

# THE FREETHINKER.

REGISTERED FOR]

EDITED BY G. W. FOOTE.

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

## THE BISHOP OF MANCHESTER ON THE FREETHINKER.

WE beg to tender our "most humble and hearty thanks" to Bishop Fraser for the splendid advertisement he has just given us. Preaching at Hollinwood last Sunday week, he reprobated two tendencies of our time; Salvationism which turns religion into hysterics, and Atheism which makes it the subject of ridicule. He confessed to "great anxiety about the future of Christianity in this land, in the face of infidelity and atheism, with all their terrible accompaniments of blasphemy and profaneness." Then the perturbed preacher introduced this journal to his audience.

"Some kind friend yesterday sent him a number of a paper called the *Freethinker*. The tone of that paper might be a proper one for Atheism to adopt, but he said advisedly, anything more horribly profane and blasphemous than he found contained in that paper he never read or saw. It was an attempt to pour ridicule on the Bible, to shake the faith of Christian people in everything that constitutes the foundation of Christian faith and life, and that was done in the most ribald, heartless, cruel way that could be conceived. He dare say it might have the effect of shaking the faith of some young and thoughtless people who did not give such reflection to these things as they ought to do, and whose faith was too easily staggered by some little captious difficulty that was raised as to the Bible, not understanding the structure of revelation, nor how God in the time of Moses allowed many things to men, on account of the hardness of their hearts, which he forbids now. Writers of the class he had been speaking of, thinking Christians were bound by the law of Moses, which contained many things not applicable now, said 'Here's the God whom the Bishop of Manchester worships.' The God of the Bible was the God he worshipped, and if he could reproduce in his life ever so feeble a pattern of the evangelical righteousness he found in the Sermon on the Mount, and persuade the people to try to rise to that standard, the world would be a great deal better than Atheistic teachers were ever likely to make it."

This statement has gone the round of the North of England and South Scotch papers, and it has already made an improvement in our circulation. We hope the good Bishop will preach against the *Freethinker* in every church of his diocese. We shall send him a copy of our Christmas Number, and as soon as our first volume is complete we shall be happy to furnish him with a bound copy, so that he may have a perfect mine of texts for his sermons against infidelity. And if his Grace continues to promote our circulation so effectively, we shall even be glad to pay him a handsome commission on our increased sale.

Bishop Fraser says the *Freethinker* is "blasphemous." What he means is that we bring the Bible to the touchstone of common-sense. He finds it "horrid." That is exactly what we mean it to be. We want to startle sluggish Christians and make them think. Anything that shocks Bumble is of the highest service to mankind. Orthodoxy has been reasoned away long enough; science and scholarship have proved its utter falsity; and it is now time to hold it up to ridicule and scorn. The priestly manipulation of the masses must be resisted, and this can best be done by making Christianity ridiculous.

The charge of "heartless cruelty" is a huge joke. Christians burned us for centuries; when they could no longer burn they imprisoned us; and now they try to rob us of our political rights. They outrage our persons, and we must not laugh at their opinions. They may steal our sheep, and we may not look over their hedge. It is like a big ruffian thrashing a lad until he grows big enough to protect himself, and then calling him a cruel wretch because he mocks his old persecutor. We shall go on mocking. It

succeeds. Thick hides of superstition impervious to argument may be pierced by the shafts of sarcasm. The policy of Voltaire is not yet played out. It has done its work in France, and England wants it now.

## THE ATHEISTIC PULPIT.—SERMON XIV.

(Continued from p. 131.)

*Resist not Evil* (Matt. v. 39). What must we resist, then? Must we resist good? Jesus seems to have been unable to run from one extreme without rushing to the opposite. Retaliation, in most cases, may be foolish and wrong; no general rule can cover all cases. But non-resistance of evil is the best way to encourage it. There is "a law in our members," much older and much more potent, which tells us to resist evil with all our might, viz., the law of self-preservation. And Jesus was as much under the force of that law as other people. He never turned the other cheek (v. 39), but gave check for check whenever opportunity occurred. So did his disciples. And his followers have always been more ready to smite than be smitten.

*Let him have thy cloak also* (v. 40). Jesus was too poor to know the value of clothes, hence this stupid rule of life. Here, too, we have a most direct and thorough encouragement to dishonesty. People are too fond of law as it is; what would be the state of society if every rogue who stole a coat could get the owner's cloak too by simply suing him?

Verses 39—42 of this Sermon on the mount are amply sufficient, if put into practice, to destroy civilisation and reduce mankind to a state of anarchy and violence. Fortunately, professing Christians have always, with an exception or two, been more ready to steal than to throw away their property, more ready to compel others to walk the "miles" than do it themselves. Bad as this is, it is better than what Jesus taught.

*Love your enemies* (v. 44)—that you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven (v. 45). No man can love his enemy. The father in heaven cannot do it, or he would long since have hugged and carressed the devil. Jesus did not do it, or he would have turned those stones into bread, as the devil requested him when they met in the wilderness. "Do good to them that hate you!" By what law? It is contrary to reason and nature both. Someone asked Confucius what he had to say "concerning the principle that injury should be recompensed with kindness?"—It was a very old superstition, evidently—Confucius replied, "With what then will you recompense kindness? Recompense injury with justice, and kindness with kindness." That is good philosophy; the language of Jesus is babyish.

*He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust* (v. 45). He does nothing of the sort. The sun doesn't rise; it is the earth that spins round in front of him, like a leg of mutton before the fire. And if god did this work, he also makes his sun scorch good and bad alike, and sends rain or drought indiscriminately. If we followed the heavenly father's example, no day would pass without our doing much mischief and murdering more or fewer persons. Better leave him alone.

