

THE FREETHINKER.

REGISTERED FOR

EDITED BY G. W. FOOTE.

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]

THE ATHEISTIC PULPIT.—SERMON III.

“The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.”—Psalm xiv., 1.

THESE words, so it is said, were uttered by the notorious king of Israel, St. David. He was no worse, perhaps, than kings are in general. His moral character was such that nothing he said could be relied upon; his intelligence was far less than that of our Germano-English George III.; his rudeness is hinted at in the text. There is, however, some excuse for David:—He lived in a distant age, in a land more than half barbaric, and with no better tutor and guide than Jehovah, the “obscene and jealous dread of” Israel’s sons. But Christians of to-day ought to be above quoting David’s rudest explosions of temper and prejudice against their opponents. But they are not.

It is often held that Atheists are a very modern section, set, or class of persons. The text, however, shows that they existed as long ago, at least, as the time of David; and it may be of interest to speculate as to the cause of Atheism at that early age. No one can suppose that the spread of popular education, or any vast advances in science, at that date, could lead to Atheism; for such were then not known. No doubt a philosopher here and there, by his unaided genius, rose to the sublime light of Atheistic thought; but most such dared not utter their sentiments. Thinkers, as a rule, do not rush to martyrdom.

Had such a compliment as this of the text been found in Egyptian or Hindu literature, no reason could be assigned for concluding that it was not purely intellectual. But Judea was not an intellectual region. Faith and superstition grew there rank enough; but the Jews were never intellectual until they emigrated.

Rejecting this hypothesis, then, that the unknown despiser of gods in David’s day was led to his position by purely intellectual processes, we adopt the conclusion that moral and political influences made an Atheist.

I. Had Theists always, or even generally, been good men, and just and true, no merely moral or political Atheists would have been possible until science had sufficiently advanced to explode and dissipate the Theistic superstition. But most of them have been bad and unjust and false. Hence the merely moral Atheist. No doubt this so-called “fool” had watched the career of David and the priests:—He knew of Eli and his sons; of Samuel’s “hewing Agag to pieces before the Lord,” in sacrifice, no doubt; of David’s usurpation of Saul’s throne, and the trickery of Samuel going to anoint him under pretence of visiting Bethlehem for sacrifice; he knew of David’s shameful amors; possibly had had his own daughter or wife, or sweetheart, dragged off to the king’s seraglio; had heard of the Bathsheba-Uriah seduction and murder, and many other deeds of the Lord’s anointed, such as the Holy Ghost has not seen fit to record for our disgust.

He was quite aware, too, that priests and prophets were hand-in-glove with the king; and that they and their religion were the main support of his tyranny. “These priests,” he doubtless reflected, “pretend to know God, to be his chosen servants, to understand his will, to fear him, and to regard him as just, merciful, and an enemy of wrongdoers. Yet they support the king’s evil deeds, and say that God is pleased with him, and that he calls him the ‘man after his own heart.’ Tut! tut! There is no God! I am no scholar; I know little; but my best and noblest instincts tell me that a God would be good, would do good and not evil; that he would be no friend of the worst of villains; that he would scout such a wretch as our king and role him and his throne in the dust! That is just what my common-sense tells me! The priests and prophets speak by inspira-

tion of God! Holy Moses! No honest God would be seen in their company. And then—do they not wilfully deceive the people in his name by pretending to have revelations from him? If they want a new temple, or new veil, or new altar, lo, there is a revelation! A new suit of clothes, the deity intimates in a dream that they are to have it; a special gala, behold, God inspires a proclamation for the shepherds, herdsmen, farmers, etc., to contribute of the very best of their property, generally with a promise of rich harvests and numerous beeves and flocks in return! Pshaw! If the king wants a new mistress, the prophets and priests oblige him with a revelation or oracular utterance to consecrate the infamy! What God would stand this? If he knew that all these atrocities and worse were committed in his name, he would expose the whole trick, unless he is as bad as they, and worse. What! when David murdered the seven sons of Saul, he did it by revelation, and, to appease the people, hung them up, in time of famine, before God, and God, said the priests, was ‘pacified!’ Oh, no doubt, no doubt! The God of these villains is but their own brutal self-interest, which is ever ‘pacified’ by the destruction of those who justly oppose them. I say again, there is no God.”

II. And I agree with him. 1. By this I mean that no such being or beings as Theists profess to worship—excepting visible and tangible idols, fetishes, etc.—exist. 2. Science knows nothing of such. 3. Science definitely points to the conclusion that no being of the sort is possible. 4. If a good and great God had existed, he would never have had such contemptible and wicked servants and “friends.” 5. If such existed, he would expose the sham of present-day Christianity, and introduce truth and justice to supersede the falsehood and the tyranny of religion. This is not done; therefore, if any God exists, he must be as contemptible as the worst of his worshippers.

J. SYMES

DOLET, THE FREETHOUGHT MARTYR.*

RELIGION has had its martyrs, and so has Freethought. The path of progress has been drenched with blood and tears, and a world darkened by theology has been lightened by the fires of the stake. From Socrates drinking the poison cup to the latest object of orthodox hate, history bears a long record of noble men and women who have died or suffered for humanity and truth.

Nothing, says Lecky, should impair the reverence with which we bow before the martyr’s tomb. But there are martyrs and martyrs. The early Christians courted death at the hands of power; their eagerness to be immolated outstripped the cruelty of their persecutors. They were ready to perish miserably here in order to wear an imperishable crown of glory hereafter. They wished to make an infinitely profitable exchange, giving a few moments’ pain for eternal bliss. They died not to save others but to save themselves, not for unfriended Truth but for a Deity with power to bestow matchless rewards. There is no martyrdom in that. But when a man who has no assurance of another life, and perhaps no belief in it, risks reputation, fortune, friendship, and life itself, in the pursuit and propagation of Truth; and rather than belie his conscience or stultify his manhood, dies a bitter death, and lays his *all* on the altar of man’s highest hopes; then indeed there is a martyrdom at once pathetic and sublime.

Etienne Dolet, one of the martyrs of Freethought during

* Etienne Dolet, the Martyr of the Renaissance: A Biography. By R. C. Christie. Macmillan & Co.



the Renaissance, was hanged and burnt at Lyons in the year 1546, on his thirty-seventh birthday (August 3rd). The Church gave him the martyr's crown as a birthday present, and that was the only noble gift it could confer.

Several works have been written on Dolet in French, but nothing had appeared in English until Mr. Christie published this monumental Biography, which shows, like Mr. Pollok's *Spinoza*, that we, as well as the Germans, can produce the finest fruits of profound and careful scholarship. Mr. Christie has devoted the leisure of eight years to his work, and as he can never expect any other payment for it, he should at least receive our heartiest gratitude. He has conferred an inestimable boon on all earnest students of literature, as well as on those who treasure the memories of the heroes and martyrs of progress. While highly impartial, he has performed his task as a labor of love, and done justice to one whom M. Boulmier has called "the Christ of Freethought."

