

THE FREETHINKER.

REGISTERED FOR]

EDITED BY G. W. FOOTE.

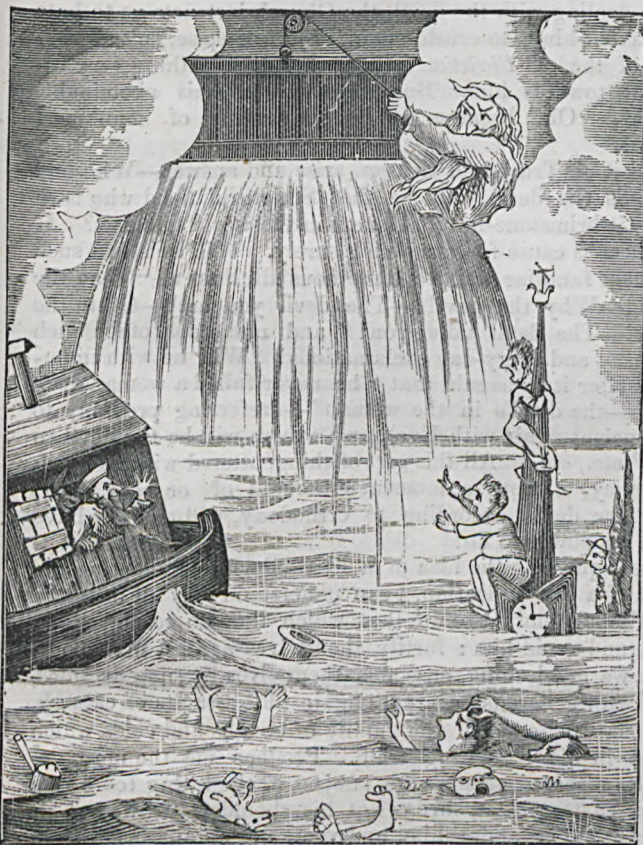
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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

"COMIC BIBLE" SKETCHES.—IV.



NOAH'S ARK.

"And Noah went in, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him into the ark, because of the waters of the flood. . . . All the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. . . . And every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground. . . . and Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark."—GENESIS VII., 7, 11, 23.

THE GOD CHRISTIANS SWEAR BY.—II.

(Continued from p. 122.)

God's original name was Jehovah or Jahveh. He was one of the deities of the early Jews. Natural selection applies to gods as well as animals, and Jehovah beat all his competitors as the fittest to survive. Baal, Moloch, Ashtaroth, and a crowd of other deities, perished in the struggle for existence.

Jehovah never denied the reality of his opponents; on the contrary, he fiercely resented their rivalry. He described himself as a *jealous god*. A husband could not be jealous of his wife unless there was another man to make love to her, and no god could be jealous unless there were other gods bidding for the adoration of his worshippers. Moses styled Jehovah "the lord God of the Hebrews," and Pharaoh in speaking to the prophet always refers to him as "your God." And he himself distinctly says, in the twelfth verse of the thirteenth chapter of *Exodus*, "against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment." This clearly implies that they were gods as well as he, although of inferior power. He was only the strongest member of a large family.

God the Son and God the Holy Ghost did not exist then. Jehovah was too much absorbed in the task of self-preservation to propagate himself. Only when his supremacy was undisputed did he find leisure to branch out in two directions.

But his great adversary existed. The Devil was active

from the beginning of the world, and held his own against Jehovah when Baal and all the other gods were demolished. Nay, he more than held his own; he outwitted and worsted his rival; and from the Fall until now he has secured the vast majority of the human beings whom the Lord made expressly for himself. The Devil pursues a Machiavellian policy. He allows God to create things and appropriates them afterwards. God invests all the capital and the Devil takes nearly all the profit.

This does not surprise us when we consider the Lord's ignorance. His knowledge and intelligence are about as small as those of a savage. The only explanation of this is that savages made him thousands of years ago.

While he worked hard at creating the world he quite forgot that the Devil was prowling about. When it was finished he retired to rest and the Devil turned everything upside-down. Why did he go to sleep at all? Or why did he not depute an archangel to watch the world while its boss took a nap?

When he made Adam as the flower of creation he pronounced everything *good*, but soon after he found it was not good for man to be alone. Any idiot might have known that. There was poor Adam, monarch of all he surveyed, and king of the dreariest paradise that ever existed. What are all the flowers in the world worth with no lovely flower of womanhood to crown them?

God then made Adam a wife. All the nothing out of which everything was made being used up, some of the manufactured article had to be employed. The Lord could no more make something out of nothing, not even a curate; so Eve was made out of one of Adam's ribs. The first woman was manufactured from a spare rib. Fortunately the Lord did not bungle over this job; but suppose he had forgotten some of his apparatus, and while he was gone for it the dog had carried off that bone!

So far were Adam and Eve from being "good," that God soon after cursed them up and down, and their descendants were so bad that he resolved to drown them as an old lady does her stock of kittens. What a queer method! Why did he not reform his children? Why not hang a few priests and put a few schoolmasters in their places? The Lord's ways are not our ways, and he does as he likes with his own.

Even then he bungled afresh and perpetrated blunder within blunder. Instead of drowning all and starting with a new stock, he saved eight of the bad old lot. These replenished the world with wretched creatures like themselves, and the people after the Flood were, if anything, worse than those before it. Before Noah died there were not ten righteous men found in one populous city to save it from destruction, and no doubt other cities were very little better.

After the Flood this God promised that he would never again deluge the earth. But the people said "Walker!" and began to build a big tower with its top in heaven, so that if another Flood came they might mount the stairs and step clean on to the golden floor. How high heaven is we cannot say, but no tower could ever near it. When it reached a certain height it would tumble about the builders' ears. But God did not know this any more than they. He thought they might succeed. He knew nothing of gravitation or the principles of architecture. His godship became alarmed, and instead of leaving them alone until their tower toppled over, he afflicted them with a diversity of speech. One man talked Sanskrit, another Monoglian, another American Indian, another Dutch, and another Double Dutch. The story represents God as ignorant of the simplest laws of nature, and stupid as a hydrocephalic idiot.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be continued.)



