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PROSECUTED FOR BLASPHEMY.

THE FREETHINKER.

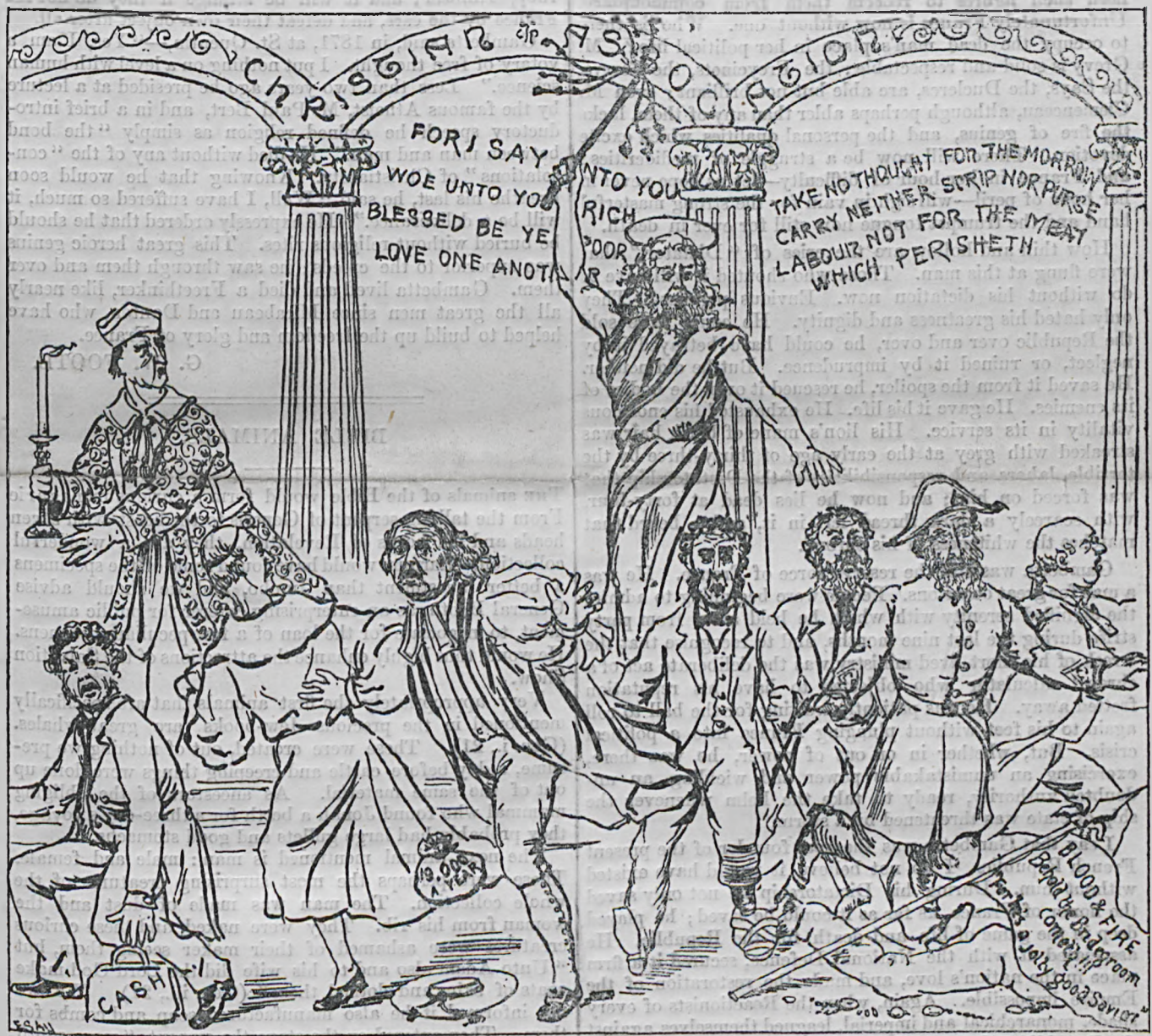
EDITED BY G. W. FOOTE.