Mr. Christie's research has been wide and patient, and he has collected a vast quantity of interesting matter from obscure sources. Yet we are surprised to find that he makes no reference to the bibliophile Jacob's lengthy introduction to the works of Bonaventure Des Periers, in which there are several passages referring to Dolet, and many curious notes on the literary struggles of his time. Has it escaped Mr. Christie's notice, or does he think it useless? We can hardly conceive the latter, for Jacob (Paul Lacroix) is certainly an authority on the history of French literature, if on nothing else.

Although he is Chancellor of the Diocese of Manchester, Mr. Christie praises Rabelais and Voltaire and the French Revolution with charming frankness. He writes of Voltaire as "the father of the Revolution in at least one, and that not the least beneficial of its aspects." And of the arch-heretic and the jolly Cu.é of Meulon he writes: "Intense love of the human race, intense desire for its social and intellectual progress, intense hatred of hypocrisy, bigotry, superstition and ignorance, is to be found in both." Further on, in a footnote, he says:—

"Great as was the genius, many as were the virtues of Bossuet, I prefer the Christianity (or non-Christianity) of Voltaire to that of the Eagle of Meaux, nor can I forget that his beak and claws displayed themselves not only in the flights of his pulpit oratory or in his admirable denunciations of the variations of the Protestant Churches, but in the active persecution of Fénelon, and in the warm approval which he gave to the revocation of the Edict of Nantes and the dragonnades of Languedoc."

And he describes Rabelais as "that great man, from whom a word of praise is itself sufficient to confer an immortality." It is very pleasant to find a serious and sober scholar, like Mr. Christie, confessing himself a "disciple of the divine Pantagruel." He is worthy to be a member of the Rabelais Club, and to consort with the choice spirits who compose it. He sees the splendid wisdom and humanity beneath the Master's buffoonery, and understands the meaning of Victor Hugo's great word about "irony incarnate for the salvation of mankind."

With regard to the Renaissance, Mr. Christie notices the sneer that it gave birth to nothing, and refutes it:—

"Surely this is not so. The Renaissance gave birth to mental freedom. It taught the true mode of looking at things and opinions. It revived the classical as opposed to the mediæval method of thought. It examined things as they are, and opinions according to their absolute truth or falsehood, and not according as they are in accord or discord with authority and orthodoxy. It appealed *ab auctoritate ad rem*; and a system which was the parent of Erasmus and Rabelais, and a more remote ancestor of Molière and Voltaire, cannot be called unfruitful or unworthy of attention, whatever be the value at which we appraise its fruits."

Mr. Christie then notices the hostility of the chief spirits of the Renaissance to Christianity, and says the fault was not theirs:—

"To each of them Religion, Christianity, the Catholic Church represented, as it could not but represent, all that was odious, all that was opposed to freedom of thought, to freedom of action, all that in one aspect (the religious) was cruel and brutal, in another (the mundane) all that was degrading and immoral."

Even Bossuet, says Mr. Christie, "had no word of sympathy, apparently no thought, for the wretched and oppressed millions; in fact, as Vinet has remarked, 'during all that triumphal era the people escape our search.' For them, at least, the Church had no message."

Such is the spirit in which Mr. Christie writes. Having recognised it, and given him thanks and praise for the

result of his labors, we shall proceed to draw from it, for our readers, a brief narrative of Dolet's career, his struggles, his successes, his misfortunes, and his death.

G. W. FOOTE.

IS CHRISTIANITY PLAYED OUT?

CHRISTIANITY played out! What nonsense! Look at its missions, its churches and chapels, its array of priests, ministers, and street-corner preachers, with their devout and devoted followers. What better evidence of vitality could one have than the strife that rages between its rampant sects? Christianity is the greatest fact of the world's history; and the wilfully blind individual who asserts that the religion against which Porphyry, Celsus, and Julian contended in vain, is effete and unable to overcome all its enemies, deserves execration here and will receive execution hereafter.

But soft awhile! So many and various are the statements of Christian doctrine by its professors that the outsider may surely be allowed to ask for a definition. What is meant by Christianity? In an historic enquiry as to whether Christianity has had its day and is passing away, for that is the most unfrivolous purport of our question, it is obvious it will not do to accept as Christianity all choosing to call itself by that name. We must have something distinctive. We cannot, for instance, allow leading a moral life to be Christianity; for in that case many heathens who have never heard of Christ would be Christians. The average Protestant evangelical, who blusters about Christianity being the friend of progress, civilisation, and what not, will probably define Christianity as a following of the life and teachings of Christ. This, again, will not do. Apart from the difficulty of getting at the genuine doctrine of Jesus, as distinguished from the errors, exaggerations, and mis-statements of his reporters; and the additional difficulty of the totally different ideas of Christ and Christianity exhibited in the earliest Christian writings, those for instance of Paul and those attributed to Matthew and John; there is no possibility of tracing in history the genuine doctrine of Jesus, even if that could be arrived at. For historic purposes Christianity must be considered as those distinctive beliefs which have come down the ages embodied in the Christian Church.

We have felt it necessary, in consequence of the pretensions of an entirely new firm trading under the old name, to premise that we mean by Christianity what the world has meant by it for the past eighteen hundred years,—a supernaturally established system of dogmas intended to save men from suffering after they are dead. This scheme of salvation includes the belief in a Trinity, in man's inheriting sin through Adam, in God having become incarnate in Jesus, who was prophesied as the Jewish Messiah, wrought miracles, was crucified by the Jews as a substitute for human sin, resurrected and went up through the clouds: whence he will come to judge the quick and the dead; belief in all which will bring eternal happiness to the elect, while the rest will go to everlasting punishment. With the new firm trading under the old name, of which the late Dean Stanley was an amiable specimen, we have no present concern, except to adduce its appearance in confirmation of our contention that the old and genuine article is played out. In studying the history of the decline of religious beliefs two phases may always be observed. At first the priests stoutly defend the dogmas and practices which the world is outgrowing, and finally, when well outgrown, they declare they form no part of the original faith. The fact that we have reached the second phase, when the original faith is usually confined to what the pious old Scotchman called "the mere cauld morality of the Sermon on the Mount," renders our preliminary definition necessary.

Religions, as Heine said, die of but one disease, that of being found out. In the accelerated march of humanity a larger and larger quantity of superstitious *impedimenta* gets left behind. The place that Christian doctrines will hold in the mind of coming generations is best measured by their estimation by the thinkers of this. With one notable exception the Christian Church cannot boast an intellect even of the second order, and John Henry Newman is to-day a cardinal only because his penetrating mind saw no logical halting-place between Catholicism and the rejection of all theological dogmas. The late Earl Beaconsfield, whose freethinking opinions have been so interestingly exposed by

the Marquis of Queensbury, makes one of the characters in his last novel, *Endymion*, say, "Sensible men are all of the same religion."—"And pray what is that?" enquired the prince. "Sensible men never tell." This, like many of the same author's brilliant sayings, is a plagiarism. The epigram here recorded was uttered by Lord Chesterfield. It expresses a deal of truth. Educated men are agreed in the main as to the worth and weight of Christian dogmas; only some, a very few, of them tell out plainly what they think. But the Christian creed is of that nature that if really believed it must evidence itself in the life. By their fruits ye shall know them. And what class in Europe, save a few ignorant peasants, really show in their lives that they believe in Christianity?