WHAT IS THE DEVIL?

From lisping infancy to old age, as soon as the young mind is able to receive impressions—it has presented to it in various ways and under various forms a strange creation, which continues with us through life, and which, according to the fanciful ideas of some, asserts a claim to us when dead. Universally the civilised infant, just able to articulate words, though yet unconscious of their meaning, has stamped upon its susceptibility a notion of the unknown and unseen presence of a spirit of good, which it is taught to revere, and of a spirit of evil which it is taught to dread and avoid.

The spirit of good is a power too mysterious lightly to discuss; but the spirit of evil, to wit, the great arch-fiend and enemy of mankind, as he is broadly termed, and known to us by the several appellations of Bogy, Old Scratch, Lucifer, Apollyon, Ahrimanes, Satan, Mephistopheles, Old Nick, and so forth, is proper aliment for our mental dessert. O versatile and many gifted spirit we desire further acquaintance with you.

Readers of Burn's "Address to the De'il" will remember the irreverent way in which the Prince of Pandemonium is therein handled, and may conclude that his brimstone highness—unless he has taken the matter in the light of a joke—has treated his reviler ere this to a plentiful supply of that unsavory soup. It is always as well to bear in mind that proverb about playing with fire, in its application to this subject, for if it be true what parsons say, that "the prince of hell will have his day," it is reasonable to suppose that he will treat none the better when he gets them below those who made sport of him whilst they were living above.

I have been at a Ranters' meeting ere now, and have heard a preacher terrify a crowded congregation with such a picture of hell torments that some persons have gone mad therewith. I am disposed to believe that the devil will show less lenity towards these noisy fanatics who make him out to be such a merciless monster, and his residence such an undesirable retreat, than to those who go the opposite length of poking fun at him. "Respect your enemies" is another good adage; therefore in case of your getting into the devil's clutches, let him not have it to say that you spoke of him ever in a manner unbecoming a gentleman.

I wish it were possible to arrive at something like a correct notion of what the devil is like in outward appearance—whether dignified or ludicrous—of an aspect to inspire terror, or provoke laughter. Whether of disposition grim, good humored, gossippy, taciturn, sarcastic, cruel, sardonic, sulky, generous, or what or how; because the descriptions we get of him (if to any sex he belongs) favor any of these ideas. Milton gives us a magnificent portrait of him, so does Byron. Holy Writ is of course opposed and its expounders are not likely to give any favorable coloring. Some authors have ventured upon a description of his attire, Porson says:—

"His vest it was red and his breeches were blue
With a hole at the back for his tail to come through."

I never could clearly see why the devil should be looked upon as the enemy of mankind. I cannot in any literal sense regard him an enemy of mine. Scriptural injunctions, and exhortations such as, "From all attacks and assaults of the devil," "From all the deceits of the world, the flesh, and the devil, good Lord deliver us," and so on, are very well as coming from a well paid priesthood, whose especial interest and business it is to abuse the devil; but taking a case individually, as my own to wit, I cannot understand what amount of ill the devil has ever done to me that I should turn upon him and anathematise him. Therefore, in the expectation of polite and tender treatment if I should be assigned to his care hereafter, I deem it politic and proper to behave respectfully towards him whilst here.

I am at a loss to understand where the infernal regions may be located. The underground or downward notion at one time entertained, and still occasionally favored, as in the descent of stage demons through traps, and in the significant direction of the forefinger downward whenever the fiend is referred to, are matters to my mind no longer tenable. They cannot be supposed to occupy any portion of our world, because we are some time or other to expect its dissolution. I am left, therefore, to the supposition that

they exist in some part of the space between the thousands of millions of orbs that are incessantly circling and whirling through it; and, accepting the belief that many of these orbs are inhabited with human beings, the amount of sinful population requiring accommodation must be something considerable. We may therefore imagine the infernal regions to be of vast extent.

The celestial country on the other hand, I take to be situated at a remote extremity, and of far greater extent in order to afford room for a still larger population which would comprise all that numerous class of thieves, murderers and vagabonds who commonly turn pious towards the end of their lives and consequently inherit the kingdom of heaven prepared by the priests for all those who truly repent and unfeignedly believe the Holy Gospel.

In dealing with the devil, the Church instructs us to hate and avoid him; to crush, chain, abjure, despise, spit at him. One of the old *Christian* fathers says do something very indecent towards him. But wherefore all this abominable usage? Oh, because he is the enemy of mankind! How?

Spirit of Truth and Reason, arise and answer—Who and what is the devil? Is he that Scriptural fiend who is to make it brimstone-hot for sinners in the world to come? If so, there is cause for trembling surely. Will he stand such frequent familiar and contemptuous allusions as "Who the devil!—Why the devil!—The devil you are!—Go to the devil!—The devil take you!" and numerous other such ordinary and every-day exclamations? Will he with impunity suffer it to be said that "he never failed a woman at a pinch—the devil's in the woman"—(referring probably to his ancient affair with Eve), and "there will be the devil to pay," etc., etc.? All this sort of thing, uttered with so much flippancy, without a moment's thought of or care about what the devil, according to orthodoxy, will one day have it in his power to do!

Relinquishing the idea of a literal devil and adopting the view of a personification, I can understand why all mankind should be exhorted to do that which they do voluntarily—shun and avoid him: fortify themselves against his attacks with warm clothing, ensconce themselves by snug firesides, arm with generous beverages against his assaults of catarrh, rheumatism, and all the family of coughs and colds which come in his desolating train. Produce me the most devoutly disposed person who, subject to the biting tooth of a north-eastern blast, shrugs not his shoulders, draws not his rug yet closer about him, and vents not an anathema upon the foul fiend who is thus attacking him. All well enough superficially to talk of winter jollity, of the fine bracing air of a winter's day,—yes, if well clad, but how if otherwise? And how if ever so well clad, when the north-easter comes tearing along and wraps the sky in leaden ugliness, and the sinking sun gives place to gloom and desolation? It is all stuff to prate about the glory of winter: it may be glorious to the wealthy and well-fed; to the starving poor it is devilish enough, and so they find it. "Oh, but how healthy," say some; yet they are not the wise who say it. Heat is the principle of life. Summer is the great revivifier. Summer generates life, winter destroys it.