*What reward have ye?* (v. 46—7). Just so. Jesus was enslaved to the barbarous philosophy of rewards and punishments, and his followers have never grown out of it. The Christian is taught to expect a reward for everything. If he gives away money in charity, it is to get riches in heaven; if he spends his money upon church and chapel-building, it is to get an endless annuity in the New Jerusalem, or to be insured against the unquenchable fire; and those who hang-fire at parting with their cash are gravely assured that they



will be "recompensed at the resurrection of the just"—the date of which will be about the time the sky falls.

*Take heed that ye do not your alms before men* (Matt. vi., 1). Christians read this the other way, viz.: *Take heed to do your alms before men, to be seen of them.* They boast of what they give out of their abundance and taunt us with not giving what we do not possess. They accept challenges to debate at times, on condition that the proceeds shall go to some charity, not at all caring if we should be compelled to apply for charity as a consequence of having to work for nothing. If Christians were half as good as they pretend, they would be too good to pretend at all; and if Christians would leave off wasting, and robbing, and swindling, all would have enough, and charity would no longer be needed.

*When thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites* (Note, Hypocrite meant originally an actor); *for they love to pray, standing in churches and chapels and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men* (v. 5). Here I improve both the translation and the original. How many of the parsons would every pray if no men or women were by to hear?

*Verily, I say unto you, They have their reward.* True! True! ranging from £50 per annum to £15,000 and perquisites. Not bad remuneration for actors in religious theatres.

*But when ye pray, do not jabber like foreigners, etc.* (v. 7). I make the orthodox commentators a present of this rendering; it exactly gives the sense. A paraphrase is:—Don't jabber away like foreigners landed on a strange coast, who utter a multitude of words in the hope of being able to make the natives understand them. All the orthodox commentators have missed the point of the advice. And most parsons have a sort of regulation time for prayer, hoping that their god will answer a long prayer, though he won't a short one. In fact, they treat their deity just like dishonest beggars do their victims—they try the virtues of unlimited blarney. Were I a god, I would much more readily relieve the Atheist who never asks for anything than those who make a trade of prayer, that is, begging. There are laws against begging, but none against praying; which shows that Christian states respect the public more than their god.

*Your father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him* (v. 8). He is a poor father, then, to wait to be prayed to before doing his duty. It is a father's duty to see that his children have their wants supplied whether they ask or not. The great father in heaven should spend a fortnight at some well-conducted house to learn the ways of civilised people. If he did this, he would burn the bible and order a new one, this time not written by his amanuenses, but by men who could teach him more than all eternity has been able to do.

The prayer that follows as a model, the Lord's prayer, has about all the faults a prayer can have, probably, except length. There the pious pray for a kingdom to come. All just government grows. We don't want foreign rule, though we can have no objection to god's will being done on earth as in heaven, because it is not done there at all. Men should work for their daily bread, not pray for it. *Forgive our debts, as we forgive our debtors.* If Christians believed in "a prayer-answering god," they would be afraid to pray thus: for they do not forgive, and so, in effect, they ask not to be forgiven. They are the most unforgiving of all people, being inspired perhaps by the great father who will burn his enemies with unquenchable fire. *To pray not to be led into temptation,* is wise, if the bible be true; for god tempted Abram to murder his son, David to number Israel, etc. But to ask to be delivered from the evil one, is like a frightened child begging his father to keep away the black man the nurse has been speaking of.

Your father will forgive you, if you forgive others; he won't if you don't. Good example. Sublime morality! You are to be perfect as your father (chap. v., 48), and he threatens to be imperfect if you are so! That is, you can make him just what you will, forgiving or malicious, good or bad; for his conduct is regulated by yours. This is the very highest point in New Testament morality!

JOS. SYMES.

(To be continued.)

EVEN the most religious man, who would scorn to worship an idol, takes a peculiar delight in being worshiped as an idol himself.

SOME one says that a certain congregation pray on their knees on Sundays, and on their neighbors the rest of the week.

## WHAT IS THE DEVIL?

(Concluded from p. 130.)

I WANT to know something of that Sacramental Feast—that eating the body and drinking the blood of Christ, which in a literal sense is simply disgusting, and puzzles me to understand what it can have to do with man's salvation. I am answered, "it is a mystery"—true it is so, but I can only venerate mysteries in relation to their grandeur and sublimity. This has nothing of either in a literal meaning, figuratively it is pregnant with both.

In a figurative sense then I prefer to regard it. I know that the Oriental astronomers of a long departed time were wont to clothe their thoughts in allegory, map out the heavens and work those myriad points of light which stud their immensity into fictitious forms and places, and the ignorant and knavish seers of after ages gave to these fanciful legends of their predecessors a literal interpretation—hence the *secret* Scriptures.

By that Sacramental Feast, I understand the Festival of the Sun—the wheat and grape—the bread and the wine—the body and blood of Christ, the Sun, ripened for the use of man, and unless he partake thereof he shall most surely die. Here is salvation accorded.

The Protestant Church by its altar adornment of the interwoven wheat-ear and vine, by its halo-encircled monogram; the Roman Catholic Church, by its multitudinous tapers burning at its eastward shrine; clearly denote that now, as in all former periods of the world's history, is continued only under different forms and names, the worship of the sun.

But what has this to do with the question—"What is the Devil?" Everything! because I believe in the identity of God and Devil; that the God of summer is the Devil of winter. That the sun, under an infinity of terms and personifications, obtained as age followed age, until the multitude of gods became resolved into the Christian Trinity.