The creed of the aristocratic set of idlers that calls itself "Society," would seem, since the days of the Second Empire at least, to be, "There is but one goddess, *Fashion*, and one prophet, *Worth* (the tailor)." Feminine deities have usually been the worst, and this one is worshipped nightly with most questionable rites. So truly sincere, however, are her devotees that wives and daughters are constantly self-immolated or ruthlessly sacrificed at her shrine. As regards any other God, unless with a few it be Power they worship, the lives of the upper scum go to prove them practical Atheists. To the large crowd of respectabilities that strive to follow in the wake of "Society," Position serves as God and Push as Gospel. The aims of the true nobility (who are far enough removed from the nobs) are quite other than the save-your-own-soul-alive-oh creed of Christianity. They have a new ideal and a new gospel. Their aims are human, not divine; and they seek to divert the wealth and energies that have been wasted in striving to grasp another world to the practical amelioration of this. And their influence is being felt. Faith is no longer the standard of virtue. Few now consider it enough to allege God's word for any institution. The Sabbath, for instance, is defended on the ground of its human utility and not because "God rested on the seventh day and hallowed it." It is seen that if a coach and-six can be driven through any Acts of Parliament, whole sects can ride roughshod over any Biblical text. The old words may be indeed retained, but they no longer have the old significance nor the old influence on the life. We have no Christianity, but a Sunday playing at pretending to be Christians. The endeavors of all religionists to reconcile their beliefs with science sufficiently shows who is victor. Scientific men do not stoop to try and reconcile their conclusions with Christianity. They rest on their own evidence and need no anathemas to protect them. Creeds, from having been convictions, are becoming curiosities, and, among the cultured, are relegated duly labelled to their places in the department of extinct mythologies in the great museum of human history.

On the Continent, Christianity is perceptibly fading. The visible head of the great Christian Church only exercises his spiritual authority by resigning temporal power, just as among many Freethinkers the heavenly Pope remains untouched in his celestial Vatican only on condition of never meddling with earthly affairs. There the churches are left to the women and the weak in intellect. Everywhere it is gradually coming to be thought that the brand of intellectual inferiority, as Colonel Ingersoll says, is stamped on the believers in orthodoxy. They have the choice of being considered dull or dishonest. The best intelligence in France and Germany is not only not in harmony with Christianity but in direct opposition to it, or subtly undermining while ignoring it. Unbelief is rampant in all classes. Here we have nominal Christians, but no Christianity save a few shreds, left with the Peculiar People, the Millennium maniacs, the Salvation Army, the Hallelujah Lassies, Showman Charlie, and the editor of the *Armagedon Almanack*. We have a High Church, whose virtue lies in vestments, trying to galvanise the corpse by furnishing it up with ecclesiastical machinery. An evangelical Low Church, built on particular texts of Scripture, canting their little bit of a lopsided Christianity in most pharisaic fashion, and a Broad Church trying to palm off new wine in the old theological bottles. A change has come over all the sects. The road to the celestial regions has widened, and the temperature of the infernal ones decreased. Satan is superannuated. His long forked tail is atrophied into the mere semblance of an anthropoid *os coccyæ*. The Revised Version cannot revive "the evil one." The stern old Jehovah seems to have retired in favor of his son and partner, Jesus, whose virginal disposition is

more in accordance with the mildness of the age. The claims of Jesus are no longer based on his sovereignty as God, but on his sweet reasonableness as a man. The third partner in the triune theological company, though represented fluttering about vaguely in pigeon form on church windows, is so seldom heard of that he is supposed, like the archangels and cherubim, to be on the moult. In short, Brimstone has departed, and Treacle and Water reigns in its stead.

The real old genuine Christianity is as played out as the belief in Osiris, witchcraft, or Bonaparte. Its miraculous narratives are discredited, its petrified dogmas denied, its ascetic morality disregarded as impracticable, and its sanctions as inefficacious. The oriental trumpery of its heaven has lost its blandishments on the active western mind, and the horrors of its hell are heard of with laughter instead of terror. It is not only assailed, but explained. Christianity is seen to be but one of a number of religions that have in succession garnered up the thoughts and aspirations of various races of men. The undateable collection of documents upon which it is founded are known to be neither the oldest, the widest believed, nor the best of the sacred books of the world. The tawdry trappings of its church cannot hide the rottenness behind. Its dark crypts, foul with the dust and cobwebs of ages, will not bear to be seen in the electric light of science. Ichabod is emblazoned on its portals. Its columns totter at the breath of criticism, and the dead cold ashes on its altar proclaim that the presence of the Highest is no longer there. It has served its purpose, and is passing away.

There is something touching in this dying of an old faith. Its ghastly attempts at revivalism may provoke more ridicule than sympathy. Yet we cannot forget that this decrepit frame once lived and flourished, and, let us own it cheerfully, did some good work in its day. A deeper pathos lies in the fact that still among the myriads of adherents who profess homage with their lips to the departing religion, but whose minds are far from it, there are some few who have given it their whole hearts and to whom its departure will seem as a personal bereavement, yea, as the extinction of the light of their lives. With these we have all sympathy. They cling to Christianity because unaware of hope and consolation elsewhere. To them, Freethinkers must show they hold a nobler faith that pretends not to finality, a higher hope that rests not in self-salvation, a wider charity that damns no unbelievers. Religions perish, Gods come and go, but Humanity abides, ever extending its power over nature, ever seeking new solutions of the old, old problems of its mysterious life.

LAON.

ACID DROPS.

The *Christian Globe* is very much distressed by the Sabbath-breaking of this age. It complains that Christians actually cook on Sunday, while "the distinctions which once obtained universal sway in pious homes with regard to religious reading are less strictly observed than of old. Sunday newspapers, such as *Lloyd's*, the *Dispatch*, *Weekly Times*, and *Reynolds's*, are now taken and diligently read in houses where, twenty years ago, all secular newspapers were carefully laid aside on Saturday nights." After some more wailing, the question is asked, "How do watching angels regard it, as they bend from the invisible battlements of heaven?" What a funny question! Just imagine the angel Gabriel looking down anxiously on a Sunday morning to see whether a Radical shoemaker is reading the *Christian Globe* or the *Referee*! If that is the kind of work we shall be put to in heaven, we should certainly prefer going to the other place.

