

THE FREETHINKER.

REGISTERED FOR]

EDITED BY G. W. FOOTE.

[TRANSMISSION ABROAD.

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.



"I WILL TURN MY HAND UPON THEE, AND PURELY PURGE AWAY THY DROSS, AND TAKE AWAY ALL THY TIN."—Isaiah i., 25.

JOHN ASGILL.*

THE case of John Asgill, commonly known as "translated Asgill," is one which, but for the still more unwarrantable and dastardly expulsion of Charles Bradlaugh, would have probably lain in oblivion, except to antiquarian searchers into our historic records. And yet this tract giving his defence is full of a quaint and living interest. It is a veritable flower, redolent of a strange, pungent, old-world scent, growing among the accumulated rubbish of the dry-as-dust department.

Early in the reign of William III., John Asgill, a lawyer of some eminence in his profession, began to display his humor and talent as a writer of pamphlets. Among his earliest works were a suggestive pamphlet proposing to employ securities as a new circulatory medium; and "An Essay on a Registry of Titles for Land," which, though written in his quaint, humorous vein, the "Biographica Britannica" allows to be "as sensible a piece as was perhaps ever written on that important subject." After this he appears to have taken to the study of the Bible, somewhat in the spirit of a lawyer looking over an old deed in order to claim a title for himself, and adjust the right of others. The result was "An Argument proving that, according to the Covenant of Eternal Life revealed in the Scriptures, Man may be translated from hence into that Eternal Life without passing through Death, although the Humane Nature of Christ himself could not thus be translated till he had passed through Death;" a pamphlet which from the singular style and amazing boldness of the author's ideas, occasioned a considerable sensation.

In his *Table Talk* (July 30th, 1831) Coleridge says of the work, in which he finds "the very soul of Swift, an intense half self-deceived humorism." "I scarcely remember elsewhere such uncommon skill in logic, such lawyer-like acuteness, and yet such a grasp of common sense. Each of his paragraphs is in itself a whole, and yet a link between the preceding and the following; so that the entire series forms one argument, and yet each is a diamond in itself."

* Look Bijou Reprints, No. 2. "Mr. Asgill's Defence upon his Expulsion from the House of Commons of Great Britain in 1707."

Defoe, ever ready to turn his pen into pence, wrote a pamphlet entitled "An Enquiry into the case of Mr. Asgill's general translation, showing that 'tis not a nearer way to Heaven than the grave." The notorious Dr. Sacheverell alluded to it as one of the blasphemous writings which proved the Church to be in danger. For taking the words "Who-soever liveth and believeth in me shall never die" (John xi., 26), in their literal sense, Asgill was everywhere denounced as an Atheist. His book was publicly burnt in Ireland, where he was practising, and himself expelled from his seat for Enniscorthy in October, 1703. In 1705 he was returned to the British House of Commons for the pocket borough of Bramber in Sussex, and sat until 1707, when, during a recess he was arrested for debt and committed to the Fleet. He petitioned Parliament against his arrest, as a breach of privilege. He was ordered to be released, and a committee was appointed to report upon the teachings of his book. Despite the spirited and humorous defence now reprinted, he was formally expelled, and his book was ordered to be burnt by the common hangman as profane and blasphemous.

The exquisite taste of Mr. Sugden has made this important reprint all that even the fastidious bibliomaniac could desire. Lovers of the æsthetic will be gratified by the "get up," and lovers of the pungent humor and pertinacious honesty of the men of old will be delighted with the contents. There they will read Asgill's account of his strange idea. "How it came into my Head; And after that (as well as I can) how it came out of my Head: And after that, I'll endeavor to trace it, how it came in this House. How 'twill come out again, I begin to guess; but that the House knows (at present) better than I do." His retorts upon his opponents as the true infidels are especially racy.

The little volume contains a well-written Introduction by "B. E.," and a Postscript from Southey's "Doctor." We suspect that Southey made a slight mistake in stating that "though he lived twenty years after the publication of his Defence, and the announcement of a second discovery in the Scriptures, the promised argument never appeared. His subsequent writings consist of a few pamphlets in favor of the Hanoverian succession." In the British Museum Library Catalogue are found, "A Question upon Divorce," 1717; "A Short Essay on the Nature of the Kingdom of God within us," 1718; and "The Metamorphosis of Man by the Death and Resurrection of Christ from the Dead," 1727.

The service which Mr. Sugden is doing to the cause of Freethought by the reprint of such out-of-the-way pamphlets as the present, deserves, and will doubtless receive, the encouragement of Freethinkers.

LAON.

ATHEISTIC SONNETS.

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

VI.—HEAVEN.

Far in the Nowhere floats a shadow land,
Where flimsy saints in formless throng unite
To praise the triple God by day and night,
Who rules as "boss" upon that shining strand,
And scatters honors with a lavish hand;
No honest searchers yawn in that fair grot;—
There Freedom's heroes dream and dawdle not,
But lazy Pleasure waves her silver wand,
To charm a thieving and a murderous band;
Repentant scoundrels from the scaffold boards,
Lascivious kings and drunken Dukes and Lords,
Throng that blest land in pardon'd demon hordes:
There men of brains the faithful ne'er annoy,
And all is ignorance and harps and joy.



THE ATHEISTIC PULPIT.—SERMON V.

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself.”—Luke x., 27.

We are frequently informed by prejudiced persons that the more you study the texts of the Bible, the more do you perceive their depth and beauty. This is not so in the present instance; for the first view of the above text is not merely its best, it is also the only good view it is capable of presenting. The text, so much belauded by Christians, is a tissue of absurdities.

1. Love can never be successfully enjoined as a duty. You can command the outward signs of love, but the thing itself is not produced to order. A command in such a case is either tyrannical or absurd. What would be thought of a cook who issued a command to the public to love, like, or be fond of his viands and ragoûts? Let him boil, stew, fry, or any otherwise cook, frogs, toads, grubs, snails, horseflesh, etc., many people never *could* like them. The fault may be in the food or in the people; all the same, liking is impossible.

Just so, my good friend, it is as regards love. It is the best thing in the world, and it is independent. It will flow where the proper attraction is exerted, spite of priestly ban or tyrannical threat; and, on the other hand, all commands, all threats, all punishments, all bribes, all intimidations, can never produce the genuine article. Therefore, the man who first put my present text into shape was nine-tenths of a goose, for he commands what authority can never produce. 2. Besides, he never seems to have stopped to consider whether your God or your neighbor was really worthy of your love.