Regardless of the commiserating smile of assumed superiority—of the censors' reproof, equally as of the impudent derision of bigotted ignorance, I advance this my rational and consistent belief. I attempt no raid upon the belief and conclusions of others—if they lend to take for granted all the incongruous and inchoate legends that priests preach to them, let them. If they can derive comfort in the view of a life of harmonious idleness for their disembodied spirits hereafter, let them indulge the fanciful pleasure—for me it has no charm. I believe in the eternity and indivisibility of matter; in the revolution of the endless wheel; in an everlasting round of decay and reproduction. I cannot entertain an idea as regards the universe either of a beginning or an end; it surpasses finite comprehension. I cannot account for my existence here, neither as to the why nor the wherefore. The destiny of man seems to be the perpetuation of race, the probationary notion is speculative, and the theory of civilisation and progress seems opposed by the fact of the civilisation of past ages being swept away and the succession of barbarism. I accept the philosophy of Volney, whose idea of death is not one of annihilation but change. The body decomposes, moulders and mingles with the earth, giving sustenance to future life, and my idea of that unknown, unseen power which rules the universe may be best expressed in the words of Paine:—

"The Almighty lecturer, by displaying the principles of science in the structure of the universe, has invited man to study and imitation. It is as if he had said to the inhabitants of this globe that we call ours: 'I have made an earth for man to dwell upon, and I have rendered the starry heavens visible to teach him science and the arts. He can now provide for his own comfort, and learn from my munificence to all to be kind to each other.'"

I cannot penetrate the wonders of creation and account for causes, but into the things which men have written, thereof I may venture to inquire. Therefore to pursue the question—"What is the Devil?"

I regard this fanciful creation, as before stated, in the light of a personification of winter or of the sun in the winter light. The story of the crucifixion is presented to my mind in the shape of an allegory—the Savior of the World, the death on the cross, the descent into hell, the resurrection and the ascent into heaven—a complete scene of the sun's annual course through the zodiac.

Having affected the salvation of man by the preparation of that food by which man is enabled to live, the race is run, it is finished. The crucified sun retires from the world he had glorified, and, dipping below the equator, undergoes

the figurative death—proceeding meanwhile to effect the salvation of the other hemisphere—until the Easter, the rising time again comes round, when the vernal crossifixion takes place, and the sun—the Savior of the world—arisen from the dead, ascends to his zenith,

“The eastering orb, the equatorial line,  
Doth now divide, and, rolling upward, scans  
The azure vault. Beneath with baleful shine  
The demon scorpio spreads his dusky vans.  
So Christ, the Sun, is born from year to year  
To save mankind and guide the rolling sphere.”

MS. poem, “The Zodiac.”

Hawthorn, the author of the “House of Seven Gables” and other very beautiful books, thus discourses in one of them entitled “Our Old Home.” In one of our English villages—

“A well-trodden path led across the churchyard. The ground must have been dug over and over again innumerable times until the soil is made up of what was once human clay, out of which have sprung up successive crops of gravestones that flourish their allotted time and disappear like the weeds and flowers in their briefer period. . . . Time gnaws an English gravestone with wonderful appetite, and when the inscription is quite illegible the sexton takes the useless slab away and perhaps makes a hearthstone of it, and digs up the unripe bones which it ineffectually tried to memorialise, and gives the bed to another sleeper. . . . The man who died yesterday, or ever so long ago, walks the village street to-day, and chooses the same wife that he married a hundred years since, and must be buried again to-morrow under the same kindred dust that has already covered him half a score of times.”

Birth and death are the two mighty mysteries of nature. The first is mostly accompanied with rejoicing, the last with lamentation, and they are both eternally taking place all over the world in every moment of time.

The last event creates a vast amount of wonder, apprehension, fear, seldom indifference. Some are consoled with a belief in reunion with those who have gone before them and of enjoying a state of endless pleasure. Those who depart thus may be said to depart in peace and happiness. Some are haunted by the terrors that have been preached to them, and their dying thoughts fix upon a fabulous day of judgment and their possible rejection. This idea saddens indeed the last moments, and woe to the teaching which has created it.

I have no belief whatever in either of the consequences referred to and should not therefore be elated by the one nor depressed by the other.

I look upon death, not as annihilation but change, and the mind and matter whereof I am composed as a part of creation—brought into this breathing world, and after a time departing from it, but not to decay and in decay to rest. Nature is never still. In the quiet of the grave she is busily at work, the process of decomposition is going on, and death and decay are but the precursors of renewed life.

I believe in the sublimity, power, and beneficence of Nature. The universal cause, exacting neither worship, prayer nor thanksgiving beyond that which is spontaneous. Not word-worship with its cold formalities and parrot-like consistency, with most no sooner uttered than forgotten.

There are persons who, ready to defend any absurdity based upon Scripture, will sometimes attempt to fortify their position by a reference to the works of creation, as thus:—You should not reject belief in the miracles and in those things which are mysteries because Nature itself is full of them. True, but this we know from the uniformity and regularity of their occurrence made familiar to us. Of the Scripture miracles we have no proof beyond their being printed, and as in their literal shape they violate the order and course of Nature as uniformly presented to us, and fail of supernatural confirmation reason rejects them. I have no belief in any printed word of God. I read the word of the supreme in the sublimity of creation and my religion is

“— An earnest love

Of all that's good and beautiful and true.”

To this stage of reflection I have arrived from the starting point of consideration—“What is the Devil;” and if I have failed to satisfy others, I have at least satisfied myself in the view I have taken of this extraordinarily diversified phantom.

PATROCLUS.

THE Christians all over the world are going to have another “week of prayer” early next year. Amongst other things, they mean to pray against crimes of violence; in other words they will advise the Almighty to keep his affairs in better order. Won't they catch it if he hears them!

## THE GOD CHRISTIANS SWEAR BY.—III.

(Continued from p. 129.)

THE Bible God is infinitely petty. He exhibits all the weakness of a spoilt child or a savage chief. His temper is usually very warm, and in his fits of anger he rages about like a monstrous madman, killing wholesale by flood, famine, earthquake, pestilence and war. Occasionally he relents. But woe unto those who presume on his goodness, and imagine that “his tender mercies are over all his works”! He suddenly rouses himself, and they and their fool's paradise vanish into limbo.