GLASGOW, like Newcastle, is a "canny" city, but there are a good many lunatics at large amongst its half-a-million inhabitants. The editor of the *Christian Herald* has recently delivered "prophetic lectures" in St. Andrew's Hall to "immense audiences."

LAST Sunday the chief of the howling maniacs in Plymouth, known as the Salvation Army, denounced the "beastly infidel" who was lecturing in St. James's Hall. It was, perhaps, in consequence of this that Mr. Foote's evening audience was exceptionally large.

AT the close of the afternoon lecture a silly-looking man ascended the platform to offer opposition. His first move was to drop on his knees before a chair, holding his Bible aloft with one hand. Then, with a vacuous smile, he said, "Let us have a little prayer." Some of the audience laughed loudly, others were dumb with surprise, a few shouted "get up," and one profane person cried out, "spare your breeches!" Mr. Hawkins, the chairman, who is a very jocose gentleman, advanced to the kneeling figure and convulsed the audience with laughter by saying, with a roguish twinkle of the eyes, "Come, now, you've only ten minutes, and you might have done that before you came up." The poor stupid then stood upright, an attitude to which he was apparently unaccustomed, and, after mauling for a few minutes, was peremptorily ordered to finish by the audience, who would stand no more of his idiocy. It is a wonder that the Lord doesn't send more competent champions to fight the infidels.

A PIOUS contemporary says that "a drunken infidel" has been converted somewhere out in America. His downward course began thus: He went off on the spree with two friends, and lost a situation worth three hundred a year. After this, "he sank lower in the ways of dissipation, and, becoming connected with a society of infidels, he denied the existence of God." The road to Freethought lies through the dram-shop, as everybody knows. Every member of a Freethought society is obliged to get drunk three times a week, and the committee have to double this performance. The president is elected because he is the biggest toper of all; he is bound to be drunk seven days in the week, and is instantly deposed if he is ever found sober. Our intimate acquaintance with "infidels" enables us to state this as a positive fact, and we defy contradiction.

AFTER President Garfield had been lying on his sick bed for two months unprayed for, the doctors had him removed to a healthier place, and directly there was a slight improvement in his condition the religious folk began to pray wholesale for his recovery. They now say it's all owing to prayer.

WHILE the great Mr. Müller is evangelising on the continent, typhoid fever has broken out in his Orphanage at Bristol. Sixty girls are affected, some of the cases being of a serious character. The cause is contaminated water. No doubt Mr. Müller will say, "An enemy hath done this." The Devil must have poisoned that water, in order to bring the great man home from the work of saving souls abroad.

WHAT does Butcher Varley think now? When a similar outbreak occurred at the Müller Orphanage some years ago, Mr. Bradlaugh said it was owing to bad drainage. This statement is stigmatised in Varley's pamphlet as a libel and a lie. Mr. Bradlaugh triumphs again, and Butcher Varley may hide his ignominious head. Blush he cannot. If he could, his face would always be crimson.

WRITING to the *Bristol Times*, a member of the Young Men's Christian Association says that in their reading room *Punch* is always well-read, while the religious publications frequently remain uncut.

A BERKSHIRE farmer complains of the carelessness of a curate down there, who made a mistake, and instead of praying for fine weather read the appointed prayer for rain. The farmer adds, "Most unfortunately for us his prayer has been abundantly answered, and our crops are spoiled." That curate should be liable to an action for damages.

THE *Christian World* lost its temper last week in an article on "Nature and God." It spoke of "the Atheist, the Materialist, and the whole superficial crew." It would probably think us very insolent if we spoke of "Churchmen, Dissenters, and the whole stupid crew."

IN the same article the dainty Tennyson is described as one of the deepest thinkers of the age. Will the *C. W.* point to a single original idea in the whole of his writings?

PROFESSOR HUXLEY accompanied Professor Roscoe to the Minster in Manchester, and "attended divine service." The rarity of such an occurrence set everybody talking. A religious contemporary wishes it happened more frequently.

The Christian public would like to see the terrible Huxley attend his parish church every Sunday, sit like a good boy under the parson, and snuffle out "amen" like a Methodist local preacher.

THE Church Defence Institution is issuing some very untruthful leaflets, one of which begins by declaring that "the property of the Church does not belong to the State." Why then does the Church submit to State control?

THE intense heat has stirred up American superstition. The curious appearance of the sky excited terror in some minds and wonder in others. The Millerites, a sect who believe that the second coming of Christ is near, thought the day of judgment had begun and put on their ascension robes which they have had prepared for some years in readiness for the Last Day. None of them, however, went up.

DR. McCANN AGAIN.

TO THE EDITOR.

SIR,—In the correspondence notes in the last number of the *Freethinker* I find the following sentences: "It is not true that Mr. Foote has ever 'run away from any parson.' He is glad to meet them, but they shun him, as witness the correspondence with Dr. McCann." I perfectly believe, sir, that you have never run away from any parson, and I hope you never will. Be your faults what they may, cowardice is not one; and I wish with all my heart some parson could draw you to his side and keep you there till both were convinced that both were right and both were wrong, and that there was some common ground where honest men might meet. The reason why I and others like minded may shun you in debate is not that we are not able to give a reason of the hope that is in us, but that we consider the whole matter so sacred and so important that one who insults our beliefs (the beliefs of all Christendom) as you do, that one who has so little sympathy with the holiest and grandest of mankind in their most cherished convictions as to treat them in the buffoonish style in which you have condescended to do, cannot be an earnest searcher for truth, or an antagonist worth the meeting. True, Mr. Bradlaugh has not been gentle to Christianity; we do not wish it. If Christianity cannot stand the hardest blows, the sooner it falls the better. Mr. Bradlaugh, however, has not, so far as I remember, descended to the sort of thing found in the *Freethinker*.

Surely the points in dispute are sufficiently important to demand the gravest consideration and the most thoughtful treatment, sufficiently important to condemn your wood cuts, your "Atheistic Pulpit," your so-called "Acid Drops," etc.—
Yours, etc.,
JAS. McCANN.

[WE have no desire to prolong this correspondence, and it must now close. Whenever Dr. McCann is ready to hold a public debate on our respective beliefs, either on the platform or in the *Freethinker*, we are at his service. Courtesy to persons we can understand, but courtesy to ideas appears to us nonsense. They have no feelings, and if they are true no treatment can injure them. Only falsities have any cause to fear sarcasm, and the sooner they are slain the better. As to Mr. Bradlaugh's attitude towards Christianity, we are content to abide by what we said, and to leave it to the judgment of our readers. In conclusion, we beg to say that we value truth as highly as Dr. McCann does, and probably we have made greater sacrifices for it than he has; while with respect to all other complaints we will simply say that the *Freethinker* was not started to please Christians.—EDITOR.]

CHRISTIANITY AND MODERN LIFE.