A. As to our neighbor, it seems to me that we are the best judges of his loveableness. And am I to love my neighbor irrespectively of his qualities? I won't, for I can't, and don't wish to. My reader!—my orthodox reader especially! Have you not had neighbors you *could not* love, but could and did despise and detest beyond definable measure? Come, now, be candid. Love the man that steals your cauliflowers, plays the fiddle, and dances, to your loss of sleep and utter annoyance far into the morning? the fellow that flogs his wife three times a week, and winds up with an extra outrage every Saturday night? Or do you really love that Atheist who lives next door? He is a man of intelligence, probity, candour, justice, and good nature; but he laughs at your superstitions! How can you love him? Either you do not much care for your religion, or you hate that man more intensely than words can express. And what folly it is to *bid* you love him, is it not? You must be an idiot to love, as *you love yourself*, anything or any man you deem inimical to your dearest and best interests.

Whereas, if your neighbor seemed to you to be a loveable man, you could not help loving him. The best thing to do in the case is to wait, and hate or love as circumstances may require, suggest, or warrant. Neighborly neighbors are usually respected and loved by all except the selfish and the bad, and an unneighborly neighbor ought not to be loved.

B. “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God.” I plead exemption. I don't know the gentleman; haven't either Lord or God to love. So, there now! I don't know anybody's god that is worthy of any love or even the coldest respect. The god here alluded to is, I presume, the old Jewish God. Here are a few facts in his history:—He *cursed* the serpent, and even the ground; he drowned all the world except an old fellow named Noah, his wife and family—eight persons of very indifferent character; he destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, and saved Lot and his daughters, as nice a trio as ever lived; he hardened Pharaoh's heart for the purpose of bullying him and “getting honor upon him,” by killing all the first-born of man and beast in all Egypt; he drowned the poor Egyptians in the Red Sea; he stopped the sun and moon to enable Joshua to murder innocent people; he rewarded Rahab and Jehu for the worst of crimes; he stirred up Absalom to outrage his father in the most unmentionable manner; he lit a fire, called hell, and keeps it ever burning, for the behoof of devils and unbelievers; he flirted, and worse, with Mary, and afterwards incited Caiaphas, Pilate, and Co., to murder his own illegitimate son, to quench his bitter wrath against mankind! Such, reader, is the bible conception of the “Lord God” you are to love with all your heart, etc.

No wonder it was found necessary to command this love! Prophets and priests, blind as they are, must know that there could be nothing but detestation and horror felt for their deity, and hence they commanded perfect love, hoping, no doubt, to get the semblance if nothing better.

Between ourselves, reader, if an Almighty God were loveable, he would show it in so overpowering a manner that the very stones would be almost stirred to love him. The sun, inconceivably hot with generous passion, pours down his radiant glory in such oceans upon the earth, that trees and herbs, and beasts and insects, ay! the very water and rocks, glow and burn with reciprocal passion! Where and what *is* this God we are bidden to love, and so overwhelmingly too? It is nought but a name! Intelligence and independence never yet worshipped; it is but the fool and the slave in a man that worship; all his intellect and manhood tend in the opposite direction.

3. But the greatest absurdity of the text is yet to be noticed. “Heart, soul, strength, mind!” These comprise all the loving material a man can possibly employ; and “they Lord God” must have every fraction of it. And yet you are commanded in the same breath to love your neighbor as yourself! Is this a conscious joke or an unconscious “bull”? It must be one of these; probably the latter; and certainly no son of Erin ever pronounced a more delicious piece of absurdity. What would be said of Pat, were he to make a will giving all his land, houses, cash, bonds, government stock, and *all his other wealth* of every description to his son, and *all the rest* to his daughter?

A man who loves his God with “all his heart, soul, strength and mind,” can neither love himself nor his neighbor. What an absurdity the text rightly appears when dragged into the light of common-sense! “Thou shalt love the Lord with all the love thou hast, and thyself and thy neighbor with the balance!” “Thou shalt give the Lord all thy cattle and sheep, and feed thyself and family upon the rest!”

Reader, you love yourself best, do you not? I need not say you ought to; you do. I advise you not to commit yourself to love either your neighbor or any god till you know something about them. And when you find a God, “make a note of it,” and kindly communicate with yours truly,

J. SYMES.

THE COMMANDMENT OF THE LORD TO HIS HOLY PROPHET, GUTEAU.

IN the fifth month—even the tenth day of the month—the word of the Lord came unto me, saying: “Guiteau, my chosen, get thee up from thy native country and from among thy kindred, and go to Washington, where thou shalt find a man in whom is the spirit of wisdom, and whose motives and intentions are pure and honorable; a man after the most upright citizens of the United States' own heart—the President.” And I bowed before the Lord, and answered: “Ah! Lord God, behold, I am but a weak mortal—what wouldest thou that I should do concerning him?” And the Lord answered me, saying: “Behold! the man whom this people have elected President is an upright man, and likely to do much good for his people and country by making just laws and correcting abuses; and, lo! I am against him.” And I spake, saying: “O, Lord God! I am thy servant; command me; what shall I do?” And the Lord answered, and said: “Perceiving that it is according to his purpose to execute justice and judgment and to lead the nation to prosperity by virtuous means, and discovering in him no desire to emulate my servant David, inasmuch as he is content to have only one wife and no concubines, neither doth the spirit of murder dwell in him—I, even I, have determined to cut him off out of the midst of the land, and thee have I chosen for the extinguishing instrument of his shining light.” And I said unto the Lord: “Ah! Lord God! most just! most holy! now do I know of a truth that I am thy servant. As of old, thou puttedst a lying spirit into the mouth of thy prophets and didst inspire thy ancient people with the spirit of murder, so likewise do I perceive that the God of Moses and the prophets is indeed my God.” And the Lord answered me, and said: “Guiteau, I am well pleased with thy speech.” Again spake I unto the Lord, and said: “Seeing that I have found grace in thy sight, direct, Lord, thy servant.” And he answered me, saying: “Arise! get thee forth into the city and buy thee a California six-chambered revolver, which charge with effective cartridge, and lie in wait for this man; and when he shall be come within certain range, discharge the contents of thy revolver at him, and shoot him dead. See! have not I commanded thee?” And I answered God, saying: “Ah! Lord God, in whose hand are the issues of life and death, the omnipotent, most merciful and loving father of all flesh, lo! I go to do thy will.” And I went forth and did as the Lord commanded me, and slew the honorable and upright man.