He is constantly changing his mind, and cannot be depended on for twenty-four hours together. He regrets, repents, wails, and carries on like a big baby whose hopes are disappointed; and when things turn out contrary to his expectations, he never blames his own want of foresight, but damns his own creation for being what he made it.

Let us take an instance. He sent Moses to rescue the Jews from bondage and lead them to the land of promise. But after Moses brought them out of Egypt, the Lord found that they were all unfit to enter Palestine, and he led them a devilish dance up and down the wilderness for forty years, until every soul had perished except Joshua and Caleb. Even Moses was not allowed to cross the river Jordan; and as, although a hundred and twenty years old, he was still strong and hale, the Lord asked him up a mountain, and there killed and buried him.

Another instance. While the Jews were in the desert, wandering about like a blind man in a fifty-acre field, the Lord visited Mount Sinai; and after staying there alone for some time, he invited Moses to come up and spend a few days with him. They had so much to talk about that the interview lasted forty days and nights. During that time the Jews grew impatient. They looked up and could see nothing of Moses or the Lord except a murky cloud, and they naturally concluded that both of them had ended in smoke. Thereupon they desired Aaron to become their leader and to make them a new God. Ever ready to oblige, he accepted the leadership in place of Moses; and for a God instead of Jehovah he made them a golden calf—fit deity for such a multitude of fools.

When God observed the disgraceful antics of his “holy people,” his “special people, above all people on the face of the earth,” who had stripped stark naked and were dancing like calves before the calf, he became greatly enraged. “Now Moses,” said he, “just you get out of the way, for I mean mischief. I'll kill every one of the blackguards, and start a fresh people.” But Moses, who had a calmer head, smoothed down his ruffled feathers. “Come now,” said he, “don't act in a hurry; think over it a bit; just remember that you are bound by an oath to these scurvy Jews; and then think what the Egyptians will say and how they'll laugh at you.” Then the Lord cooled down, and said he was sorry he forgot himself.

Sometimes his pettiness is more funny still. While Moses was journeying from his father-in-law's to Egypt to execute God's commission, he stayed one night at a wayside inn; and the Lord put up at the same hotel. At any rate he “met” Moses there, and strangely enough tried to kill him. Imagine an all-wise God seeking to kill a man for obeying his commands, and imagine an all-powerful God trying to do it without success! Moses does not appear to have committed any offence. The probability is that the Lord had a fit of the blues that night, and, like human beings in that state, he turned against his best friend.

On another occasion the Lord played Balaam a similar trick. When the messengers of Barak came asking him to come and curse the Jews, the prophet wisely asked the Lord what he should do. The Lord said “Don't go,” and Balaam stopped at home. The messengers came a second time: then the Lord said “Go,” and Balaam went. But he did not reflect that a god who had changed his mind once might change it twice; and that is exactly what the Lord did. He posted an angel in Balaam's path to slay him for doing as God commanded; and poor Balaam would inevitably have perished had it not been for the providential interference of his jackass.

God's treatment of Pharaoh and the Egyptians was no less singular. He sent Moses to bring the Jews out, and incited Pharaoh to keep them in. The king and the prophet had ten tugs of war; it was pull Moses, pull Pharaoh; and each time the poor Egyptians suffered. At the end

God joined in and pulled Pharaoh clean over. If the game had ended there we might enjoy the fun, for it is indifferent to mankind whether kings or priests come to grief when they quarrel. But it did not end there. The first-born of every family in Egypt was slain by this divine butcher; and after that he completed his "plaguings" by drowning Pharaoh and all the Egyptian hosts in the Red Sea.

Nor was this God over clean. His necromancers, Moses and Aaron, turned all the water of Egypt into blood, but the magicians of Egypt beat them by turning all the rest into blood. Then the Lord exerted his omnipotence to defeat them. His two necromancers turned all the dust of Egypt into lice. That settled it. "This," said they, "is the finger of God." When they saw the lice they knew the Lord was shaking himself.

Neither was God over truthful. He told an untruth to Adam and Eve, which the Devil corrected. He falsified many of his promises. The men and women he most favored were notorious deceivers. He hated open Esau and loved lying Jacob. He more than winked at the guile of his servants. He sanctioned the treachery of Jael, who invited a hunted man into her tent and basely killed him while he slept. He even kept lying spirits in heaven to go forth and prophesy falsely so that people might be lured to ruin; and there is a fine instance of this in the last chapter of the first Book of Kings. No doubt the stock of liars is still kept up, for any number of rogues, thieves and murderers have gone to glory since then. G. W. FOOTE.

(To be continued.)

## ACID DROPS.

THERE was a crowded meeting of the Society for the Propagation of the Bible in Foreign parts in the Mission Room at Clopton, a few days ago. The rector and other high people delivered rousing speeches, and called on the audience to extend Christ's Kingdom among the 850,000,000 of heathen in the world. How about those at home? Why not convert them first? There was a collection made, of course, which realised the grand sum of £1 17s. 9d. The heathen are safe enough.

THIS collection was almost as bad as the one they tell of in Scotland. An obscure country Kirk had a special sermon in aid of the funds by an eloquent outsider. On enquiring how much they had gathered he was told "eight-pence ha'penny." He then asked what was the usual amount of their collection, and they answered "two pence ha'penny." "Wae's me!" he rejoined "I put in the saxon-pence mysel'."

