to hear his voice and grasp his hand. Mr. Underwood will be a regular contributor to the TORCH OF REASON.

It seems to be a disgrace for an infidel to die, but some people enjoy abusing dead men so much that it would be a shame to deprive them of the privilege. Go on beloved brethren. Don't bother to find out the facts in the case but just tell anything that happens to come into your brains. "The dead know not anything" (Ecles 9:5) and so you are safe and "being crafty" you can catch many people "with guile." [Cor. 12:16.]