CHRISTIANITY is utterly alien to the life of modern society, and in flagrant contradiction to the spirit of our secular progress. It stands outside all the institutions of our material civilisation. Its churches still echo the old strains of music and the old dogmatic tones from the pulpit, but the worshippers themselves feel the anomaly of its doctrines and rites when they return to their secular avocations. The Sunday does nothing but break the continuity of their lives, steeping them in sentiments and ideas which have no relation to their experience during the rest of the week. The profession of Christendom is one thing, its practice is another. God is simply acknowledged with the lips on Sunday, and on every other day profoundly disregarded in all the pursuits of life, whether of business or of pleasure. Even in our national legislation, although the practice of prayer is still retained, any man would be sneered at as a fool who made the least appeal to the sanctions of theology. An allusion to the Sermon on the Mount would provoke a smile, and a citation of one of the Thirty-nine Articles be instantly ruled as irrelevant. Nothing from the top to the bottom of our political and social life is done with any reference to those theological doctrines which the nation professes to believe, and to the maintenance of which it devotes annually so many millions of its wealth.

SPECIAL NOTICE.

Mr. Foote will lecture on Saturday evening, September 17th, in the Hall of the Pendleton Liberal Club, Manchester, on "Land, Landlords, and the People." On Sunday, the 18th, morning, afternoon, and evening in the Secular Hall, Grosvenor Street, Manchester; and on Monday evening, the 19th in the Odd Fellows' Hall, Stalybridge, on "The House of Lords, Past, Present, and Future," when the Rev J. Freeston will preside.

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AFTER Mr. Foote's lecture on "The Land Question," in the Pendleton Liberal Club, on Saturday, September 17th, there will be a meeting held for the purpose of establishing a Branch of the National Secular Society. Freethinkers are requested to muster strong on the occasion. Any who cannot attend then, but wish to join, can communicate with Mr. Thomas Knowles, 16, Harding Street, Pendleton, Manchester.

FOOD REFORMER.—You may prefer cats and donkeys to sheep and oxen. We don't. Tastes differ. Your dietetic ideas cannot be considered a necessary part of Freethought.

A. KING.—The fussy tract distributors are often great nuisances.

J. R.—You must pay the clergyman's fees. The other question must stand over till next week.

E. H.—Thanks for the cuttings. We are glad to learn that the *Freethinker* gives you so much pleasure. Some few complain of its jocoseness, but it is difficult to please all.

G. J.—Scarcely suitable.

J. HAMILTON.—Your story about Dean Stanley is very good; but of course we cannot publish it unless we are assured of its truth.

W. SMITH.—You will see from our editorial notice that your wishes will be gratified.

S. FRASER.—Order through your newsagent. You can get him to expose the second copy for sale, taking it yourself if he does not succeed in disposing of it.

MR. FOOTE lectures to-day (Sunday) morning, afternoon, and evening, in the Secular Hall, Grosvenor Street, Manchester, when he will be glad to meet all his friends in the city and district.

H. CHAPMAN.—Mr. Foote does not write his lectures. He never delivers the same lecture twice in the same way. Your strong approval of the "Bible Romances" is generally shared, if we may judge by the sale. We mean to keep the *Freethinker* "warm," but we can scarcely hope it will enable you to dispense with fire during the winter. We hope to revisit your ancient city during the winter.

J. W. HUGGINS writes:—"When I first saw announcements of the *Freethinker*, I anticipated something rich, and I may say it has more than realised my expectations. I always purchase three or four copies, as I can ensure their being read where other papers would fall flat." We thank our correspondent for his efforts to promote our circulation, and we hope his example will find many imitators.

EDITORIAL.

WE shall henceforth give weekly in *The Freethinker* a special column, or sometimes a page, of "Freethought Gleanings" from the works of English and Foreign scientists, philosophers, and historians; our object being to provide our readers with paragraphs at once interesting and instructive in themselves, and serviceable against the enemy.

Other valuable features will be introduced as we proceed. We shall spare no pains to make *The Freethinker* worthy of its title.

While addressing our readers directly, we may ask them to supplement our advertising by bringing *The Freethinker* to the notice of their friends, by distributing copies of our neat circular, which we shall be happy to forward post-free to any address, or by ordering an extra copy through their newsagent, allowing him to sell it if he can.

We also ask our readers to send us any newspaper or other cuttings at all likely to be of service to us.

SUGAR PLUMS.

THE *Weekly Dispatch* concluded its admirable article on the British Association with these words:—"Religion, in the true sense of the word—the bond imposed by the harmony of the world on each human soul to do his duty in his own place can never be weakened, but must be indefinitely strengthened and illuminated by every enlargement of our

ideas of the universe." That is just the sort of "religion" the Freethinker believes in.

"THE Church has long been saying the kingdom of heaven has nothing to do with the world but to condemn it; it exists on earth to save the few out of the wreck, and the rest go, as was ordained, to perdition. And now the great world is being taught to say that the whole world system has nothing to do with the Church and its imaginary concerns and interests; that these people who have been thinking for ages that the universe was occupied with their interests are the veriest dreamers; that the universe knows nothing about them and cares nothing about them, and that the best thing that they can do is to vanish as swiftly and as quietly as may be from the scene which they have long thought all their own, but which now ignores them and casts them out."—*Christian World*.

THE Rev. T. A. Palm writes to the Baptist *Freeman* as follows:—"As to the prospects of mission work in Japan, opinions will differ; but it must be borne in mind that the quickness of the Japanese mind in adopting, or rather imitating, Western institutions, goes no further than what is material and superficial, and affords no promise of genuine acceptance of Christianity."

LAWNSLEEVES IN THE LORDS.

FOR a country that calls itself Christian the way in which certain members of the community are overworked and ill-treated is really quite too utterly awfully shameful. We would like to call attention to a very deserving and insufficiently-considered case of hardship. We allude to the severely wrought, ill-used bishops. These dignitaries have the most onerous of tasks. They are the overseers of souls. To adequately perform such a function as this, even for one single being, were that being a bishop's ownself, would demand an immense amount of time and attention, and might tax the highest qualities of mind. To oversee the souls of an entire bishopric must need a gigantic intellect, which is poorly remunerated indeed by a paltry ten thousand pounds or so per annum. Yet our ill-paid "fathers in God," in addition to the ordinary most harassing duties of their office, are condemned by custom to spend a portion of their invaluable time sitting in lawnsleeves among the peers in Parliament assembled. They are too good followers of the meek and lowly Jesus to complain of this hard usage. But the task is evidently uncongenial to them. For ages they have taken every opportunity of showing the people the desirability of relieving them from their burden. Their Christian bashfulness in asking directly for help should be no reason for our withholding it. The very costermongers' donkeys get a philanthropic earl to fraternise with them. Yet our bishops are drudged as badly as ever. Surely it is time there was formed a Society for the Liberation of Bishops from Legislative Functions.

ATHEISTIC SONNETS.

By John Rowell Waller, F.R.H.S., Author of "Unstrung Links," "Wayside Flowers," "Rambles and Musings," "Men we Meet," etc.