A HAPPY FAMILY.

THE Salvationists are getting into hot water. In many parts of the country they are attacked by roughs. We don't approve this way of putting them down, but we do think that the police should prevent them from parading the streets and inflicting torture on everyone who has a sensitive ear. Their own ears are no doubt long and thick, but other people's are not quite so callous.

General Booth has recently delivered some boastful addresses at Exeter Hall. According to his account the Salvation Army has not only increased in numbers, but has increased its income to more than £50,000 a year. This money is obtained by the most unblushing begging, and if the "head-centres" flourish, many of the provincial workers go very short. The *South Wales Daily News* reports that a girl preacher named Williams, at Rhymney, has been loudly inveighing against Captain Booth. We extract one passage, which is highly edifying:—

"Having gone on speaking for some time on the point of Salvation, she wandered into her personal affairs, and General Booth's bad treatment of the female members of his army. The males, she said, fared better, as they could turn up their sleeves and 'punch' him if he did not act right by them, but the females had not that advantage. She had been told in Rhymney she was a fool for sending all the collections to Booth, in London, as he did not send her any wages back, and left her to starve for what he cared. If he came to Rhymney, as was expected, he should have his legs broken, and crutches to go back with. She had sent as much as £10 and £12 collections to him, and never received a penny. He promised them £6 a quarter each, but they had not had a penny."

Poor Miss Williams! When General Booth next requests the "brethren" at Exeter Hall to pass up their watch-chains for the Lord's service, we hope someone will be bold enough to inquire what is done with the funds.

Another Welsh paper, the *Western Mail*, gives a good account of a split in the Salvation camp in the Rhondda Valley:—

"The inhabitants of the Rhondda Valley, especially those living in the neighborhood of Pentre and Treherbert, were on Sunday much interested and amused at certain vagaries exhibited by parties associated with the Salvation Army in the Rhondda Valley. It appears that for some time past the movement of the 'army' at Siloh Old Chapel, Pentre, has developed itself in an extraordinary fashion. It is well-known that one of the weapons which General Booth has placed in the hands of his 'fighting' men and women for attracting Beelzebub is secular music—which is termed in Wales 'maswedd'—wedded to sacred hymns. The door having been opened to this sort of thing, it is stated that Siloh has become the scene of the most extraordinary incidents ever witnessed in these parts on Sabbath nights. The latest novelty is said to be what is termed 'Godly Christy Minstrels,' and when other chapels in the locality are emptying themselves of devout people, Old Siloh is resonant with such songs as 'Old Kentucky Shore,' 'Keal Row,' 'Nancy Lee,' etc. In front of the big seat which is below the pulpit stand 'Bones' and 'Tambourine,' and all around are the 'Godly Christies' vociferating sacred expressions to the above kind of tunes with all their might.

"Now, at Treherbert, is a young prophetess named Miriam, and she was until lately under the command of General Booth. But the prophetess somehow gave offence to the Salvation Horse Guards, and a command was issued to drum her out of the service. Unfortunately, Miriam would not be 'drummed,' and she has defied General Booth and all his officers by placing herself under the protection of 'Ffynondwym,' and renting a vacant shop known as the Temple of Fashion, at Treherbert, where she now holds services not less extraordinary than those held at Siloh Chapel. She has been followed by all of General Booth's disciples at Treherbert. On Sunday last the detachment at Siloh resolved to 'march' upon Treherbert with a view to put down Miriam and her 'reserve volunteers,' as she calls them. The Siloh contingent proceeded up the valley singing and with flags flying. Miriam and her party turned out, and so did most of the inhabitants to witness the extraordinary scene. The rival parties took positions within a short distance of each other, and the din which followed as the two parties vociferated different tunes at the same time produced a scene unrivalled for its absurdity in the Rhondda Valley."

The Salvationists have several times fought "the enemy," but they seem now likely to engage in the old religious occupation of fighting each other. We trust, however, that they will settle their differences with fists instead of brass bands, for we strongly object to a repetition of what happened at Jericho; although if they could blow each other to h—, we beg pardon, to *Hades*, we should not begrudge them a good day's tootling.

A FEW WORDS ABOUT PRAYER.

WITH all its outward show of reverence prayer is perhaps one of the most irreverent habits of which man is capable. Indeed, it is a sort of pious impudence, none the less unpardonable because spiritual pride prevents the "unco guid" from seeing it in its own light.

If prayer simply consisted in thanksgiving to God there would perhaps be something to justify a devout Christian going upon his knees; although even in that case it might be urged that since God knows everything—even before it happens—to inform him that we are thankful is simply to tell him what he knows already. But prayer generally consists of a good deal more than mere thanksgiving. The pious worshipper after telling the Lord how thankful he is for the manifold blessings of Heaven, slyly proceeds to insinuate that after all there was not a satisfactory amount of the said "manifold blessings," and concludes by humbly soliciting a fresh and increased supply. If Christians regarded their God as a procrastinating negligent deity, or a deity with a defective memory, there would be some excuse for addressing him in this way. But believing as they do that he is all knowing, all powerful, and all good, to pray to him in such a fashion is either superlative irreverence or superlative stupidity. After all, the sceptic who takes things as he finds them, and tries to make the best of them, is perhaps a more devout person than your praying saint who is everlastingly pestering omnipotence with prayers for sunshine or supplications for rain, and who cannot hear of a case of measles or whooping-cough without letting all the angels in heaven know about it.

If pious people trusted the Lord half as much as they pretend to do they would not pray to him so often. Men don't petition Parliament when they think it is doing its duty, and they would not petition deity if they really believed he was going about his business in a proper way.

A good God would not need praying to. If the Lord does all he can for us we have no right to ask him to do more. If he does not do all he can for us he is not a good God.