Upon this ground then I take my stand. To my question—"What is the devil," my answer stand recorded. And now to examine how far Reason will sustain the interpretation.

PATROCLUS.

(To be concluded).

WHO'S AFRAID?

EVERYWHERE the clergy are showing signs of alarm. Even in godly Scotland, able doctors of divinity like Principal Caird and Professor Flint have been exhorting ministers and students to try and keep abreast of the thought of the age. They see that when the best intellect of a nation leaves a faith, it is bound to decay. Inferior religionists are trying new sensational forms of revivalism. Both are unconsciously aiding the cause they least desire to aid. Supernaturalists are striving against a stream stronger than themselves, and know not whither it is carrying them. We, mounted on the tide of Freethought, are bounding forward and know where we are going. With Science at the helm, our course is kept straight, and our topmost men begin to see the haven in sight. Driving backward by our tide, they dread untold dangers, and screech out that the ship of society is bound to destruction because it deserts them and the ways of steering laid down in their sacred antique chart. You have had your day ye black-robed white-chokered gentry; and a fine mess you've made of it. Clear the way

THE ATHEISTIC PULPIT.—SERMON XIII.

(Continued from p. 122.)

MATT. V. "*Ye are the salt of the earth*" (v. 13). If Christians ever were the salt of the earth, they must soon have lost their savour: as far as we can trace them back they have been the world's "bitters," without being anywise its tonics. Or—let me see! Salt of the earth! In large quantities salt renders soil absolutely barren. And wherever Christianity has reigned in unchecked sway, there has been a general dearth of all good things. *Ye are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid* (v. 14). This was no doubt intended to produce modesty. Those poor illiterate disciples of an equally ignorant master were the light of the world! Look at the Science, Philosophy, and Art of the world, and ask how much of it all is due to Jesus and his followers. Christianity never shed a ray of light upon anything. Its lantern is a dark one, having neither wick nor oil.

So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your father which is in heaven (v. 16). Let your rushlights shine, that men may honor the sun. Amen. What nonsense, to call upon twelve boobies to confer honor upon an infinite being! If the Father in heaven knew the rubbish his only begotten son was spouting on earth, he would have shown his good sense to have corrected him. It says little for that parent's fatherly qualities that his children behave so badly as they do. Worse behaved beings than sons and daughters of God there never were—ignorance, insolence, and brutality are their usual characteristics; and they are just like their father. *Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets* (v. 17).—No, no, Jesus, you had not the power, your countrymen still cling to them and leave your doctrines and religion alone.—*I came not to destroy, but to fulfil.* How fulfil? To keep, do you mean? to obey? If so, the Christian church sorely misunderstands you. What Jesus says about heaven and earth passing away is nonsense; but what he says of those who disobey Moses and the prophets shows him a Jew, not a Christian, and puts all Christians in the wrong—if he was right. Jesus knew no other law than that of Moses, no other inspired book than the Jewish Scriptures, he never hinted that any other was needed or would be written; yet his professed followers have almost superseded the Old Testament by the New, as they supersede the New Testament by their creeds, confessions, catechisms, and theological writings.

Jesus next proceeds to improve upon Moses, though he above said he came only to fulfil. "Thou shalt not kill," said Moses—though he was frightfully fond himself of killing. *Thou shalt not be angry with thy brother*, says Jesus; *to be so, thou shalt be in danger of the Judgment*, or local petty court. *If thou say, Raca to thy brother, thou shalt be in danger of the Council, the Sanhedrim, or the highest Jewish court; and to call thy brother a fool, shall expose thee to hell fire!* (v. 21, 22). Thus, it is bad to be angry, worse to say, Raca, but a damnable thing to call a brother a fool. Yet Jesus and Paul did not hesitate to call people fools. I hope they are not damned. If your brother is a fool and gives you good reason to tell him so, do it. It may open his eyes and lead to improvement. The clergy usually try to give the word "fool" here some deep and mysterious and dreadful meaning, in order to justify Jesus in his absurd denunciation of it; but it means nothing worse than fool. It may be an impropriety to call a foolish brother, or even a neighbor, a fool, but it is not a crime.

As to offering gifts at the altar (v. 23, 24), had Jesus been wise, he would not have sanctioned but condemned the miserable superstition. Gifts are offered at the altar which ought frequently to be paid as just debts to debtors; in every case it is disgraceful to waste upon gods what men, women and children so much need for their life.

Agree with thine adversary quickly, etc. (v. 25). Surely this ought to depend upon the justice of the case. If men can honestly avoid law and lawyers, they are great fools to have any connexion with them; but there are many cases when a man must be a coward and a fool to agree with his adversary. Though if Jesus had agreed with his adversaries, or even had made any rational defence before Pilate, he probably would not have gone to the cross.

The 27th and 28th verses are simply atrocious, for they condemn every healthy man that ever lived, and would, if they could be obeyed, depopulate the earth. Licentious-

ness is bad; asceticism is a thousand times worse. Verses 29 and 31 are most brutal, and their moral tendency debasing in the extreme. To fear hell at all is barbaric, to fear it to the extent of mutilating oneself or its equivalent is brutalising.

Had Jesus been a married man he might have spoken (v. 32) with some authority on the subject of divorce. None of his utterances on the sexual relationships are at all edifying. There are just causes of divorce; a divorce which is not a perfect divorce ought never to be effected; when once effected, the parties ought to be as free to marry again as bachelors and spinsters.

What Jesus says respecting perjury and swearing (v. 33—37) I entirely endorse, except that about the evil one. To swear is folly. A man that cannot be bound by a promise, cannot be bound by an oath. But it is amusing to note how Christians send Jesus to Coventry when it suits them. Their conduct and teaching on oaths are the most perfect hypocrisy that could be conceived. In most respects they are to day, as the result of purely secular influences, immeasurably superior to their Master; in respect to the oath business they are as far behind him. In that respect they are false, hypocritical and brutal. If they had their way, they would depopulate the world for the sake of their superstitions.