Vol. III.—No. 1.]

JANUARY 7, 1883.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.

"COMIC BIBLE" SKETCHES.—LII.



AN UNWELCOME VISITOR.

And he went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold therein.—LUKE XIX., 45.

GAMBETTA.

LAST Sunday night I watched the old year out and the new year in with some hospitable American friends at Sheffield. I was diverted by observing a quaint country custom. Small parties came wherever they saw a light, and sang a carol or chanted an old rhyme; after which they gently rapped at the door for a recognition of their attentions. It was nearly one when I retired to rest. All was calm and quiet, and as I looked out from my bedroom window into the night I saw that the mist had cleared away and left a

dull but peaceful sky. Little did I think as I laid down to sleep that my hero was already asleep in death.

Yes, Gambetta was my hero, and I am not ashamed of the enthusiasm. He was the one public man in the world whom I loved and revered. I never saw or heard him, but for thirteen years I had closely watched his career. I read all his speeches and treasured every scrap of biography or gossip I could procure. My loyalty was never shaken by all the detraction of his critics or the calumny of his enemies. I was sure that he was honest as well as great, a patriot as well as a politician. And now he is dead the truth is beyond all dispute. The colossal fortune amassed

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by this bourgeois Tiberius, as the extreme Reds called him, turns out to be a myth; his entire fortune being under £30,000, and most of that consisting of his interest in the two newspapers he founded; while the splendid mansion they accused him of living in at Ville d'Avray turns out to be a small house which, according to the *Times*, would be thought too mean for a small shopkeeper. There was no sign of real comfort, much less of luxury in the place; and the room in which he died contained nothing but a narrow plain bed, a chest of drawers, a common table, and a few old chairs.

Gambetta's death is an immeasurable loss to France. The politicians he leaves behind on the stage are dwarfs compared with him. Like Saul, the son of Kish, he stood head and shoulders above his contemporaries. His individuality overshadowed them all. His tremendous courage, his inexhaustible energy, his matchless eloquence, his sagacity, his natural ascendancy over others, his traditional glory, and the popular fascination of his name, made him the centre of French hopes and fears. He was a figure splendid and unique. And there can be no doubt that nations need such figures to redeem them from commonplace. Unfortunately France is now without one. Who is there to occupy the dead man's place in her political life? M. Grevy is solid and respectable; the Freycinets, the Ferrys, the Says, the Ducleres, are able but not brilliant; even M. Clemenceau, although perhaps abler than any of them, lacks the fire of genius, and the personal qualities which excite devotion. There will now be a struggle of mediocrities; and France in her hour of difficulty—let us hope never in her hour of peril—will sigh in vain for the strong masterful hand and the trumpet tongue now still for ever in death.

How thin and hollow are the cries of "Dictator" that were flung at this man. Those who shouted it will have to do without his dictation now. Envious pigmies! They only hated his greatness and dignity. He could have sold the Republic over and over, he could have betrayed it by neglect, or ruined it by imprudence. But he did neither. He saved it from the spoiler, he rescued it over the bodies of its enemies. He gave it his life. He exhausted his enormous vitality in its service. His lion's mane of black hair was streaked with grey at the early age of thirty-three by the terrible labors and responsibilities of the Dictatorship that was forced on him; and now he lies dead at forty-four, with scarcely a dark thread left in it, and a beard that matches the whiteness of his shroud.

Gambetta was still the reserve force of France. He was a man for great occasions. People were beginning to admire the dignified serenity with which he held aloof from party strife during the last nine months, and to recognise that the wreck of his short-lived ministry was the deliberate act of a shrewd calculator who objected to have his reputation fretted away. He was patiently waiting for the ball to roll again to his feet without plunging France into a political crisis. But, whether in or out of power, he was there, exercising an unmistakable power and wielding an undoubted authority, ready to take the helm whenever the ship of state was threatened by a storm.