The fellow who is constantly praising God evidently takes him for an almighty coxcomb, who likes being told how good and great and terrible he is. Excessive love of praise is a weakness even in man, and that which is a weakness in man cannot be a virtue in God. The man who supposes that, whenever he falls upon his knees, the great God of Heaven is all attention, appears to me more impressed with his own importance than with God's greatness. Indeed, as a rule, I have found praying people to be narrow, selfish, and presumptuous. Burns's "Holy Willie" is representative of a class when he exclaims—

"Lord, remember me and mine
 Wi' mercies temp'ral and divine,
 That I for gear and grace may shine,
 Excelled by name.
 An' a' the glory shall be thine,
 Amen, amen."

If the holy impudence of the above is more apparent than that of most petitions to God, it is because it is condensed into a stanza instead of being spread over a prayer an hour long.

Prayer is utterly futile. People who pray live no longer than people who don't. A supplication was never known to cure consumption or the measles, or even the mumps. Even Christians themselves practically admit this. In health they trust in God, but in sickness they send for the doctor. They request the Lord to give them each day their daily bread, but they don't forget to take the wise precaution of making a contract with the baker beforehand.

God—if there exists one—either does not hear our prayers or does not heed them. All experience is against the efficacy of prayer and in favor of the efficacy of honest labor. As the world goes there is no substitute for willing hands and hearts. Earnest effort is the only prayer that ever gets any answer. Petition the soil with a spade, and it will answer with a harvest. Prayer will never make an idle man rich, and the neglect of prayer will never keep a willing man poor.

So far as we labor honestly and diligently in this world, so far as we do our duty here—so far, and not one jot further, shall we find happiness or deserve to find it.

W. NELSON.

ACID DROPS.

A CORRESPONDENT sends us a curious extract from an old newspaper, containing an account of certain proceedings at Bow Street instituted by a musician in the Coldstream Guards and a chimney sweeper against a Mrs. M'Intyre for assault and slander. Both the plaintiffs "appeared in the uniform of their profession," and the case caused a great deal of merriment in court. The chimney sweeper seems to have been the most aggrieved party. He claimed protection against the woman for calling him a *Bishop*, a term which he utterly abhorred. He protested that he worked honestly for his living, and did not deserve to be called by such a *vile word*. The magistrate committed Mrs. M'Intyre for the assault, and assured Mr. Harris, the honest sweep, that "his character was completely free from the suspicion of being a bishop."

MR. G. R. SIMS, in the *Referee*, has shed a little superfluous sentiment over "La Bible Amusante,"—The Comic Bible. After remarking that the work is being sold by thousands among all classes in France, he ventures to think that English Freethinkers would "shudder at such a production." Why? Does not Mr. Sims enjoy satire at the expense of Pagan deities in whom he does not believe? And may not the Freethinker enjoy satire at the expense of deities that are to him just as fabulous and far more pernicious? Most people want all the gods in the world laughed at except their own, and the Freethinker only goes one step farther.

SCEPTICISM and satire are not found together for the first time to-day. We have just lighted on a manuscript copy of an old title page which runs thus: "The Natural History of Religion, from the year of the world 5000, 1, until the Jewish Era: giving an account of 50,000 Religions which were all considered *orthogonal* whilst in *fashion*, but denominated *superstitious* when *bye-gone*.—Explaining the tricks whereby 50,000 Priests lived on the fat of the land by selling smoke to their poor deluded Dupes. By Hugo Bumblepuppis, Senior Spificator in the College of Drumcondra."

A CLERGYMAN asks us whether we should think of treating "the poetical myths of Greece and Rome" in the usual style of this paper. We reply: first, that the Christian myths have no poetry in them; secondly, that they are real enemies to rational progress; and thirdly, that when they have, like the Pagan myths, been dead about fifteen hundred years, we will cease to attack them.

THE Lord is no respecter of persons, but tract distributors are. We observed one of these gentry at a railway station the other day. He went with his pious rubbish to the door of every third-class compartment of the train we were in, and carefully avoided the first and second class. It is only the common people who will submit to such officious impertinence, and even they are growing restive, for three of our fellow-passengers declined the proffered tract, while a fourth, after facetiously asking if it was a race card, told the distributor to apply it to a purpose which we cannot describe.

MR. C. STOCKER, who has recently opened a Freethought newspaper and book store in Liverpool, has made acquaintance with the Christian charity of his neighbors. His window has been broken, and occasionally a handful of mud is cast over his goods. Pious humbugs and bigots visit his shop now and then, and open their minds pretty freely when they find nobody in but Mrs. Stocker. One visitor expressed a desire to burn the whole concern, another wondered at their audacity, and wished he could prosecute them. Two little girls were passing one day, and the elder said to the younger, "Don't you look in that shop, the priest said you wasn't to." Mr. Stocker, however, is not frightened. He sells away to those who will buy, and already he finds a brisker demand for *The Freethinker* and the *National Reformer*.

IN a tract published by the American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions, entitled "The Grand Motive to Missionary Effort," we are told, "The heathen are involved in the ruins of the Apostacy, and are expressly doomed to

perdition. Six hundred millions of deathless souls on the brink of hell! What a spectacle!" If there be any man with a human heart in all Christendom who really believes, fully realising what it is which he believes, that a God has made millions of creatures who will be tortured for ever in hell fire for not having heard of or accepted Christianity, *he* is indeed a spectacle. Even when poor humanity is seen in its lowest phases, we retain some belief in its higher possibilities; but, for such an one, what is there left better than to take the advice of Job's wife, "Curse God and die"?

THE Rev. C. R. Morse, of Calstock, has declared that the Church of England should treat Dissenters as the Jews did the Samaritans. To enter a chapel or to trade with a Nonconformist is a sin in the sight of God. How these Christians love one another!

THE Guernsey parsons are a 'cute lot. They keep a certain amount of every collection for a charity. The parson mounts the pulpit, preaches a rousing sermon, cries Give, give, give! and, after the collection is made, goes into the vestry, and, like a smart man, pockets his commission.

THE *Clerkenwell Press* praises the work of the Rev. W. Dawson, who has paid the expenses of the Christian Evidence lecturers on Clerkenwell Green until the last two months. It also says that "after these lectures there is an offer of discussion; but, although many sceptics are present, it is only occasionally that they have the courage to reply to the lecturer." Yet, a little later, it admits that Secular lecturers discourse on the Green to large audiences. Does it suppose that they are going to leave their own stations in order to provide a large audience for Christian speakers who can't get one for themselves?