J. SYMES.

(To be continued.)

ACID DROPS.

Now murder is all the rage, and the hangman and the jail-chaplain are likely to have plenty of work on their hands, it is well to relieve our horror with a true story. A Bishop out in America visited one of the State-prisons and offered to officiate. "No need of you here, sir," said the head jailer, "we have eight preachers safely locked up, who are brought out each Sabbath to minister to their fellow-prisoners!" Exit Bishop.

SALVATIONISM did a good thing for poor Annie Lloyd, of Lambeth. This young girl, only fifteen years old, joined the "army," and soon after wrote to her father that she was "going to glory." Then she exhorted her friends to "fly from sin," and accused herself of being a "bad, wicked girl, whom nobody ought to speak to." She refused her meals and took to eating soda and drinking paraffin oil, and finally she flung herself out of a second-floor window. It is scarcely too much to say that if Salvationism peoples Heaven the place will be little other than an eternal lunatic asylum.

THERE was a nice little party a short time ago at the Hall of the St. Philips' Evangelical Mission, Landport. Two special sermons in aid of the funds produced £2 8s. 1½d., and this strenuous effort of charity was followed two days after by a tea-meeting. Some funny speeches were made. The Rev. J. J. Goundry expressed his hatred of "croakers and grumblers," and his opinion that they should not be argued with but kicked out or sunk in the sea. The chairman thought that "no civilisation was worth anything without the Christian element was in it," by which he of course means evangelical mission-halls and pious tea-fights. The Rev. T. W. Medhurst thought the way to get rid of grumblers was to make them Baptists, his opinion being founded on the same principle as that of the gentleman in the old story who said "there was nothing like leather." Then, with a sublime flight of fancy, he declared that there were as many heathen to be saved here as ever there were in China or Africa, and they meant to do this glorious work for the Lord. All on £2 8s. 1½d. we presume. It can't be done for the money. Every heathen costs ten times that modest sum to convert.

THE London correspondent of the *Western Daily Mercury* is rough on the Brooklyn "pastors." He writes thus:—

"The 'Clerical Cornerers' say there are 2,400 pastors and their official aids, and that they individually and collectively receive a higher remuneration than any descendants of the twelve poor fishermen ever known. The Pope and all his surroundings do not approach an income of these Republican divines—Peter's pence thrown in. One Brooklyn pastor pockets 25,000 dollars nett cash, another 18,000 dollars, a third 16,000 dollars, and the lowest 8,000 dollars to 6,000 dollars per annum. The first gets 'on an average twenty-seven suits of new clothes,

eight dozen of slippers,' and 'trunks full of pocket-handkerchiefs, bands, Bibles, *sutans* and *alls* for nothing.' He received nine new horses last year, and has eleven carriages for the usual orthodox number of incubatory or prospective pastors in olive branch condition clustering round the parsonage. The second has clad and put into prosperous and commercial pursuits all his wife's poor relations, and hopes to take an occasional turn down Wall Street on, if not in, the interest of his salary. The fourth has, in a manner that would make Shylock's pound of flesh delightfully leap in the freedom of justice and fair dealing, lent money out 'on call' at a percentage I would not dare to 'tell in Gath.' The fifth was found to be so closely allied with 'a Saving Bank Institution' that held up sixpenny deposits as the aim and object of all material goodness in men, and propagated 'penny readings' as the highest mental achievement of a British-imported literary feast, and yet failed in qualifying the deposits of the sixpenny element on the delineators of the penny nostrums, and therefore 'bust,' as the 'Clerical Cornerers' say. Hence this 'corner' and the outcome are dreaded like coals of fire on the heads of the churches in the city of biblical lore or bridge lengthiness."

How can the good Christians of Plymouth stand such disrespectful language about the godly? Is a revolution going on in leafy Devon?

A CHURCH of England priest in one of our agricultural districts walks about with his wife on one arm and a widow on the other. He carries a dog-whip and sports a terrier at his heels; and in church, we are told, he is very fond of "carrying his mortar-board from the altar to the pulpit." A profane parishioner sent him a note to this effect:—"I believe in the Trinity of the three hats: First, the priest's hat; secondly, the field-marshal's hat; and thirdly, the money hat: and yet they are not three hats but one old hat." The widow's name is Marshall.

A GENTLEMAN who lost his umbrella in a church, advertised for it in the newspapers, stating that the thief was well known but would be pardoned if he brought it back at once. The next morning his front yard was paved with umbrellas, and his letter-box full of notes saying the article had been taken by mistake and begging the owner to keep the affair quiet. Fact.

STAFFORD G. OGILVIE (who is he?) is "editing" and writing a series of "Pamphlets for the People." He seems to write in the interest of men like Newdegate and Randolph Churchill. He hates Free Trade, Free Land, Free Church, and above all Freethought. He describes a Freethinker as "a monster and a disgrace to humanity." Mr. Ogilvie is neither a credit nor a disgrace; he is simply insignificant. As the "people" won't buy his pamphlets we should like to know who pays for them.

PAINE'S "Age of Reason" has been seized at the Toronto (Canada) Custom House as *indecent!* That is quite a new way of suppressing heresy. Darwin's "Descent of Man" will soon be prosecuted for dealing with the habits of monkeys, and Huxley's "Lay Sermons" for indecent attacks on the cosmogony of Moses. Paine's works have been lied about often enough, but until now we never heard them called "indecent;" and the charge comes with especial grace from those who put the Bible into children's hands as the Word of God. That holy book contains some of the filthiest stories in existence.

AFTER this it is instructive to note that the race of "Kissing parsons" flourishes in full vigor. One of these gentry, not so very far from Toronto, was fined a dollar and costs for improper conduct towards a married woman. The American papers, North and South of the border, are full of clerical elopements and seductions; and, as we said, their Bible contains heaps of filth. Yet these hypocrites get the "Age of Reason" seized as indecent.

THE *Montreal Star* states that five hundred dollars have been subscribed to enable the importer of Paine's works to fight the matter out in the law courts, and that one result of the seizure is "a greatly augmented sale of anti-Christian literature."