IV.—PRIESTS.

Oh! ye, the pride of grateful gods and kings,
Whate'er may be your sect, whate'er your creed,
List while a bard in pithy sonnet sings
The praises of your great and holy greed;
Sweet Papists, Churchmen, Methodists, your wings
O'er shade the poor, for 'tis the poor ye bleed.
Ah! who can rightly estimate the worth
Of your great trade, its glory and its gain?
Since first the cute conception had its birth
In thieving Moses' euphemistic brain;
The war, the wrong, the hate, the death, the dearth,
All wrought since ye began your pious reign;
Most holy priests, so well the game you've played,
You well deserve the lazy heaven you made.

A MYSTERY CLEARED UP.

AN ingenious friend, anxious for "the truth," whether it is in or out of "Jesus," thus accounts for the rejection of Cain's offering. Cain "brought the fruit of the ground," which, being green, would not burn. Cain, doubtless owing to his ignorance of chemistry, did not think of this. Abel, on the other hand, presented the "firstling of his flock and the fat thereof." The fat soon produced "a flare up," and his offering was consequently deemed accepted. Had Cain waited until mechanics' institutions began to give lectures on chemistry, before making his offering, he might have learned how to outshine poor Abel, which would have been better than breaking his head. Ignorance of chemistry caused the death of Abel.—"Oracle of Reason," No. 93.

FREETHOUGHT GLEANINGS

THEOLOGY AND CIVILISATION.—For more than three centuries the decadence of theological influence has been one of the most invariable signs and measures of our progress. In medicine, physical science, commercial interests, politics, and even ethics, the reformer has been confronted with theological affirmations that have barred his way, which were all defended as of vital importance, and were all compelled to yield before the secularising influence of civilisation.—*Lecky*, "European Morals," Vol. II., p. 18.

ATHEISTIC RELIGION.—Buddhism inculcates a pure and lofty morality wonderfully elaborated out of the self-consciousness of man; but it acknowledges no personal God, it worships no Deity, it affords no explanation of life beyond the grave.—*Canon Liddon*.

MORAL DISBELIEVERS.—It can do truth no service to blink the fact, known to all who have the most ordinary acquaintance with literary history, that a large portion of the noblest and most valuable moral teaching has been the work, not only of men who did not know, but of men who knew and rejected the Christian faith.—*J. S. Mill*, "On Liberty," p. 93.

AN EARLY FATHER.—In his work against heretics Irenæus [A.D. 170] says: "The men of old who saw John, the disciple of the Lord, remember to have heard from him, how in those times the Lord taught and said, Days will come when vines shall grow each with 10,000 shoots, and to every shoot 10,000 branches, and to every branch 10,000 tendrils, and to every tendril 10,000 bunches, and to every bunch 10,000 berries, and every berry shall yield when pressed 25 measures [that is about six puncheons] of wine. . . . In like manner shall every grain of wheat produce 10,000 ears, and every ear 10,000 grains, and every grain 10,000 pounds of pure white meal; and the other fruits, seeds, and vegetables in like manner."—*Cranbrook*, "Founders of Christianity," p. 40.

THE FOUR GOSPELS.—The history of Christ is contained in records which exhibit contradictions that cannot be reconciled, imperfections that would greatly detract from even admitted human compositions, and erroneous principles of morality that would hardly have found a place in the most incomplete systems of the philosophers of Greece and Rome.—*Rev. Dr. Giles*.

FALSE PROPHETS.

THAT humanity has in all ages been liable to religious impostures, set on foot either by designing knaves or by those who were common victims with their followers of the delusions they attempted to propagate as the direct commands of one or many gods, is matter of history. But very few people, I take it, are aware of the numbers of false prophets who have, even in recent times, been so far successful in their efforts that not only have they numbered their adherents by the thousand during their lives, but have left of themselves a memory which is revered by certain sections of society at the present day as that of men who were directed by a divine agency and were possessed of supernatural powers. My purpose is to make only very slight allusions to some few of these who have flourished during the last hundred years. That Christ belonged to this class at all, but was sincere, is doubtful. Of his actual existence we are certain, as also of the fact of his having been a reformer, but the facts—first, that he ever said he was the "son of God"; secondly, that he used those words as meaning that he was so in a greater degree than the rest of his fellows; and, thirdly, that he backed up the assertion by the practice of miracles—these are vouched for by the possession of Greek manuscripts (all his immediate followers spoke Hebrew) which are signed by nobody, which are addressed to nobody, which were obviously not written by the men whose names are affixed to the title-pages of them, and which, in any court of law composed of intelligent men not blinded by fanaticism, would be condemned as evidences self-contradictory and utterly untrustworthy. Mahomet, who was carried up to heaven, and who upset a pitcher of water with his foot as he was being lifted aloft, who had nine hundred and ninety-nine thousand interviews with the deity (pity he didn't make it a round million!), and who returned in time to sublunary cares to be able to raise the pitcher before all the water had run out of it, was an impostor who was to some extent sincere in his monomaniacal

convictions. The only difference between these two enthusiasts is that the creed of the one, separated from the abominable interpolations introduced into it by those who saw in it a means of gaining wealth and power through its influence on credulous mankind, is merciful and tolerant, that of the other licentious and debasing. Humanity, however, is prone at all times to lean upon some power, real or imaginary, supposedly greater than its own. And it is this feeling which has given rise to our ideas of a deity, and what was an immediate consequence of those ideas, a belief in priests, soothsayers, prophets, medicine men, *et hoc genus omne*. That our notions of a god are not innate, but the direct outcome of early and directed habits of thought (start not, Christian reader, nor "lay your hand upon your sword," as did the gentle Peter), I propose, if Mr. Editor will kindly allow me space, to prove in a subsequent article.

I shall now proceed to quote a few instances of this misdirected enthusiasm.

Richard Brothers, a half-pay lieutenant of the British navy, published in the year 1794 certain "works," in which it was set forth that he was the "nephew" of God, though, considering that all the members of the Trinity are of the male "persuasion," this seems rather impossible, unless, indeed, either Christ or the "Holy Ghost," who may in one sense be regarded as the brothers of the third member, had paid another and a mysterious visit to our highly-favored little planet. Anyhow, Richard Brothers said he was the "nephew" of God (yes, it was very shocking, my Christian friends, was it not?), and, incredible as it may seem, the street in which his house was situated used to be literally besieged by foot-passengers and carriages containing those who came to see and hear him. A Mr. Nathaniel Brassey Halhed, M.P., a profound oriental scholar and a distinguished *litterateur*, was one of the warmest of his advocates, and actually had the audacity to introduce his doctrines during the course of a debate in the House of Commons—that highly respectable and eminently Christian body of gentlemen! Brothers prophesied that London would be destroyed in the year following, and when the event proved otherwise, he, with a knowledge of human nature worthy of that other humbug, Mahomet, elated his immense body of followers by declaring that the city had been saved through his interposition. For a period of five years the ravings of this madman were regarded as manifestations of the divine spirit in him, and it was not till the end of that period that, being tried on a charge of high treason for having commanded George III. to transfer his crown to him, he was found to be lunatic, and was placed under the care of the Lord Chancellor for the rest of his natural life.