FRANCIS GRIFFITHS, a Salvationist only converted a fortnight, has been sent to prison for four months for brutally assaulting his wife. The poor woman, who lives in Birmingham, will enjoy a brief period of freedom from prayers and thrashings, after which she will have to practise St. Paul's maxim, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your husbands."

A MEETING was called at Bedworth to discuss the water supply. Some objected to the scarcity of the vital fluid, and said it had something to do with the outbreak of fever. Others argued that "illness came from the Lord, and he sent it when he thought fit." Of course these people hadn't had fever themselves.

CORRESPONDENCE.

JOSEPH'S RELATIONS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

DEAR SIR.—One of your prize Bible Questions, I presume, with the view of showing the absurdity of tracing Jesus as a descendant of David if the story of the Incarnation be admitted, asks, What relation was Joseph to the Holy Ghost? The following anecdote will, I think, give a correct solution of the difficulty.

Pat Murphy was asked why he did not take proceedings against Tim O'Connor, who had done him many unneighborly tricks and injuries. Pat replied "Faix, he's a kind of relation of mine." "Why, what relation Pat?" "Well, you see, my wife had a child to him before we were married."

LUCIANUS.

WHAT NEXT?

So Christianity is played out is it, Mr. Laon? And what, I pray you, is going to take its place? You concede (*Freethinker*, p. 51) it is "one of a number of religions that have in succession garnered up the thoughts and aspirations of various races of men." Can you then name its successor? Where is your gospel for the weary and heavy laden? Christianity is becoming extinct. Very good. But Christianity only has existed because it has supplied certain natural cravings. Are those cravings extinct? Are what are called the religious instincts becoming eliminated by science, or are they only being elevated and improved? Is the conscious life of a man with all its thoughts and aspirations, hovering for a few short years between the illimitable past and the unknown future, on this planet suspended in infinite space, no longer a mystery, and has he by eating of the tree of knowledge become indeed a god already? I pause for a reply.

J. W.

SPECIAL NOTICE.

MR. FOOTE will lecture to-day (Sunday, October 2nd) in the Baskerville Hall, Birmingham: morning, at 11 o'clock, "Poverty, Priestcraft, and Privilege;" evening, at 7, "The Religion of the Future." On Wednesday, October 5th, Mr. Foote will give a Reading at the London Secular Choral Union's Quarterly Concert, Hall of Science, London.

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

October 8th & 9th, West Hartlepool; 10th, Middlesboro'; 11th, Spennymoor; 12th, Blaydon; 13th, Jarrow; 14th, South Shields; 16th, Newcastle; 23rd, Claremont Hall, London; 25th, Walworth; 30th, Edinburgh.

November 4th, Paisley; 6th, Glasgow; 13th, Hall of Science, London; 20th, Sheffield; 27th, Manchester.

December 4th, Huddersfield; 11th, Claremont Hall, London; 18th, Rotherham.

CORRESPONDENCE.

ALL business communications to be addressed to Mr. W. J. RAMSEY, 28, Stonecutter Street, London, E.C.

LITERARY communications to the Editor, Mr. G. W. FOOTE, No. 9, South Crescent, Bedford Square, London, W.C.

M. NUNN.—Our space is too limited for a discussion of Food Reform. There are many interesting and important topics which lie outside our scope. We cannot return rejected manuscripts without stamps are enclosed for postage, and all answers to correspondents must go through this column.

DEEP INTEREST.—If the Rev. W. Howard, as you say, admits that Mr. Foote was "able and courteous" in the debate with him, that is all any rational person can expect. It is not likely that Mr. Howard will admit that he was defeated. You say he boasts of a victory. Let him. The Stockton Freethinkers are perfectly satisfied. We agree with you that it is a pity there was not a full report of the debate. That would speak for itself. But Mr. Howard's statement, that if a vote of the audience had been taken the decision would have been overwhelmingly in his favor, is sheer nonsense. How can the question be determined in that way? Five hundred Christians can easily outvote two hundred Secularists, but the question would remain just where it was. If Mr. Howard "wishes a public debate on the Bible" Mr. Foote is ready to oblige him at a month's notice, or he is ready to hold a written discussion with him in *The Freethinker*. We are afraid, however, that Mr. Howard will not discuss his own creed.—Your statement, "Your *Romances* interest and delight me: I have lent them to a great many Christians here, one of whom actually said that it was difficult to believe the Bible after reading them," is very gratifying. We are also pleased to know that you "take a few extra copies of *The Freethinker*," and that you regard it as "a rare weekly dish of rich varieties."

T. RITCHIE.—Thanks for the extracts. We shall be glad of more at any time.

J. BROTHERTON.—We are pleased to know the *Freethinker* "constitutes your weekly treat," and thank you for offering to distribute the circulars, which we have forwarded. We hope to be able to publish a weekly cartoon, as you desire, by and by.

C. YOUNG.—December 18th is booked for you.

W. CROPPER.—Mr. Foote has written you.

J. HEY.—In our next.

We thank the unknown correspondent who sent us a copy of the *Ashton Reporter*, containing a long report of Mr. Foote's lecture on the "House of Lords," and of the introductory speech of the chairman, the Rev. J. Preston.

BRUNO.—Thanks for the cuttings. Yes, this journal is well patronised by Freethinkers.

C. B. BOND.—The publisher says the numbers were sent. We note your words "I read your literature with interest, and the cause is rapidly becoming popular in this little town."

A. ASHLING, in sending us some cuttings, for which we are obliged, says of the *Freethinker*: "Devout Christians in every direction are condemning it—a true sign of success." He hopes all our readers will push the paper about among their acquaintances.

J. ELLIS.—Circulars for distribution forwarded. Thanks.

H. SWIFT.—The subject is a little overdone. The hero of your verse deserves all your praise, but we don't like to see the butter laid on too thick. A good petition in his favor is better than a eulogistic poem.

SUGAR PLUMS.

ADMIRAL MAXSE is likely to stand for Portsmouth at the next election, and we sincerely trust that he will be returned at the head of the poll. So liberal a thinker at every point of the compass would be a most valuable accession to the House of Commons, and it is to be regretted that he did not enter Parliament many years ago.