MR. GORE LANGTON, M.P., has been imposing a monstrous fable on the natives of Yeovil district. He stated at a public meeting that "if Mr. Bradlaugh had come to the table in the usual way no question would have been asked him; but what they objected to was having Mr. Bradlaugh's opinions thrust down their throat." As a matter of fact Mr. Bradlaugh has never made any statement of his views on religion in the House of Commons; and after his re-election he *did* go to the table in the usual way, but was stopped by the Tories. But this is not all. Mr. Gore Langton not only utters a glaring untruth, but he advises the practice of the vilest hypocrisy. While there were two forms open, Mr. Bradlaugh was conscientiously bound to use the one without an imprecation. But Mr. Gore Langton says "No, he should have sworn." Which means that if Mr. Bradlaugh had played the hypocrite the pious Tories would have allowed him to "profane the name of God." Why does the Almighty allow such men to speak for him, who, as Hood says, "might sit for Hell and represent the Devil."

MOODY'S yarns are getting tougher and tougher. Here is the latest taken from the *Christian Herald*:—

"A President of an Infidel Club was overcome by prayer, and the following are the particulars as narrated at our noonday Prayer Meeting at Newcastle last week, by Rev. R. Leitch, who said:—During Mr. Moody's former visit to Edinburgh, the popular president of an infidel club was present at several of the meetings trying to turn away many seeking souls. The brethren begged Mr. Moody to forbid him to come, but this he refused to do, saying, it would be too great a handle for the enemies; we

will pray about him.' A few nights afterwards he went up to him and said, 'Are you a Christian?' 'No, I am not.' 'Don't you wish to be a Christian?' 'No, I do not; but you can try it on if you like.' 'Will you go down on your knees while I pray with you?' 'No, for I do not believe there is a God, but you can pray if you like.' 'Well,' said Mr. Moody, 'I believe that there is a God, and that he answers prayer, so I will kneel down and pray for you.' He did so, and when he rose, the other remarked that the prayer was useless, as he felt just the same as before. Mr. Moody bade him wait awhile and see; prayer was not always answered at once. Some months afterwards, while holding a meeting at Wick, he saw the same man, who came up to speak to him, and said he was still just as before, the prayer was unanswered. Mr. Moody said he should continue to pray for him and to expect his conversion. After his return to America, he received the welcome news from Edinburgh that this man had entered the noonday Prayer Meeting one day quite broken down under conviction of sin, and that he had subsequently found peace and begun to testify for Jesus. This conversion of their President had such an effect on the other members of his club, that several were converted to the Lord, and the club was broken up. Mr. Moody related this in a meeting in America, and it caused a great sensation among the Infidels in the place. They sent over to their friends in Edinburgh to know if the story were true, and received the full confirmation of the truth of the statement. 'O Thou that hearest prayer, to Thee shall all flesh come.'

We defy Mr. Moody or the Rev. R. Leitch to substantiate this story. The "President of an Infidel Club" should be a well-known person, and if the story is true it can easily be proved. We have challenged the *Christian World* before about similar fables, but could never get any answer. Now we challenge Yankee Moody and Newcastle Leitch. If they make no response we shall brand them with the name they deserve.

IF Moody wants to do a little real converting let him try it on the editor of this journal. What's the use of converting a man nobody ever heard of and who can't be found when wanted?

THE *Inquirer* (Unitarian) finds Ingersoll's criticism "coarse," but the value of this judgment may be estimated when we state that in the same article Israel is alleged to have contributed more to the world's progress than Egypt or Greece.

THE London *Echo*, after describing our sketch of Jacob's Ladder, asks "How can a party expect to win respect, or even consideration, when its organs indulge in such wanton outrages on the religious feelings of their fellow-citizens?" This is rich. Consideration! When did we ever enjoy any beyond what we are able to exact? Where is the *consideration* in declaring a Freethinker unfit to be [a jurymen, in putting his testimony under a stigma of suspicion, or in turning a freethinking member of Parliament away from his seat with brute force? Perhaps the *Echo* expects us to show tenderness for the feelings of our enemies on the ground that "gratitude is a lively sense of favors to come."

THE piety of the *Echo* is refreshing. We shall try to look in when its staff hold their next prayer meeting. It would be a treat to see Passmore Edwards leading the hymn, although if he does not sing better than he writes it would scarcely be a treat to hear him.

MR. FOOTE'S lecture a few weeks ago at the Hall of Science on "Hebrew Old Clothes" brought him a letter from a gentleman of the Jewish persuasion who had not heard the lecture himself but had received a muddled account of it from a friend. In reply to that letter a long note appeared in "Answers to Correspondents," to which the writer was referred. Not satisfied, he wrote again, and Mr. Foote declined to continue the correspondence; first, because he had no time; secondly, because the Jewish gentleman did not hear the lecture; and thirdly, because he imputed base motives. Still unsatisfied, the irascible Hebrew writes to ease his mind. "You are," he says, "a cowardly and contemptible slanderer; you are a contemptible scoundrel; you are a defender of thieves and murderers." With these few remarks he remains. Holy Moses! All this comes of criticising a people who have been buried some thousands of years, and a God of theirs who ought to have been buried at the same time. Petticoat Lane's in arms. We shall desire a cordon of police round our office, and never go abroad without a mail shirt.

## SPECIAL NOTICE.

TO-DAY (Sunday, December 4th) Mr. FOOTE will lecture three times in the Secular Institute, East Parade, Huddersfield: morning at 11, "Great Christ is Dead"; afternoon at 3, "The Land, the Lords and the People"; evening at 6, "The God Christians Swear By." On Monday evening Mr. Foote will lecture in the Secular Hall, Leicester, on "The Gospel of Secularism: a Reply to the Bishops and the Church Congress."

## MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

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

January 1st, Kilburn; 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.

## 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.

J. MOSS.—Thanks. See our reply to the Bishop.

A. HURREN.—See "Acid Drops."

SAM.—There is nothing wonderful in a priest buying expensive grapes for his children while poor people's children eat nuts. We know of only one remedy—cut off the supplies.