I say that Gambetta was the real founder of the present French Republic. I do not believe it would have existed without him. During his Dictatorship he not only saved the honor of France, as far as it could be saved; he played deep in the game of life and death for the Republic. He associated it with the National Defence, secured it a firm place in the nation's love, and made the restoration of the Empire impossible. Again, when the Reactionists of every shade, monarchical and imperial, leagued themselves against the Republic and prepared to kill it, Gambetta was the soul of its defence. He excelled himself in the struggle. He worked night and day, he flung scornful defiance at the enemy, he inspired the friends of freedom with his magical eloquence, he organised their campaign, his generalship led to their victory, and when the battle was ended he stood master of the situation. Then he sacrificed his ambition for the Republic, and let the presidency go into other hands. It is for this that the Liberals of Europe owe him unstinted gratitude. The French Republic carries with it the world's hope, and Gambetta was its founder and its savior.

The career of Gambetta since 1877, which has caused so much controversy and speculation, is a subject I have no space to discuss here. I shall deal with it in the full critical Biography which I intend to publish with a Portrait in the next number of *Progress*.

Freethinkers can claim Gambetta as one of themselves. He never entered a church even at the burial of a friend, and he publicly professed himself a disciple of Voltaire. He called Comte the greatest thinker of the nineteenth century, and most of his intimate friends were Atheists or Positivists. It was he who uttered the famous word—"Clericalism, there is the enemy." He helped to drive the priest from the schools, to secularise education, to cripple the power of the higher clergy. But he was too sagacious to propose the immediate separation of church and state, unlike M. Clemenceau and his friends who are anxious to tear them apart at once. Gambetta knew that Catholicism is still a great power in France, and that while its dignitaries might be tied down and its unauthorised orders expelled, it would only provoke a religious reaction if the poor rural clergy were molested. He saw that by secularising education, and bringing girls as fully as boys under its influence, the future was assured to Freethought. His enemies called this Opportunism. The name is a compliment. The extreme Reds, who are no better Freethinkers than Gambetta and much worse politicians, may have a chance of trying their Inopportunism; and it will be strange if they do not set France by the ears, and defeat their own object after all.

Gambetta said, in 1871, at St. Quentin,—“Yes, I am a votary of free thought. I put nothing on a level with human science.” Less than two years ago he presided at a lecture by the famous Atheist, M. Paul Bert, and in a brief introductory speech he defined religion as simply “the bond between man and man.” He died without any of the “consolations” of Christianity. Knowing that he would soon breathe his last, he said “Well, I have suffered so much, it will be a deliverance.” He expressly ordered that he should be buried without religious rites. This great heroic genius was superior to the creeds; he saw through them and over them. Gambetta lived and died a Freethinker, like nearly all the great men since Mirabeau and Danton, who have helped to build up the freedom and glory of France.

G. W. FOOTE.

BIBLE ANIMALS.

THE animals of the Bible would form a curious menagerie. From the talking serpent of Genesis to the beast with seven heads and ten horns of Revelation, they are a wonderful collection. Barnum would have found some of the specimens a better investment than Jumbo, and we should advise General Booth, as an enterprising caterer for public amusement, to negotiate for the loan of a few peculiar specimens. He would thus highly enhance the attractions of the Salvation Show.

Very appropriately the first animals that are specifically mentioned in the precious Jew-books are great whales. (Gen. i., 21). These were created, out of nothing we presume, a day before cattle and creeping things were done up out of the same material. As ancestors of the obliging mammal who found Jonah a berth for a three-day's voyage, they probably had large gullets and good stomachs.

The next animal mentioned is man: male and female. These were perhaps the most surprising creatures of the whole collection. The man was made of dust and the woman from his rib. They were naked, and these curious creatures were ashamed of their maker seeing them, but “Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins and clothed them” (Gen. iii., 21). We are not informed if he also manufactured soap and combs for them. Then entered on the stage the serpent, “more subtil than any beast of the field.” He presumably preambulated on the tip of his tail as he was condemned afterwards to go upon his belly for telling the truth to the woman in very good Hebrew.