ALTHOUGH we are not politicians in this paper, we cannot refrain from drawing attention to a letter which Admiral

Maxse has just privately printed. It is an answer to Mr. Auberon Herbert's letter to the *Times* of August 31st, entitled "Wanted—Some Principles." The editor of the *Times* declined to insert it, and Admiral Maxse says with great force that "of course editors in their own office are de-pots, and one of their methods of cooking public opinion is to publish only one side of a question, and to pretend that the public do not care to hear more about it." Admiral Maxse protests against Mr. Auberon Herbert's statement that certain land reformers lack principles, and twits him with having made too many changes himself. He maintains that the doctrine of "laissez-faire" does not apply to property in land, "as Mr. Auberon Herbert ought to know if he had properly studied the words of his beloved master, Mr. Herbert Spencer; and if he asks me how far I am prepared to apply this principle, I say just so far as it is reasonable and convenient to do so in the interests of the greatest number of human beings composing Society." Admiral Maxse's letter should be widely circulated.

CAPTAIN BEDFORD PIM, who is making an effort to raise subscriptions for a testimonial to Charles Newdegate, for his "bold and spirited" attempt to get £500 from Mr. Bradlaugh, got a warm reception from the Clerkenwell working men on the 20th ult. He came to open a debate on the evils of Free Trade, and began by inviting any opponent to "peel off his coat and have it out with him in a fair fight." In the debate which followed he was unkindly reminded of the sham delegates at the Trades Congress and Honduras Bonds. Ultimately, on the motion of Mr. W. J. Ramsey, seconded by R. Forder, the following resolutions were carried almost unanimously, amidst enthusiastic cheering, for Mr. Gladstone, Mr. Bright, and Charles Bradlaugh: "That this meeting is of opinion that a Free Trade policy is best calculated to better the condition of working-men, and denounces the so-called Fair Trade agitation as a delusion and a sham;" "That Captain Bedford Pim be invited to lecture on 'How foreign loans are financed, with special reference to Honduras bonds.'"

MR. GEORGE HOWE, 2, Falcon Court, Fleet Street, has published, at the price of one penny, "The Employers' Liability Act, 1880." As workmen are universally interested in the provisions of this Act it is to be hoped that Mr. Howe's publication will have a wide sale.

The *South Wales Daily News* is a very outspoken paper. Its article on the speech of a certain Rev. Vincent Saulez is quite refreshing. Parson Saulez attended a Conservative meeting, and bitterly denounced the education of the people.

"Improved education was now leading our people to be all masters; and if we wished to be all masters, where were our servants to be? Education was, in his opinion, placing people so much above the position that God had intended them to be in that he felt it was doing harm rather than good."

This little excursion affords the *News* an excellent opportunity of castigating his arrogance, which it playfully does in a racy article concluding thus:—

"School Boards he assures us, are doing harm rather than good. It seems that they are elevating, lifting up the children instead of rolling them in the mire. When they grow up they will not listen to rubbish, and then what will the Rev. Vincent Saulez do? He will be a shepherd without sheep. That will be a grievous blow to his aspirations. We are afraid, too, that there is no cure for the mischief. The only thing we can suggest is that the rev. gentleman should give himself up to study and meditation, so as to be prepared to teach even his masters. He cannot expect the universe to be brought to a dead stand until he has made up to it."

Mr. Saulez probably went to bed and took gruel after reading that.

LIBERTY of Conscience is being guarded in New Zealand. The Hon. Mr. Menzies' Education Act Amendment Bill consists of two classes. No. 1 gives the short title. The second is as follows:—Section eighty-four of the Education Act, 1877, is hereby amended by adding to subsection two the following words, namely:—"Provided always that any such committee may, if it sees fit, direct that a portion of the Holy Scriptures shall be read aloud by the scholars of one or other of the senior classes every morning at the opening of the school; but no child shall be compelled to attend at the reading herein provided for if his or her

parent or guardian shall inform the committee or the teacher in writing that they object to such attendance."

THE unprecedented success of Col. Ingersoll's pamphlet, "What shall I do to be saved?" the Bijou edition of which has reached its twenty-fifth thousand, has been followed up by the issue of John Asgill's Defence, which we review in another column. We understand that No. 3 will be Col. Ingersoll's "Mistakes of Moses."

THE International Freethought Congress, held at the Hall of Science, London, on Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday last, was a thorough success. With one exception the foreign delegates were commendably brief in their speeches. Dr. Buchner, the celebrated German scientist, presided most admirably, and delivered some very eloquent speeches which were greeted with storms of applause. Delegates were present from America, France, Holland, and Belgium. Their names and reports of their speeches will be found in the *National Reformer*.

MRS. BESANT acted as translator to Dr. Buchner in a way which we lack words to praise. Mr. Bradlaugh delivered a powerful address on the Sunday evening, when the hall was so packed that people were glad to get on the roof, and another eloquent speech, full of fine feeling, before Dr. Buchner's closing remarks. Dr. Aveling read a characteristic paper on Science and Religion, which was loudly cheered; Mr. Joseph Synes delivered a neat speech on State Teaching in his bright, humorous, telling style; and Mr. G. W. Foote spoke on both subjects. Mr. Holyoake was not present at the open meetings, but he sent a brief paper, which was read for him by Mr. Swaagman on Tuesday evening. It was, of course, smartly written, but if Mr. Holyoake had been present himself it would have been better received. Criticism is very good, but somehow people don't like too much of it unless it goes hand in hand with work.

THE *Daily News* and the *Standard* gave no report of the proceedings, but the *Times* and the *Chronicle* gave over half a column each. This is a sign of progress. A few years ago no London paper would have noticed such a Congress at all.

DOLET,

THE FREETHOUGHT MARTYR.

III.

DOLET's intention on leaving Padua was to return to France, but he was persuaded to accompany Jean de Langeac, Bishop of Limoges, who was then on his way to Venice as Ambassador from France. At the early age of twenty-one Dolet became his secretary. Jean de Langeac had been Ambassador to Poland, Portugal, Hungary, Switzerland, Scotland, England, and Rome, and few men of his time had seen more of the world; he was also a patron of men of letters, and himself a man of learning and culture; and his selection of Dolet as his secretary speaks highly for the young Frenchman's character and attainments.