C. DELOLME.—The cuttings are very useful.

H. J. B.—A somewhat similar piece of humor has already appeared.

T. S. CLARK.—See "Acid Drops."

J. P. J.—We are always glad to receive cuttings.

J. WEBB.—We cannot carry on a personal discussion with you, but any question you choose to ask shall be fairly answered.

J. SMITH.—We have no connexion with the firm you mention. If your orders are not executed send somewhere else. Try 28, Stonecutter Street.

ACHILLES.—Thanks. Cuttings are best.

JONES.—We cannot defend every word employed by our contributors.

Of course, as you say, Heaven and Hell are the real opposites.

T. JACKSON.—We cannot give a verbatim report of the debate between Mr. Bradlaugh and the Rev. James McCann, but we shall give a descriptive report, which will doubtless prove just as interesting.

J. BROTHERTON.—Received with thanks.

D. R.—We cannot find any more space for your discussion with Mr. Symes. It leads nowhere. We think you have had fair play.

W. H. MORRISH.—We are pleased to hear that your Ingersoll reprints are selling so well. Bills of our Christmas number shall be posted.

J. D. S.—Bill shall be posted. Thanks. Your keen appreciation of the *Freethinker* is grateful to us. With our friends applauding and the parsons howling we are quite delighted.

A. GRAY.—If Mr. Long's friends like to say that Mr. Foote, who had nothing to do with money matters, carried off the proceeds of the recent Glasgow debate, let them. If it amuses them, it doesn't hurt us. Pray trouble yourself no further. It is too heavy a task to contradict all the liars and lunatics in Glasgow.

J. C.—Many thanks.

BOTH SIDES.—We are much obliged.

## OUR CHRISTMAS NUMBER.

FULL particulars of this new venture will be given next week. In the meanwhile we may intimate that Dr. Edward B. Aveling and Mr. Joseph Symes will be among the literary contributors. Readers should order early of their news-agents so as to prevent delay. We shall print a very large edition to meet the extensive demand which is already threatened.

## SUGAR PLUMS.

THE Rector of Merthyr preached a very dolorous thanksgiving sermon recently. He complained that "the Gospel did not seem to spread among the people, whether rich or poor," and that "infidelity was becoming fashionable even among women." We are very glad to hear it.

ONE remark of the Rector's is worthy of especial notice. Referring to the religious census lately taken in several of our cities and large towns, he said that he put no trust in

these statistics, and should not do so until he was assured that the census was taken secretly. It was easy to pack themselves on special occasions, and "he remembered a little church where the attendance was put down as more than the number of inhabitants."

THAT is just the kind of thing which happened at Sheffield a fortnight ago. The census was announced beforehand, there was a good whip-up, and the attendance everywhere was largely increased. The parsons are up to a thing or two, and don't mean to be caught napping by editors any more.

THE Rev. J. E. Symes, of University College, Nottingham, recently gave an "address to men" on the "Moral Difficulties of the Old Testament." He seems to have made a brave effort to whitewash the old book, but without much success. With respect to the Canaanites, for instance, he urged that they had become so wicked that it was best to exterminate them. But this does not account for saving the virgins and handing them over to the Jewish soldiers and priests; nor does it account for the leaving of some of the original inhabitants in order that they might quarrel with the Jews and keep up their warlike spirit. Mr. Symes had better abandon his enterprise. He will not convert Free-thinkers, but he may convert himself.

MR. W. F. ADAMSON, late president of the Plymouth Secular Society, a few days ago astonished and perplexed the magistrates by asking to affirm instead of swearing. Mr. Adamson says, "I was much amused by the horror-stricken visages of these holy men. For about ten minutes they ransacked books to find the form of affirmation, and a pious Tory growled loud enough for me to hear 'these people are so few that when they come they give a lot of trouble,' and I very quietly and solemnly breathed Amen." Mr. Adamson claims to be the first in the district who has availed himself of the Evidence Amendment Act.

MR. G. R. SIMS has recovered from his attack of piety. He no longer wails over the Comic Bible, but enlivens the *Referee* with playful digs at orthodoxy. We hope the doctor's bill wasn't heavy.

M. PAUL BERT has made an announcement respecting the attitude of the French Government to the Church. He says that they wish to postpone, until a fitting time, the unavoidable separation between Church and State, and shrewdly adds that the outcry against his appointment is simply political, since he is much more dangerous to the Church as Minister of Public Instruction than as Minister of Public Worship.

## PROFESSOR ROBERTSON SMITH ON THE JEW BOOKS.\*

WE have always pitied W. Robertson Smith. Endowed with true scholarly acumen and thorough Scotch diligence, his many high qualities are marred by a hesitancy and half-heartedness which will wreck what might have otherwise been a brilliant career. When engaged to write in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, the then young Free Church Hebrew Professor found himself in a strait. Either he must fairly embody in his articles the results of Biblical criticism, and risk displeasing the orthodox, or lose his scholarly reputation and become the laughing-stock of Europe by following on the lines laid down by his Church. He chose the former, though in the timid fashion of a man who always lets "I dare not" wait upon "I would." Everyone knows he has had his reward; suspension and dismissal from a Professorship to which he clung with a pertinacity surely unnecessary to a man whose best students have left with him.

We pity him now, not because he is outside perhaps the narrowest and most slavish Church in Christendom, the so-called *Free Church of Scotland*, but because, being outside, he yet talks and writes like a man who has the fear of their assembly before his eyes.