Ann Lee, the daughter of a blacksmith in Manchester, having emigrated to America, there declared that she was the woman referred to in so-called Revelations, and her ravings were certainly as delirious and incoherent as any to be met with in that extraordinary work, the difference being that it was caused, probably, through the excessive use of opium in the one case while with this modern prophetess it was the result of catalepsy. She was to bring forth a man child who was to "rule all nations with a rod of iron," and was afterwards to be "caught up unto God, and to his throne." Just what I should have expected! The harsh and bloodthirsty Moloch who directed the Jews in their inhuman slaughter of inoffensive men, women, and children, nay, even of the beasts of the field, "their sheep, cattle," etc., and who now poses as the God of the Christians, could do nothing more congenial to his own nature than to "catch up unto himself" as something "quite too utterly precious" the man who ruled his fellow creatures with "a rod of iron!" She had the "gift of tongues" and "could never die." Nevertheless she went over to the majority in due course of time, after the manner of all flesh. Her followers, however, are yet to be met with in the United States, and they, like all other sectarians, are the only people who will "see God," the rest of humanity being doomed to everlasting immersion in a huge lake of brimstone and fire.

Johanna Southcott, who, till the ripe age of forty, had been a domestic servant, was born in Devonshire in 1750. She predicted the approach of the Millennium, and as in the case of the Tichborne claimant, she was also the woman referred to in Revelations, and was with child of the "Holy Ghost!" We could, if we offered a prize for it, receive the names of scores of domestic servants who would be only too glad to make the same declaration if only they had the ghost of a chance of being believed! But we live in a sceptical age, my masters! However, although her appearance seemed to warrant it, together with the fact of her having named the day and even the very minute of the birth, it was otherwise with Johanna Southcott. Her followers, who numbered over 100,000 persons, prepared a gorgeous cradle for the reception of the expected little stranger. On the day announced masses of people assembled about the house to get the first news of the interesting event, and could not be driven away until they were informed that the aged prophetess had changed her mind about "that baby," and had fallen into a trance instead. The poor old lady was afterwards found to have been suffering from dropsy. Her followers are still to be met, and, after the manner of sectarians, exhibit a peculiarity of garb.

Robert Matthews, who professed to be a fourth member of the "godhead," began his career in the United States in 1832. He immediately gathered around him a vast body of partisans, among them being a Mr. Pierson, a wealthy merchant. He professed to

raise the dead to life, but failed. The zeal of his followers was, however, unabated, and numbers of other wealthy men were induced to believe in him. The career of this scoundrel, which extended over a period of three years, is remarkable as a proof of what an ingenious rogue is capable of accomplishing by playing upon the superstitious feelings of others. He took up his residence at the abode of Mr. Pierson, where he lived upon the fat of the land, and literally ruled the household with a "rod of iron." Poor Mrs. Pierson's diet and that of her children was restricted to bread and vegetables, and he was the cruel task-master of this unfortunate family. He said he would build a New Jerusalem, which should contain the most magnificent Temple ever erected, where he should preside with Mr. Pierson and another of his adherents on either side of him. The sea was to yield up its treasures for the furtherance of this design, and some of his followers actually went the length of purchasing expensive jewels for the Temple that was to be. He sent for a married daughter of his, but on the day of her arrival the savage beat her so brutally that she at once returned to her husband. Towards the end of his career, Mr. Pierson fell ill, and Matthews, who believed in fever-devils, toothache-devils, &c., and who would not allow any medical man in the house, administered some potion which all but killed the unfortunate gentleman. Not content with this result, Matthews, a few days after, held open his jaws while some water was poured from a height of four or five feet between them. Mr. Pierson was found dead in his bed shortly after! The children, also, were sick whenever they drank any of the coffee which was invariably prepared by Matthews, and there is little doubt but that he attempted to poison them. This infamous wretch was tried on the capital charge for the murder of Mr. Pierson in 1835, but, unfortunately, was acquitted through the want of direct evidence. He was then charged with assaulting his daughter, for which he got three months' imprisonment, and since then he has never been heard of.

There are but a few cases picked at random out of a shoal of others, but they all go to show that a view of life that is not based upon cool, calm reasoning, as distinguished from speculation of any kind, together with an explanation of all things by the aid of unmistakable, unerring science, and the tangible results it affords us, is both dangerous and degrading.

FRED. W. DILLON.

THE SALVATION ARMY.

YESTERDAY "Captain" Frederick Spencer, 27, stated to be a captain of the Salvation Army, was charged at Southwark Police Court, with embezzling a sum of 3s. and various other moneys, received by him for and on account of Charles Howard, his master. Prosecutor said prisoner had been in his employment at Denmark Hill for about nine months. In July last he sent the prisoner to collect some accounts, and, having received various sums of money he disappeared. Witness did not see him again until last week. On charging him with embezzlement, prisoner said, "Yes I had it. I'll come back and work for you if you don't charge me." Witness then gave him into custody. Serjeant Jupp, of the Criminal Investigation Department, said he had made inquiries about the prisoner and found he belonged to the Salvation Army, and that he officiated at the "head quarters," Whitechapel. In June last he met a young woman at one of the services, and induced her to leave her home on pretence of marriage. He lived with her for some time, and persuaded her to pawn her clothes to keep him. After the girl had left home, the following letter, written by the prisoner, was received by her father:—"June 21, 1881.—Dear Father,—I write to inform you that our marriage has taken place this morning we are quite appy we have a comparable home and we shall call over to-morrow evening to see you both and bring the things away may the Lord be with you all has he His with us. It was the Lords wish we should be together so we have tied the knot which shall not be untied by anyone on this earth praise the Lord it is finished dear father and mother believe me to be, ever your son-in-law, FRED SPENCER."—The reading of the prisoner's letter caused much merriment in court.—Mr. Bridge asked if the girl were present, and the detective having replied in the affirmative, a respectably-dressed and good-looking young woman, about twenty years of age, stepped into the witness-box.—In answer to the magistrate she stated that she first met the prisoner at the head-quarters of the Salvation Army in Whitechapel Road, on Whit-Monday. She went there to attend a "baptism of fire." After the service, at which the prisoner "preached," he came and spoke to her, and asked her if she was saved. She said she did not know, and after some further conversation he said she was in the hands of the devil, and she must come and pray with him. She accompanied him to his lodgings, and he told her that he would marry her, and that she had better stay with him, and join the Salvation Army, who were a very good lot of people. Prisoner told her he had £1 15s. a week, and was coming into a lot of money. She stayed with him for two months, and she had to pawn her clothes to keep him, as he had no money. On being asked what he had to say for himself in answer to the charge preferred against him, prisoner said, "I had the money, but I gave it to the young woman. I am willing to go back and work it off."—Mr. Bridge said it was

not likely that any master would take back a dissolute, impious, hypocritical scoundrel, like the prisoner. He was a dastard as well as a thief, for the way in which he had treated the girl whom he had deceived. He would be committed for trial for the embezzlement.—*Lloyd's News*

"INSPIRED" WAR.