As the duties of his office were not heavy, Dolet found ample leisure for study. He attended the lectures of Egnazio, and continued the preparation of materials for his great work, "The Commentaries on the Latin Tongue." He also found time in this "fairy city of the heart," as Byron calls it, to fall in love. But his mistress was soon taken by death, as his dearest friend had been before. His epitaph on the fair Elma is described as "stilted and pretentious," and we may conclude that his heart was not severely wounded. At his age, and in that magical city, he was bound to fall in love with some fair one, and his passion was probably no more than a flush of youthful spirits.

Dolet's stay in Venice was but brief. Early in 1532, at the instance of De Langeac, who charged himself with his *protège's* maintenance while his studies were being completed, he entered as a law student the University of Toulouse. Under the Romans, and still more under the Visigoths, Toulouse had been the most polished city of Gaul; but at this time it was given over to orthodoxy and ignorance. It

had been, centuries earlier, the head-quarters of the simple Albigenses, who had for their many virtues and lack of faith been exterminated by what Mr. Christie well describes as "one of the most horrible and brutal persecutions which the history of the world records," before which "the persecutions of the Christians by the Pagan emperors of Rome fade into insignificance." Thousands of men, women and children were slain by sword and fire, and a still greater number were tortured, wounded, imprisoned and robbed. The most smiling and prosperous part of France was changed into a desert. But heresy was crushed, and the most heretical became the most orthodox city in France. At Toulouse, St. Dominic founded his celebrated order, and there shortly after his death the Inquisition was established. Not only the governors of Languedoc, but even the kings of France themselves, could not enter Toulouse until they had taken an oath before the Inquisition to maintain the faith and the Holy Office. In the Place de Salins more eminent heretics were "roasted for the love of God" than in any other city except Paris. Toulouse, even in 1562, anticipated the St. Bartholomew massacre by a wholesale slaughter of the Huguenots within its walls; and "an annual fête in memory of the happy event was instituted in the city, and subsequently confirmed by a Bull of Pope Pius IV., who granted special indulgences to those who took part in it." After the St. Bartholomew massacre at Paris, three hundred Huguenots were led out of prison one by one and butchered by eight students of the University, and the receipts for their payment are said to be still in existence. In the year 1611, Pierre Girardie, the Inquisitor-General, tried and condemned to death a boy of nine years of age, and the poor child was duly burned alive. Centuries have elapsed since, but one's flesh creeps in recording the infamy.

This citadel of orthodoxy is associated in history with three notable heretics, Bruno, Vanini, and Voltaire. Mr. Christie does not seem to be aware that Giordano Bruno reached Toulouse in the middle of the year 1577, after his flight from Geneva and the tender mercies of Calvin's disciples, and was there elected Public Lecturer to the University, an office which he filled with great success until 1579, when he sought a wider sphere in Paris. During these two years there must have been a lull of intolerance, or Bruno's scepticism in such a city would have certainly cost him his life.

Vanini was burnt alive at Toulouse, on the Place St. Etienne, February 19th, 1619. Mr. Christie assigns a different date, 1618, and a different spot, the Place de Salins. And he does not allude to one atrocious circumstance of Vanini's martyrdom. Before being burnt alive, the sentence of the Court was that his tongue should be cut out, and as he was obstinate at the stake his tongue had to be plucked out with pincers!

At Toulouse, in 1762, Jean Calas was condemned to be broken on the wheel. It was this ecclesiastical murder which proved the grand humanity of Voltaire, and gave him an opportunity of standing forth before the whole civilised world as the dauntless champion of justice. Voltaire's vindication of Calas was one of the finest achievements in modern history. It taxed all his wonderful powers, his generosity, his logic, his persuasiveness, his wit, his matchless finesse, and his preternatural energy.

The populace of Toulouse in Dolet's age were "what their spiritual pastors had made them." The Reformation was ridiculed in the most sacred part of the cathedral, where a carved figure of a pig was placed, with the inscription, "*Calvin porc prechant*,"—pig Calvin preaching. "If," says Mr. Christie, "rain was desired, the statues of the saints were removed from their places and carried in procession through the city. If a flood was threatened, prayers were addressed to the river itself, and a cross was placed beneath its waves." The church bells never ceased ringing, the people were surrounded with crucifixes, holy pictures, and relics, and, as an orthodox modern historian says, "the whole life of an inhabitant of Toulouse was a perpetual confession of the Catholic faith."

Soon after his arrival, Dolet witnessed his first auto-da-fé. He saw Jean de Cartuce burnt at the stake in June, 1532. The greater Rabelais was composing the first book of his *Pantagruel* at this time, and he gives the martyr a niche in his immortal pages. He also satirises the pious city wherein the deed was wrought: "From thence Pantagruel came to Toulouse, where he learned to dance very well and to play

with the two-handed sword, as the fashion of the scholars of the said university is. But he stayed not long there when he saw that they stuck not to burn their regents alive like red herrings, saying, Now God forbid that I should die this death, for I am by nature dry enough already without being heated any further."

Dolet viewed the state of Toulouse with great indignation, which he lost no time in expressing. On the 9th of October, 1533, he was unanimously chosen "imperator" by the French students. His first oration is said to "possess little that is worthy of our attention." But his second oration was more important. He alluded to Jean de Carutue and branded his execution as a murder; he declared that the city was "given over to superstitions worthy only of the Turks;" and he boldly questioned its right to "impose its notions of Christianity on all men." His enemies used these passages against him, and early in January, 1534, he found himself in prison. His imprisonment was not of long duration, but it was the beginning of all his misfortunes. During the remaining thirteen years of his life he was five times imprisoned, and nearly half his days were spent in confinement. Well does M. Boulmier remark that Dolet's harangue laid the first faggot of the terrible pile on which, thirteen years later, he was to be consumed.

G. W. FOOTE.

FREETHOUGHT GLEANINGS

RELIGION.

Look on this spot—a nation's sepulchre!
Abode of gods, whose shrines no longer burn.
Even gods must yield—religions take their turn:
'Twas Jove's—'tis Mahomet's; and other creeds
Will rise with other years, till man shall learn
Vainly his incense soars, his victim bleeds;
Poor child of Doubt and Death, whose hope is built
on reeds.