No person can carefully read his lectures on the Old Testament without finding out the thoroughly unreliable

\* The Old Testament in the Jewish Church. Twelve Lectures on Biblical Criticism, by W. Robertson Smith, M.A. Edinburgh: A. & C. Black. 1881.

character of the Hebrew records; and that they have no more pretence to authenticity, still less inspiration, than the Vendivat ascribed to Zoroaster; and yet his criticisms are veiled in so many seemingly orthodox phrases about "God's book," the "divine dispensation," "the word of the Lord," and so forth, that a casual peruser of a page or two might be inclined to throw the book down as "the usual orthodox trash." All these foggy phrases remind us of the inky fluid emitted by the cuttle fish to hide his real course from his pursuers. Only Professor Smith continues to emit his sepia when there is no longer any necessity of hiding. At a time when all the world and his wife are laughing at Ingersoll's "Mistakes of Moses," it should not take much courage to follow in the wake of Colenso, Kuenen, and Tiele. He says, for instance, "The transmission of the Bible is not due to a continued miracle, but to a watchful Providence ruling the ordinary means by which all ancient books have been handed down." (p. 21.) He then proceeds to show that "a watchful Providence" has not preserved any Hebrew Manuscripts of earlier date than the ninth century after Christ (p. 69); that the earlier copies were written in ink which could be washed off (p. 401); that the earlier Hebrew was in an entirely distinct character from that we know; that the vowel points which determined the pronunciation were not known in the time of the Talmudists or of Jerome, 400 years after Christ; that, therefore, the right meaning of a word, whether Bible, bubble, or babel, was only known by oral tradition, "which ascribes everything to Ezra which it has not the assurance to refer to Moses" (p. 81); that the text was handed down by interested scribes, who "did not hesitate to make small changes in order to remove expressions which they thought unedifying" (p. 78), and who "vigorously suppressed discordant copies" (p. 75), which doubtless accounts for the wonderful unanimity of existing texts; that nevertheless the canon once included apocryphal books, and most diverse readings and transpositions, as proved by the earlier and often preferable Samaritan and Septuagint versions; and that other books, such as the Book of Jasher and the book of the wars of the Lord, have been lost. He further shows, at great length, that, under "a watchful providence," the Levitical law ascribed to Moses was not known until a thousand years after his death, when the Jews were in captivity. Of course, he does not put such a damaging statement in this coarse fashion, but *graces* it in the following manner: "It was not on the basis of the Pentateuchal theory of worship that God's *grace* ruled in Israel during the age of the judges and the kings, and it was not on that basis that the prophets taught" (p. 240); "and so the conclusion is inevitable that the ritual element which the law adds to the prophetic doctrine of forgiveness became parts of the system of God's *grace* only after the prophets had spoken." "A dim consciousness of this witness of history is preserved in the fantastic tradition that the law was lost and restored by Ezra. In truth the people of Jehovah never lived under the law, and the dispensation of divine *grace* never followed its pattern, till Israel had ceased to be a nation" (p. 267).

Professor Smith's book is doubtless calculated to do good by opening the eyes of many to the dubious nature of the documents they have too long regarded as infallible. But in the name of common manliness and honesty we must express our disgust at the flabby-mindedness or insincerity of these members of the "loose" Church, who attempt to run with the hare of orthodoxy while hunting with the hounds of free inquiry. Professor Smith and his like have yet to learn that a house built partly on rock and partly on sand is as unsafe for permanent shelter as one built wholly on sand, and that no battle that is worth the winning is ever won by the half-hearted.

LAON.

## CORRESPONDENCE.

### W. R. BRADLAUGH AT ROTHERHAM.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In your last issue, Mr. Young, Secretary of the N. S. S., states that the chairman at the discussion between him and Mr. W. R. Bradlaugh favored his (Mr. Young's) views of the matter. To say the very least, this is a misrepresentation of fact. After the late debate, Mr. Young wrote to me adducing further evidence to establish the position (a position taken by him at the meeting) that Jephthah the Gilcadite had actually offered up his daughter; and, with respect to this, and this only, I penned the words in reply, "I think you will see I favor your view," namely,

the actual offering up of the young woman. With the conclusion Secularists draw from that sacrifice I have not the slightest sympathy, and utterly repudiate the imputation of sympathy with any of the Secularistic objections advanced in the recent controversy.

Touching Mr. W. R. Bradlaugh, I think I may say that his friends were not dissatisfied with his defence of the Bible as a whole. This gentleman is only at the beginning of his strength, and promises to be a foeman not unworthy of the steel of the foremost Secularist.—I am, yours truly,

THE CHAIRMAN OF THE

BRADLAUGH-YOUNG DISCUSSION.

P. S.—I hold a copy of my letter to Mr. Young, and will be glad to show it to anyone at my address—13, Nelson Street, Rotherham.

### A VOICE FROM CANADA.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I am more than delighted with the *Freethinker*. It strikes the nail on the head every time, and of course when the nail happens to be a Christian finger-nail you must expect a howl. I wish you every success in your enterprise and will do what little I can to help you, both in the way of pressing its claims for support amongst my friends, and by occasionally sending you any items of interest pertinent to the cause of Freethought that may come to my notice.

I send you by this mail a copy of the *Montreal Star* and also some cuttings from *Montreal Witness* enclosed. The *Witness* is the ultra-evangelical organ in this city, and its policy until now with regard to scepticism has been to maintain the "conspiracy of silence," so that it is quite refreshing to note the different stand it takes from its Ontario *confrères* on the seizure of infidel literature. There the Protestants are in a large majority, but here in the province of Quebec they are a very magnificent minority, and the *Witness* is far seeing enough to know that they are dealing with a weapon that might cut both ways. Hence their apparent liberality. Among the cuttings you will find a remarkably unbiassed statement from a Jesuit priest on "Religion and Infidelity in England," and also some correspondence which has been causing some "trouble in de Church."