THE Bishop of Chichester says that "if the Bishops were banished from the House of Lords, the temporal peers would not long maintain their place. It would be the first brick pulled out of a grand and noble constitutional building." Surely this is a mistake. There are plenty of Bishops in the

House of Lords, it is true, but there isn't a *brick* among them. If, added the Bishop of Chichester, the Church should ever be disestablished we might cry "Ichabod—the glory of England is departed." How parsons do howl when trade threatens to become slack.

A PIOUS lady asks "It is lawful to kiss unbaptised babies?" Any decent baby would refuse to be kissed by a woman who could ask such a question.

A MYSTERY.

Skilful a thesis to maintain,
A student in divinity,
Asked me in triumph to explain
The mystery of the Trinity.
Quoth I, my friend, I think I can,
The doctrine may seem odd;
But as nine tailors make a man
Three persons make a God."

THE LION.

LIKE UNTO LITTLE CHILDREN.

DR. STONE, in his work on the "Progress of Fanaticism," gives an instance of the effect of a literal belief in the words of Scripture almost as absurd as the case of John Asgill, who relying on the words of Jesus, expected not to see death. He states that about the beginning of the present century, during an extensive religious excitement in Kentucky, many persons insisted on the words "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven," being literally understood. Some commenced playing marbles in the church; an old lady took a side-saddle seat upon her umbrella, and cantered up and down the aisle; and an old gentleman, crossing a "fiery, untamed steed"—his stick—rushed like a high mettled racer to and fro, exclaiming joyfully, "Oh, my dear brethren and sisters, the childlike spirit carrieth me to heaven on a wooden hoss! Hallelujah!"

ATHEISTIC SONNETS.

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

XIII.—MICHAEL.

Great bugler in the army of the sky!
Thy trumpet notes the faithful hear in heaven,
Glad note to knaves and fools who die forgiven,
And go to lounge in golden streets on high;
Apart the clouds at thy command are riven,
And he alone who best can cheat and lie
Shall through the folds of fleecy fabric fly,
While honest men, who dare to doubt, are driven
By thy dread blast to dark and sulphurous hell,
For ever more in torment fierce to gasp,
While thieves and murderers for ever swarp
The golden harps that endless music swell;
Town clerk and crier of the angel choir,
Blow on, while sceptics shriek in endless fire.

Amen.

THE BIBLE IN SCHOOLS.

It was my fortune the other day to hear an ordinary little boy of eight years give to his companion a few Bible stories he had learnt at school. His secular knowledge did not amount to much, but his knowledge of religious narratives and hymns was something remarkable, and he knew the Catechism by heart. He had not read the Bible, but some good stories had been told him at school. This is how he told the story of Cain and Abel.

There was once Cain and Abel, and they was brothers. And God told them to sacrifice. So Abel brought a nice lamb, and Cain he brought nice flowers. And Abel killed his lamb and sent it up to God. And Cain he sent his flowers. God liked Abel's lamb, but God he didn't care for flowers. So Cain he got wild and killed Abel. And God said, "Cain, where's Abel?" And he said, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Then God put marks on his head, so that people should know he'd killed his brother, and sent him into the streets.

As many other stories were told in much the same way, it may be imagined that I was greatly amused. But I was not amused when I reflected on the time this little fellow had been made to devote to the acquisition of such rubbish.

Z.

WHICH is the easiest of the three professions, law, physic, or divinity? Do you give it up? Divinity—because it is easier to preach than to practice.

SPECIAL NOTICE.

Mr. FOOTE will lecture on Saturday evening, November 26th, in the Islington Public Hall, Manchester, on "Secularism: Its Truth and Worth." The next day, Sunday, three times in the Grosvenor Assembly Room: 11, "Darwin *versus* Moses"; 3, "The Gospel of Secularism: a Reply to the Bishops and the Church Congress"; 6.30, "Infidel Death Beds." On Monday evening, Hyde Eclectic Institute, on "Infidel Death Beds."

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

December 4th, Huddersfield; 11th, Claremont Hall, London; 18th, Rotherham. 20th, Walworth.

January 5th, 12th, 19th, 26th, and 29th Hall of Science, London; 8th, Bradford; 15th, Rochdale; 22nd, Halifax.

February 19th, Grimsby; 26th, Liverpool.

March 5th, Claremont Hall, London.

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J. GIBSON.—Thanks.

J. T. JONES.—There ought to be no difficulty in procuring the *Freethinker* in Birmingham. Insist on your newsagent supplying you or take your custom somewhere else. Mr. Ramsey, at our publishing office, will post you the numbers you require on receipt of stamps. Winwood Roade's book is published at 7s. 6d. For prices of Mr. Foote's pamphlets see advertisement.

J. BROTHERTON.—Received with thanks.

BOTH SIDES.—We are always glad to receive good extracts or cuttings.

W. CAMPBELL.—We thank you.

J. BINGHAM.—Such cuttings are very useful. We are pleased to know that the *Freethinker* gives such satisfaction in your district.

W. R. GREGG.—Thanks for the cuttings. As you are anxious about the "dear little *Freethinker*" we are glad to tell you that its circulation increases every week. We are unable to say when the French "Comic Bible" will be completed. Our reproductions, which are better drawn than the originals, will ultimately be published in book form.

J. LOWE.—Mr. Foote's new pamphlet, "Atheism and Suicide," is not a reprint of his article on Mr. Tennyson. Only a few passages of that article are retained, and all the rest (more than three fourths of the whole) is entirely new matter.

W. BRELY.—We shall always be glad to hear from you. Thanks for the story.

E. S. JONES.—It is excellent. Thanks.

C. A. CLARKE.—Received.

J. D. writes that a Jewish friend, whom he induced to attend Mr. Foote's lecture at the Hall of Science, on "Hebrew Old Clothes," is about to become a member of the National Secular Society.

TO OUR READERS.