Bound to the earth, he lifts his eyes to heaven—
Is't not enough, unhappy thing, to know
Thou art? Is this a boon so kindly given,
That being, thou wouldst be again, and go,
Thou knows't not, reck'st not to what region, so
On earth no more, but mingled with the skies!
Still wilt thou dream on future joy and woe!
Regard and weigh yon dust before it flies:
This little urn saith more than thousand homilies.

Byron.

OLD MODES OF THOUGHT.—I am now convinced, that no great improvements in the lot of mankind are possible, until a great change takes place in the fundamental constitution of their modes of thought. The old opinions in religion, morals, and politics, are so much discredited in the more intellectual minds as to have lost the greater part of their efficacy for good, while they have still life enough in them to be a powerful obstacle to the growing up of any better opinions on those subjects.—*J. S. Mill*, "Autobiography."

TESTING OUR GODS.—A poor man, in our day, has many gods foisted on him; and big voices bid him, "Worship or be —!" in a menacing or confusing manner. What shall he do? By far the greater part of said gods, current in the public, whether canonised by Pope or Populus, are mere dumb Apises and beatified Prize-oxen; nay, some of them, who have articulate faculty, are devils instead of gods. A poor man that would save his soul alive is reduced to the sad necessity of sharply trying his gods whether they are divine or not; which is a terrible pass for mankind, and lays an awful problem on each man. The man must do it, however. At his own peril he will have to do this problem too, which is one of the awfulest; and his neighbors, all but a most select portion of them, portion generally not clad in official tiaras, can be of next to no help to him in it, nay rather will infinitely hinder him in it, as matters go.—*Carlyle*, "Latter-Day Pamphlets," p. 254.

"The superior man is Catholic and no partizan."—*Confucius*, "Lun Yu," book ii., chap. xiv., p. 127, Legge's translation.

BLASTS FROM THE NORTH.

"And a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind."
—1 Kings xix., 11.

MRS. HARRIET LAW once troubled the souls of the pious in Houghton-le-Spring, near Sunderland; the result was the Rev. James Milligen, who is the prototype of Presbyterian bigotry, was requested to reply to the infidel in two lectures. The proceeds of the lectures were given to the Houghton-le-Spring Mechanics' Institute, and went to buy books. I went to see what sort of books the rev. gentleman's lectures had procured, and, oh, ye gods! the naughty young men had filled one shelf with *infidel literature*. Tyndall, Darwin, Huxley, Taine, were there, purchased with the money of the pious.

I WANDERED as far as a bookstore in Sunderland the other day and scanned the shelves. I remarked to the dealer that his shelves were creaking under the weight of Theology—doctrines, evidence, sermons, etc. "Yes," said the bookseller, "religious literature is at a stand here, I can sell anything but that; I sell that stuff to auctioneers at a shilling a hundredweight." Dear at that, I thought, dear at that.

A PHILANTHROPIC Christian is advertising in a Newcastle paper, soliciting donations of books for benighted sailors. He fears the sailors have not sufficient interesting reading matter, so he calls upon the kind-hearted to send in bibles and prayer-books. I, for one, shall not respond to his request, as no sailor ever did me an injury, and even were sailors my worst enemies, I could not be so vindictive as to countenance such an insult and become a party to such an infliction.

THE Presbyterians on Tyneside have an organ in which they air their vagaries and let off their superfluous bigotry; they have named it the *English Household Magazine*. Fortunately it is known in very few "households."

A VENOMOUS little Tory rag, the *Sunderland Daily Post*, is bitter against Mr. Bradlaugh, and loses no opportunity of abusing him. I blew a copy of the little pestilence on the fire a few days ago and it stank.

THE *Newcastle Chronicle* reminded its readers the other day that the sixth anniversary of the death of Joseph Barker was just passed. *De mortuis nil nisi bonum*, says the proverb, Well, Joseph Barker was a clever weathercock; I suppose he's been six years in heaven and deserves our commiseration.

THE NORTH WIND.

PROFANE JOKES.

A HIELAN' thief stole a bale of cloth from an old woman's shop in most barefaced manner. "Ye'll pay for that, ye thief," yelled the old woman. "When?" "At the Last Day." "Weel, sin' ther's sic lang credit, I'll e'en just tak anither."

AN aged colored man, hastening home from church, was asked why he was in such a hurry. "Oh, nothin' pertikler, boss," was his answer: "only I jes' heard at Confrence dat Sam Johnson's fell f'm grace, an' I though I'd get home 's soon's I could an' lock up my chickens! Dat's all."

THERE is a girl in Gloucester so modest that she will not allow "The Christian Observer" to remain in her room overnight.

A NOVEL TEXT.—A greengrocer and amateur preacher who lives within fifty miles of Gateshead was once "holding forth" at a place near his native town. After the preliminary services, he addressed the congregation as follows:—"Ma Christian friends, aal tyek ma tex' frev Look's gospel, nineteenth cheptor an' twenty-forst varse, where ye'll find these words:—'Thoo airt an oyster [austere] man.' Ma frinds, the Lord is ripresented as an oyster man; sinners is the oysters, an' Iivin's the poke te put them in!"

STRIKING HEAD-LINES.—When the *Chicago Times* comes to publish the revised Old Testament in full, a Boston paper, the *Transcript*, predicts that it will introduce the volume with head lines like these—"Creation unmasked! A Family Tragedy! Escape of the Murderer! A Fruitful Feud—An Apple Evicts Them! Fearful Freshet! Showers of Brimstone! Full Particulars! Interesting Developments!"

A minister called upon to open the Arkansas Senate with prayer repeated the Lord's Prayer. Whereupon one gentleman turned to another and said, "He stole that, and I will bet on it. I heard the same idea expressed two years ago at a funeral in Eureka."

THE RESURRECTION.—A few days ago two miners were standing in front of the General Post Office at Newcastle, viewing the new buildings at Amen Corner. "Noo, Geordie," said one, "that's a clivvor buildin' altegithor. Aa believe that used to be part o' the chorchyard where ma gran'feythor wes barried." "Wey, ye beggor, Bill," responded the other, "hoo's them folks that's lying thor te get up at the Rissurrection wi' that greet buildin' o' the top o' them?"

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