By COLONEL INGERSOLL.

If the Bible be true, God commanded his chosen people to destroy men simply for the crime of defending their native land. They were not allowed to spare trembling and white-haired age, nor dimpled babes clasped in the mothers' arms. They were ordered to kill women, and to pierce, with the sword of war, the unborn child. "Our heavenly Father" commanded the Hebrews to kill the men and women, the fathers, sons, and brothers, but to preserve the girls alive. Why were not the maidens also killed? Why were they spared? Read the thirty-first chapter of Numbers, and you will find that the maidens were given to the soldiers and the priests. Is there, in all the history of war, a more infamous thing than this? Is it possible that God permitted the violets of modesty, that grew and shed their perfume in the maiden's heart, to be trampled beneath the brutal feet of lust? If this was the order of God, what, under the same circumstances, would have been the command of a devil? When, in this age of the world, a woman, a wife, a mother, reads this record, she should, with scorn of loathing, throw the book away. A general, who now shall give such an order, giving over to massacre and rapine a conquered people, would be held in execration by the whole civilized world. Yet, if the Bible be true, the supreme and infinite God was once a savage.

A little while ago, out upon the western plains, in a little path leading to a cabin, were found the bodies of two children and their mother. Her breast was filled with wounds received in the defence of her darlings. They had been murdered by the savages. Suppose, when looking at their lifeless forms, some one had said, "This was done by the command of God." In Canaan there were countless scenes like this. There was no pity in inspired war. God raised the black flag, and commanded his soldiers to kill even the smiling infant in its mother's arms. Who is the blasphemer? the man who denies the existence of God, or he who covers the robes of the infinite with innocent blood?

We are told in the Pentateuch, that God, the father of us all, gave thousands of maidens, after having killed their fathers, their mothers, and their brothers, to satisfy the brutal lusts of savage men. If there be a God, I pray him to write in his book, opposite my name, that I denied this lie for him.—*Some Mistakes of Moses*, Chap. xxvii.

THE BLESSED TRINITY.

A PROVISIONAL COMMITTEE of three persons, even though each of them is perfect, may appear but a small instrument with which to set about the rather large job of perfecting mankind and the universe, particularly when we consider in what a disastrous and horrible mess a similar committee of three perfect divine persons has now left us all, after working for upwards of eighteen centuries at the very same job. But a little thought shows us that this divine trio failed so utterly to improve man and the world, precisely because its members were gods and not men, were of heaven and not of earth; for astronomy has already resolved heaven into mere star-strewn space, illimitable, without local above or beneath; and philosophy has already resolved gods into delusive dreams and imaginations. And even if these poor deities, these vanishing phantasms of phantasms, had possessed any power, how could they have improved us? In their gospel of good tidings our world and our flesh are classed with the Devil, as an infernal trio opposed to the trio of gods, as vile and abominable and desperately wicked, fit only for eternal chastisement or annihilation: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost could only have improved us and our world out of existence. And, again, even if each of them separately had possessed any power, jointly as a committee they must have been perfectly impotent; for, in order to bring them into a spurious sort of unity, certain cunning theologians without bowels of compassion did bind these three wretched persons together, napes, armpits, elbows, wrists, thumbs, fingers, chests, loins, thighs, knees, ankles, heels, toes, with endless coils on coils of subtle iron wires, intertwined and knotted beyond human conception and unravelling. Could their three bodies have been seen, they must have appeared as one amorphous lump of black and bursting flesh, swelling over furrows and gashes cut narrow and deep by the strained network; a red glare of agony, a spout of thick blood, indicating eye, mouth, or nostril in the featureless mass. Fortunately for the victims, it is pretty certain that any life they had when the process began must have been very soon strangled out of them. Specimens of the infernal instruments of torture, the meshes in which these divine persons were involved together so as to look like an abortion, may still be seen, not without horror and com-

passion, in the creed called Athanasian, and in countless unreadable books explaining the inexplicable mystery of the Holy Trinity.—From "Essays and Phantasies," by James Thomson (B. V.)

PROFANE JOKES.

A SCOTCH minister, it is reported, went into his pulpit once in the olden time slightly obfuscated, and leaned over the preacher's desk below the pulpit, saying, "Give out the 256th psalm." "There be'ant so many," said the preceptor, wizenfaced and savage! "Then sing so many as there be!"

A LITTLE thing in a Sabbath-school was asked by her teacher if she always said her prayers night and morning. "No, miss, I don't." "Why, Mary, are you not afraid to go to sleep in the dark without asking God to take care of you and watch over you till morning?" "No, miss, I ain't—'cause I sleep in the middle."

AN affected young lady, seated in a rocking-chair, reading the Bible, exclaimed, "Mother, here is a grammatical error in the Bible." Mother, lowering her spectacles, and approaching the reader in a very scrutinising attitude, says, "Kill it—kill it! It is the very thing that has been eating the leaves and book-marks!"

MINISTER: "Well, Sandy, mon, ye will be going to a happier a bether world presently. Prepare yourself for it." Dying Highlander (*faintly*): "Wull there be ony whuskey there?" Minister: "No, Sandy, ye will not need it, mon. Consider ye will be a different being, with no carnal wishes, no—" Sandy (*still more faintly*): "A weel, I like ta see it on the table, ony-way!"

THE late Dr. Macadam used to tell of a tipsy Scotchman making his way home upon a bright Sunday morning, when the good fold were wending their way to the kirk. A little dog pulled a ribbon from the hand of a lady who was leading it, and as it ran away from her, she appealed to the first passer-by, asking him to whistle for her poodle. "Woman!" he retorted, with that solemnity of visage which only a Scotchman can assume, "Woman, this is no a day for whustlin'."

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LECTURERS FOR THE MONTH OF SEPTEMBER, 1881.

STATION AND TIME.	Chairman	4	11	18	25
MIDLAND ARCHES, ...11.30	Leekey	Job	Forder	Moss	Job
CLERKENWELL GREEN 11.30	Hilditch	Forder	Symes	Ramsey	Haslam
VICTORIA PARK 3.30	Jones	Foote	Symes	Thurlow	Moss
GIBRALTAR WALK, ...11.15	Ramsey	Ramsey	Moss	Haslam	Grout
MILE END ROAD, ...11.15	Reeve	Haslam	Ramsey	Job	Moss
STREATHAM COMMON, 11.15	Vesey	Moss	Thurlow	Norrish	Ramsey
BALHAM, 6.30	Vesey	Moss	Thurlow	Norrish	Ramsey

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