DEARLY beloved! For your edification in the true faith, for your amusement, for the general welfare of the Cause, and for the particular welfare of this pious and ever-blessed journal, we intend to bring out a CHRISTMAS NUMBER of the *Freethinker*. It will be beautifully printed on toned paper exactly like that used by the recording angel in heaven. Our special artists, celestial and demoniac, will exert all their genius to adorn it in a manner worthy of themselves and of the lofty themes they illustrate; our best writers, gathered from every quarter of the Freethought world, will tax their noble brains to provide the richest reading; and no effort on our part shall be lacking to make this CHRISTMAS NUMBER a dainty casket of Freethought jewels, which you may rejoice to treasure yourselves and be proud to hand down as a precious heirloom to your children, who will be equally proud to hand it down to theirs, and so on world without end.

This glorious announcement has exhausted our spirit, and we are almost as prone and sick as the holy prophet Daniel after one of his visions. We therefore appeal to your strong love for us, and desire you to wait with all possible patience until next week, when we shall doubtless be sufficiently recovered to allay your ardent thirst for further tidings of this wondrous thing. From our couch of repose and renovation, dearly beloved, we for the present bid you a sweet adieu.

SUGAR PLUMS.

AN old Freethinker, seventy-two years of age, writes to us from a Devonshire village. About five years ago he purchased a small hand-press, and ever since he has distributed leaflets through the district. One of these lies before us, and although its syntax is a little shaky, we have no doubt it would do a great deal of good to the villagers, for it is intelligible enough and its sentiments are admirable. The old gentleman, who has been a Freethinker more than fifty years, states that he possesses "some of the handwriting of the immortal Thomas Paine." This brave pioneer in those obscure regions should shame the backward amongst us into more active work for the cause.

EVEN in that remote Devonshire village the *Freethinker* is read and appreciated by not a few.

THE annual supper of the Central London Branch of the National Secular Society took place at Fowler's Essex Hotel, on Monday last. Thirty-two members did justice to the splendid repast which Mr. Fowler provided. If he serves other people as he serves Freethinkers, we should say that in the whole East of London the Essex Hotel is the place to take your money. Mr. Foote presided over the conviviality after supper. There was a good deal of what Carlyle calls "post-prandial or leg-of-mutton oratory" in the way of proposing and responding to toasts, and some excellent songs were sung. The few ladies present enjoyed themselves as thoroughly as the gentlemen, and no doubt all will work the better, not worse, for such a pleasant re-union. Mr. Forder testified to the progress the National Secular Society is making, and Mr. Ramsey gave an interesting account of the outdoor propaganda during the past summer. Mr. Bradlaugh's health was heartily drunk; and the editor of the *Freethinker* was similarly honored. Altogether it was a "jolly" evening, and the supper-party was declared to have been the most successful ever held in connection with the Branch.

The *Philosophical Inquirer*, published at Madras in English and Tamil, maintains its old character, and is still doing good work for the cause away in the far East.

THE Rev. Wentworth Monk, son of the Hon. Mr. Justice Monk, has returned to Canada from England, and given his impressions of the old country. Among other things he spoke of the progress Freethought is making here:—

"But I must tell you what is making the most visible progress in England, both in the social and scientific world, that is infidelity, and this is most apparent in the train of University thought; in the great schools of science and in society it is increasing enormously. I myself recollect twenty years ago in England that expressions of infidelity were far from fashionable, in what was considered educated society; now they have become the current coin of conversation, and are, in fact, the predominant feature of the intellectual world in England."

THE French clericals are up in arms. Gambetta has appointed as Minister of Public Instruction and Worship the Freethinking scientist and deputy, M. Paul Bert, who sneers at incense as the "tobacco smoke of priests" and says that the Jesuits are as great pests as the phylloxera. Even English editors are surprised. But they should remember that Gambetta once said "We have said Clericalism—there is the enemy; we must now say Clericalism—there is the vanquished." They ought to know that the "Dictator" is a man of his word. His policy in relation to the Church is truly Machiavellian. He wants to keep it and—cripple it. And in a country like France that policy is more likely to succeed than the policy of Rochefort and Cleméneau.

OUR English *Tablet* (Catholic) describes M. Paul Bert as "one of the bitterest, most blasphemous, and most bestial of French Atheists—a man in comparison of whom Mr. Bradlaugh is tolerant and reverent and clean," and sighs over the bitter fate of religion in France during the next few years.

As a matter of fact, we do not believe that there is a single Christian in the whole French Cabinet at the present moment. What an awful state of things! Surely the thunders of Omnipotence will soon be heard throughout that sinful land.

FREETHOUGHT GLEANINGS.

BUDDHISM ATHEISTIC.—As regards the denial of a creator, or Atheism in the ordinary acceptation of the term, I do not think that any one passage from the books of the Canon known to us can be quoted which contradicts it, or which in any way pre-supposes the belief in a personal God or a Creator.—*Prof. Max Müller*, "Lecture on Buddhist Nihilism," p. 10.

CHRISTIAN EVIDENCES.—Had Lord Byron possessed perseverance enough to undergo the drudgery of research, and had his theological studies and attainments been at all like mine, he would have been able to unsettle all the evidences of Christianity, upheld as it is at present, by simple confutation. Is it possible to assent to the doctrine of redemption as at present promulgated, that the moral death of an *un-offending* being should be a consequence of the transgression of humanity *and its atonement*?—*S. T. Coleridge*.

VANISHING CREEDS.—The dogmas of the past no longer reach the level of the highest thought, nor satisfy the hunger of the heart. While dusty faiths, embalmed and sepulchered in ancient texts, remain the same, the sympathies of men enlarge; the brain no longer kills its young; the happy lips give liberty to honest thoughts; the mental firmament expands and lifts; the broken clouds drift by; the hideous dreams, the foul, misshapen children of the monstrous night, dissolve and fade.—*Ingersoll*.

MIRACLES.—All history shows that, in exact proportion as nations advance in civilisation, the accounts of miracles taking place among them become rarer and rarer, until at last they entirely cease.—*Lecky*.

BREAKING THE SABBETH.

DAVID MILWEE was a joiner, and he lived in Cirkcowan, and being an elder of the Cameronians he was a horrid religious man.