Heresy hunting is likely to become a fashionable sport this winter. Dying without benefit of clergy seems also likely to become "the thing" soon. *Witness* Disraeli on one side the Atlantic, Garfield on the other, and many more, among whom I may mention Mr. John C. Baker, a member of our Freethought club here, who died as consistently as he lived, leaving the following inscriptions to be placed on his tomb, which has been done:—

"My hope is that I have done my duty and some good. Truth, Honesty and Justice are better than fasting and praying. As we know nothing of a future state, we should do our best in the present.

"Save when you are young, that you may live in comfort when old."

I must now wind up this rambling communication by giving you an item for the profane joke column. Whether it has appeared in print or not I do not know, but I have seen it in practical use in a grocer's store here—"God helps those who help themselves, but God help any man caught here helping himself."—Yours etc.,

CHAS. STEVENS.

P.S.—I have just heard the following anecdote of "Pagan Bob" from a personal friend of his who was present at the time. Several well-known infidels, among whom was Ingersoll, were stopping at a seaside hotel. There were also among the guests a number of Christians, who were in the habit of holding a daily prayer-meeting in one of the public rooms. Some objections having been made to this, the proprietor remonstrated with the leaders in the movement, and while doing so Ingersoll happened to pass, and of course he was set down as the instigator of the plot. One of the rev. gentlemen, remembering the old proverb about striking while the iron is hot, and, calling the Colonel over, said: "Mr. Ingersoll, surely you cannot have any objection to our holding a prayer-meeting here daily." And Bob, looking very solemn and placing his hand on the gentleman's shoulder, replied: "My dear friend, I haven't the least objection; if *God Almighty can stand it, I can.*"

JOHN WESLEY ON WITCHCRAFT.—"It is true that the English in general, and indeed most of the men of learning in Europe, have given up all account of witches and apparitions as mere old wives' fables. I am sorry for it, and I willingly take this opportunity of entering my solemn protest against this violent compliment which so many that believe the Bible pay to those who do not believe it. I owe them no such service. I take knowledge that these are at the bottom of the outcry which has been raised, and with such insolence spread through the land in direct opposition, not only to the Bible, but to the suffrage of the wisest and best of men in all ages and nations. They well know (whether Christians know it or not) that the giving up witchcraft is in effect giving up the Bible."—*John Wesley*, in his "Journal," 1768.

## FREETHOUGHT GLEANINGS.

**PLAYED-OUT RELIGIONS.**—We live in a transition period, when the old faiths which comforted nations, and not only so, but made nations, seem to have spent their force. I do not find the religions of men at this moment very creditable to them, but either childish and insignificant, or unmanly and effeminate. The fatal trait is the divorce between religion and morality. Here are know-nothing religions; or churches that proscribe intellect; scortatory religions; slave-holding and slave-trading religions; and even in the decent populations, idolatries wherein the whiteness of the ritual covers scarlet indulgence. In creeds never was such levity; witness the heathenisms in Christianity, the periodic "revivals," the Millenium mathematics, the peacock ritualism, the retrogression to Popery, the maundering of Mormons, the delirium of rapping, the rat and mouse revelation, thumps in table drawers, and black art.—*Ralph Waldo Emerson*, "Conduct of Life," ch. vi.

**EVERY** natural growth is more or less of a struggle with other growths, in which, in the long run, the fittest survives. Some are, and must be, wiser than the rest; and the enunciation of a thought in advance of the moment provokes dissent and thus promotes action. Discussion is therefore one of the motive powers of life; and, as such, is not to be deprecated.—*Prof. Jas. Tyndall*, "Presidential address to the Glasgow Sunday Society, 1880."

**INSPIRATION.**—Take from the *New Testament* all passages upholding the idea that belief is necessary to salvation; that *Christ* was offered as an atonement for the sins of the world; that the punishment of the human soul will go on for ever; that heaven is the reward of faith, and hell the penalty of honest investigation; take from it all miraculous stories,—and I admit that all the good passages are true. If they are true, it makes no difference whether they are inspired or not. Inspiration is only necessary to give authority to that which is repugnant to human reason. Only that which never happened needs to be substantiated by miracles. The universe is natural.—*Ingersoll*.

**SUPERSTITION.**—What can it profit any mortal to adopt locutions and imaginations which do not correspond to fact; which no sane mortal can deliberately adopt in his soul as true; which the most orthodox of mortals can only, and this after infinite essentially *impious* effort to put out the eyes of his mind, persuade himself to "believe that he believes"? Away with it, in the name of God, come out of it all true men!—*Thomas Carlyle*. The "Life of John Sterling," part i., chap. 7, p. 45. People's edition.

## PROFANE JOKES.

At bedtime, little Willie was saying the usual prayer at his mother's knee, and, having got as far as "if I should die before I wake," hesitated. "Well, what next?" asked his mother. "Well, I s'pose the next thing would be a funeral."

"PAPA," asked a boy, "what is meant by Paradise?" "Paradise, my son," replied the father, "is the latter part of the summer, when your mother goes on a visit to your grandfather."

"SATAN died here," reads a Pittsburg sign; but it was not till an astute Alleghany Dutchman inquired when he died there, that the people understood that they could get satin dyed.

"It is true," said an aged man of much experience, "it is true, as the poet says, that 'Heaven lies about us in our infancy;' and it is also true that our neighbors lie about us when we've grown up."

A BOSTON philosopher says there is something inexpressibly sad about the music of a church organ—while the collection is being made.

THERE is many a man who prays fervently not to be led into temptation, and then goes into it of his own accord, expecting the Lord to get him out.

"MARY, my love, do you remember the text this morning?" No, pa, I never can remember the text; I have such a bad memory." "By the way, did you notice Susan Brown?" joined in Mary's mother. "Oh, yes; what a fright! She had on her last year's bonnet done up, a pea-green silk, a black mantilla, brown boots, an imitation of Honiton collar, a lava bracelet, her old earrings, and such a fan!" "Well, my dear, your memory is certainly 'bad.'"

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