We are then introduced to “cherubims,” who were placed at the east of the Garden of Eden. These are generally represented as a queer kind of feathered fowl with no place to sit upon; all stem and no stern. The inspired prophet Ezekiel, however, gives us a very different, and doubtless equally accurate description of these animals, between whose wings old Jahveh sat when he got out of his box of shittim wood (Exod. xxv., 22; Numb. vii., 8, 9; 1 Sam. iv., 4; and 2 Sam. vi., 2).

“And this was their appearance; they had the likeness of a man. And everyone had four faces, and everyone had four wings. And their feet were straight feet; and the sole of their feet was

like the sole of a calf's foot: and they sparkled like the color of burnished brass As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion, on the right side: and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle. Thus were their faces: and their wings were stretched upward; two wings of everyone were joined one to another, and two covered their bodies When they went, they went upon their four sides: and they turned not when they went" (Ezek. I. 5, 6, 7, 10 and 17).

How plainly does the eye of faith discern these cherubim! They were as extraordinary as the bear in Daniel vii., 5, that had "three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it." Huxley himself could not be more graphic in their anatomical description. They dwelt in heaven together with somewhat similar beasts "full of eyes before and behind." (Rev. iv., 6-7). Oh, what must it be to be there!

We do not reckon Balaam's ass among the noteworthy curiosities of Biblical natural history, for its speaking was only a special instance of an every-day occurrence. We never yet knew an ass who met an angel of the Lord and preserved silence.

What kind of fowl the Bible angels were is left to conjecture, though they are usually represented with wings so placed as to render superfluous the use of arms. We find, however, that they partook of food with Abraham; so doubtless they are provided with an alimentary canal. Indeed, the Psalmist (lxxviii., 25) describes manna as angels' food. It apparently did not agree with the Jewish stomachs. When they asked for a change, other curious animals were sent among them, viz., fiery serpents (Num. xxi., 6). It is to be hoped these species are extinct, since travellers in Palestine never mention them. Though they assure us of the continued existence of the conies, and of their being "a feeble folk," they have hitherto failed to come across the kind of hares which, according to Moses, chew the cud (Lev. xi., 6). Breeders of racers might do well if they could infuse a strain from the horses of fire who came between the bald-headed Elisha and his prophetic pal Elijah to carry the latter up into heaven.

Any menagerie or museum would be vastly enriched by specimens of the dragons who are referred to in holy writ in no less than fourteen places, or of the unicorns, mentioned seven times, or of the satyrs spoken of by Isaiah (xiii., 21; xxxiv., 14). Some try to make out that by the word unicorn the rhinoceros is intended. Job's behemoth is also referred to the hippopotamus. But this is conjecture. Both behemoth and leviathan were curious creatures. Their description may be found in chapters 40 and 41, but some of the details would hardly find admission into any natural history. The cockatrice, as mentioned by Mr. Symes in his interesting paper on "Spurious Wisdom" in *Progress*, was a sort of viper hatched from the egg of a cock. Cock's eggs being somewhat scarce, this variety of serpent is proportionately rare. They were, however, known to the inspired writers (Isaiah xi., 8; xiv., 29; lix. 5; Jer. viii., 7). Cocks having obstinately refused to lay since the time of Peter, we fear any collector of curiosities who wishes to obtain a sample of cockatrices at the present day will have to undertake a journey to the New Jerusalem. Wonderful are the sights there. John saw horses, and extraordinary preparations for the supper of "a lamb having seven horns and seven eyes" (Rev. v. 6); white, red, black, and pale horses (chap. 6); locusts shaped like horses (ix., 7); horses "having heads as the heads of lions, and out of their mouth issued fire and brimstone. For their power is in their mouth and in their tails: for their tails were like unto serpents and had heads, and with them they do hurt" (ix, 17-19). He also saw "another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads" (xii., 3); likewise a beast "having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns." And unclean spirits, like frogs, came out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast (xvi, 13). To the supper of the aforesaid lamb fowls were respectfully invited, being promised to eat the flesh of kings, and, indeed, of all men (xix., 17, 18).