If he had been an elder of the Establishment he wouldn't have needed to be religious, seeing that the General Assembly have decided that *personal piety* is not necessary in an elder of that kirk. But Davie couldn't have got to be an elder in the Establishment, onyway, for he hadn't a big farm, and he wasn't a laird, and they blamed him with nae chance weans. Although he wasn't a big farmer, he had a bit grun, and keepit two kye and a beast, and he had his joiner's shop ower the top of the cart shed, and he had a great habit on a Sunday mornings of retiring to the shop for meditation and prayer, before setting out for the kirk; glad to be out of the way of the wife's temper—and tongue may be.

One Sunday morning Peter McVinnie, the new apprentice, happened to be sitting on the shaft of the cart in the shed watching the lasses gann by, at the time David was engaged in exercise above, and he heard what he thought a strange but familiar sound.

After listening awhile in astonishment to make sure there was no mistake, he ran away to David's wife, and said,

"Gud guide us! Lukie Milwee, but the master's gane wrang in the head; he's up in the shop yonner sawin' awa' like the very mischief."

"Sawin' what, Peter?" says the wife.

"Sawin' wudd—timmer tae be sure," was the reply, "he's been sawin' yae deal after anither this half-oor an' mair."

"Never sic a thing," cried the wife, "oor man wudna touch a saw on the Sabbath-day, no tae mak a coffin itsel! he never did sic a thing in his life." "He's dooin't noo, onyway," says Peter, "just come and hear him yersel."

The wife went to the shed, and was amazed to hear it quite distinctly, and she ran up the stair horrified, and rushed into the shop, crying, "Dawrid Milwee! whatever ir ye doin? sawin' wudd on a Sunday!"

David was standing in the middle of the shop in an ecstasy, with his hand stretched out, his mouth wide open, and his een up to the riggin' and he took no notice of his wife. She had seen him in the same way before, and so as soon as she had satisfied herself what he was about, she slippit cannilly oot, and came down the stair and attacked the apprentice.

"You born gomerall!" says she. "he's no sawin' awa, he's singin' the Aul Hunner, you fule!" "Singin'!" cries Peter, "he's nane singin', I tell ye, he's sawin' deals, so he is."

"Sawin' dales, you heathen-lukin' brute!" cried the wife, getting angry, "dinna be mockin' at religion that way, or some joodgement 'll come on ye; the Saunts in heaven sing nicht an' day for evermore, ye gumptionless cedint!" "Singin'" says Peter, "de ye ca' that singin'?" "Aye! singin'!" quo' she.

"If they sing like that in heevin, there'll no mony bide," says Peter, "they'll think they hae got into a sawpit by mistak', an' come richt back again."

Lukie Milwee broke the sabbeth pelting him with peats. [From "Galloway Gossip, Sixty Years Ago," by *Maria Trotter*, *Bedlington*.]

CORRESPONDENCE.

THE ATHEISTIC PULPIT.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I never supposed "D. R." would be satisfied with my letter; to satisfy him I must adopt his views.

2. I have introduced no irrelevant matter.

3. I never try to "conceal the real issue"—I seek truth.

4. "D. R." says Jesus denied the gods and goddesses. He was an Atheist, therefore.

5. Jesus, so the New Testament says, whipped the buyers and sellers from the temple (John ii., 15); threatened certain places with a worse doom than Sodom's (Matt. xi., 20—24), thus showing what he would have done had he been able; said he came to send a sword upon earth (Matt. x., 34, 35); his kingdom, he boasted, was like—the Turk in Bulgaria is the only example I can think of (Matt. xxii., 1—11). Read also Rev. i., 16, ii., 27, ix., xi., xiv., xix., 11—21); Jesus endured his sufferings for the sake of the reward (Heb. xii., 2); and he bade people who would be his disciples to *hate* parents, brothers and sisters, wives, children, and their own life as well (Luke xiv., 26). Peter and the rest appear to have done so (Matt. xix., 27—29).

Perhaps "D. R." can conceive of selfishness, inhumanity, and egotism more perfect than those of Jesus: and I shall feel obliged to him if he will assist me also to conceive it. Jesus did all the violence he dared, and I presume he would have treated the Freethinker as I described. His followers have always treated such persons with excessive cruelty. I presume they understand and imbibe their master's temper, and they certainly never excelled him in malignity.

6. As to the twofold trinity, which "D. R." incorrectly calls a quinity (!)—I have nothing to retract, or add just now. Does "D. R." hold that Jesus was the one son of two fathers, or the two sons of two fathers? His simile of the queen and P. of W. leads me to suppose that he considers God the Father and the Holy Ghost to be the same person. I am sorry he has disgraced his letter by quoting the disgusting language of Gabriel to Mary.

7. I doubt "D. R.'s" knowledge of scripture; and his flippant criticisms of my discourse, his rashness and intense love of Christianity distorts his conclusions; he takes the fables of Theology and his own assumptions and incautious argumentations for absolute truths, though, in point of fact, they are next door to absolute falsehoods.

As I rather enjoy the sight of an angry man getting a bit into the mire, I trust "D. R." will gratify me by another of his well-considered letters.

JOS. SYMES.

CARLYLE'S CHRISTIANITY.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

6, Candler Street, Stamford Hill, N.,
November 20th, 1881.

SIR,—In to-day's issue of the *Freethinker* I notice, under the heading of correspondence, the following: "O. Friend Carlyle was not a Christian, nor was George Eliot, nor John Stuart Mill. Buckle was no Christian either. Few great writers are." Leaving open for the moment the question as regards George Eliot, etc., I challenge you for the proof of your assertion that *Carlyle was not a Christian*. Surely the author of such a statement as this must have been no less than a bosom friend of Carlyle's. Certain it is he could not have derived his authority from the *works* of this great man. Possibly he has forgotten first to *read* the works of one of the greatest of England's writers before he ventured to make so unqualified and astounding an assertion concerning his character. Certainly he can never have considered the following words of the Chelsea sage: "Highest of all symbols are those wherein the artist or poet has risen into prophet, and all men can recognise a present God, and worship the same; I mean religious symbols. Various enough have been such religious symbols, what we call *religious*; as men stood in this stage of culture or the other, and could worse or better body forth the God-like; some symbols with a transient intrinsic worth, many with only an extrinsic. If thou ask to what height man has carried it in this manner, look on our divinest symbol: on Jesus of Nazareth and his life and his biography, and what followed therefrom. Higher has the human thought not yet reached; this is Christianity and Christendom, a symbol of quite perennial infinite character, whose significance will ever demand to be anew inquired into, and anew made manifest." ("Sartor Resartus," book 3, chap. iii., Symbols.)

I could cite plenty of other passages, did space permit, to show that if Carlyle was *not* a Christian, his own words belie him. But I apprehend this will be sufficient to warrant me in saying that, unless you have the most ample exterior proof to

bring forward to defend your bold statement, viz., that "Carlyle was not a Christian," you have no right to make such an assertion, and ought either to qualify it by saying that it is your own private opinion, or else withdraw it altogether.

The further remark that few great writers are Christians is somewhat ambiguous. In the first instance, you are speaking of writers who are no longer in the world. You say these *were not* Christians. You then say, "Few great writers *are*." This is *cautious*, at all events. Had you said, "Few great writers have been," or to that effect, I would then have challenged you. As, however, there are only a few great writers living, Christianity may certainly console itself by the fact that *these few* are among its votaries.—I am, Sir, yours obediently, W. S. PALMER.

[We accept the full responsibility of our statement, and we will justify it in a special article on "Was Carlyle a Christian?" in which we undertake to prove that he was not.—EDITOR.]

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.

MR. ANGUS MACPHERSON, writing to the *Middlesborough News*, calls Mr. Bradlaugh intolerant because Dr. Edward B. Aveling puzzled him (Mr. Macpherson) on the platform at Middlesborough. What Mr. Bradlaugh has to do with it I cannot see. I must blow gently over Mr. M. and cool his heated brow. If that will not do, Mr. M. must take some gruel and have a good sweat.

THE *Newcastle Examiner* is usually very pious, very virulent, and very dull. Its editor, Mr. Aaron Watson, cheered it up a little last week, however, and did a little quiet criticism. The *Examiner* rhapsodised about the American soul-savers, and then complained that "three-fourths of that vast audience were regular church and chapel attenders," and wailed at the idea of the faithful being there in strong force, instead of the sinners.

THE *Examiner* says, "There was a peculiar arrangement adopted to separate the sheep from the goats. The tickets for the former were yellow and for the latter green. If physiognomy be true the colors in many cases should have been reversed." Rather a funny admission this! The hang-dog look of the faithful is contrasted with the more intelligent looking outsiders.

THEN we have a complaint that Mr. Moody imitates "the pulpit buffoonery of the Talmage school." One for T. De Witt, the mountebank! The writer winds up by saying that Mr. Moody's valedictory address was "disappointing." I am glad to hear it.

I AM anxious to see whether the Americans will visit Durham. Beside being noted for mustard, the cathedral city is famous for "Old Maids," and young ones too. Their visit to Durham would have a telling effect if they took with them Richard Weaver, and the Rev. William Bethel, late of Stockton. Mr. Beecher would be welcome, too, I have no doubt. Nice man, Mr. Beecher.

I FREQUENTLY see the Bishop of Durham waddling about, nice fat, podgy, little man, with such a heavenly look. Has a fine castle, extensive gardens, nice carriage, beautiful hot-houses, plenty of company no doubt, lots of wine, plenty of servants. "Take no thought for the morrow what ye shall eat, nor what ye shall put on." Ah! Um! "Blessed are ye poor." Oh, yes! "A rich man cannot enter the kingdom of heaven." Oh! but we'll see about that.

THE NORTH WIND.

PROFANE JOKES.

"MY son," said an old lady, "how must Jonah have felt when the whale swallowed him?" "Down in the mouth," was the young hopeful's reply.

WE once knew a man who said to his pastor—"I am going to the other church after this." "Ah, and why so?" asked the minister. "Well, if you don't get your shoes made at my shop, I won't get my preaching done at yours." So he went off.

A SUNDAY school teacher was giving a lesson in Ruth. She wanted to bring out the kindness of Boaz in commanding the reapers to drop large handfuls of wheat. "Now, children," she said, "Boaz did another nice thing for Ruth; can you tell me what it was?" "Married her," said one of the boys.

A VESSEL recently sailed to Africa laden with innumerable hogsheads of rum and carrying one poor, meagre missionary. It certainly could not be expected that a single missionary would be the antidote to the rum, though it might easily be predicted that the rum would be a perfect antidote to the missionary.

MISSIONARY societies, by means of the phonograph, can have sermons canned and sent to the Cannibal Islands. The natives

can't eat the sermons, and therefore have the moral and religious without the physical part of the missionary.

SOME think diphtheria is of recent origin, but it isn't. The Baptists have had the dip theory ever since they started.

ON a sunny Sunday morning the pastor's little girl of nearly three summers became wearied at the length of the sermon, and in a low tone of voice, but very earnestly said, to the great amusement of those who sat near, "Come, papa; that's enough. Let's go home."

"SIX days of the week he's invisible, and on the seventh he's incomprehensible," was the account which a dissatisfied old lady gave of her pastor and his ministrations.

A FEW Sabbaths since, in a town in the vicinity of Dublin, a teacher of a Sunday School was engaged in questioning his pupils on subjects connected with their previous studies of the Bible. At last, turning to a young Irishman, a member of the class, he asked, "What did Adam lose by the fall?" Pat for a few minutes was apparently in a brown study, but at last his face brightened up as he interrogatively replied, "An' was it his hat, sur?"

REVIEWS.

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THIS is No. IV. of the Leek Bijou Reprints. Mr. Sugden has displayed his usual fine taste in the get-up of this nearly complete edition of Ingersoll's largest work. The reader will also find an engraved portrait of the great orator, and some interesting extracts from Macaulay, Ruskin, Froude, Colenso, Temple, Greg, and Carpenter. Altogether this little volume is a wonder of cheapness and beauty.

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