Any account of the Bible animals would be incomplete without mentioning that the king of the menagerie, the God of the Bible, is the queerest and most ill-tempered animal of them all. Indeed, he likens himself to a lion and a leopard (Hos. xi., 7). The third person of the Divine Trinity, as every ornithologist is aware, belongs to the pigeon family.—(*Columba Paraoletus*).

DUCIANUS.

"FIDEI DEFENSOR."

(From a forthcoming volume entitled "Woodland and Shingle.")

Fidei Defensor.—What is thy defence?

Is it but the buttress of a stern intolerance?
Not from Reason's armory thy weapons have been brought;
Not in brain-made fortresses thy battles have been fought;
Not in warrior vigor have thy feeble blows been dealt;
Yet have thine opponents all the woes of warfare felt;
Faggot, axe and rack have championed all thy impotence;
Fidei Defensor, vain is thy defence;

Fidei Defensor, there are daring hearts

Brave enough to battle thee though poisoned be thy darts,—
Brave enough to claim the right to speak among the crowd—
But enough to laugh at thee and tell their thoughts aloud.
'Tis not scorn or poverty our liberties shall bar;
'Tis not social ostracism can stay the tide of war;
Foot to foot we battle, Science all our providence,
Fidei Defensor, useless thy defence!

Fidei Defensor, "Freedom" is my cry!

Neither creed nor dogma infallible have I,—
But these willing hands to win my own and other's bread,—
But the consolation of repose when I am dead;
Yet while live I may, for freedom will I freely fight,
Seeking for my fellows and myself a fuller light;
Thou shalt hiss and gabble in thy fierce intolerance,
Fidei Defensor, vain is thy defence!

JOHN ROWELL WALLER.

ACID DROPS.

A CORRESPONDENT writes:—The description of the Panorama in your Christmas Number, brings to my mind an incident which occurred in a village where I was residing about a dozen years ago. An entertainment was to be given consisting of dissolving views illustrative of Bible narratives, and the life of Christ. The schoolmaster was to play appropriate music on the harmonium, but the same day he was taken ill, and the Vicarage gardener, an amateur violinist, was requested to fill the vacancy thus caused and play upon his fiddle, but his knowledge of sacred music seemed to be rather limited, and therefore his selections savored of the profane, which was fully made known when the picture of the ascension was thrown on the screen, for the old man played with extra spirit "Up in a balloon boys." This being a popular song about that time, the chorus was heartily rendered by the youngsters present.

We understand that in accordance with our suggestion, the committee of the Evangelical Alliance have been offered the services of a phonograph for their week of prayer. The instrument is arranged to pray without ceasing for eight days, and it is confidently expected that with the assistance of an ear-trumpet the deity will be quite as well able to attend to the phonograph's supplications as to those from the mouths of ministers and parsons.

GARIBALDI, like Victor Hugo, had a deep tinge of the large-hearted charity which is erroneously supposed to be peculiarly Christian. He wrote outside the envelope containing his will, the sentence which found its way from the Buddhist Dhammapada to the Epistle of the Romans: "Overcome evil with good." An American paper, however, cannot refrain from speculating that when he had written the word "good," a twinge of his old wounds came on which prevented him from adding the word "firearms."

ARCHBISHOP BENSON has been fulsomely praised by the press. The dissenters of his late diocese, however, have no high opinion of him. He was a bitter opponent of the Burials Bill, and after it became law, ordered the clergy not to permit the bell to be tolled over the body of any dead dissenter, as that was not specifically mentioned in the Act.

THE Ritualists consider the appointment to the Primacy of Dr. Benson, who recently spoke of the "crafty forgeries" of the Liberationists, as a proof that the days of the Low Church are played out. On the other hand the Church Association calls for £10,000 to assist them in suppressing Romish practices. We wish they may get it.

CARDINAL MANNING, the Catholics, and the High Church party, denounce marriage with a deceased wife's sister as incest. Yet this marriage is legal in 74 out of 75 parts of the British dominions.

A RITUALISTIC organ notes that on the first occasion that the Rev. S. F. Green officiated in a church after his release from Lancaster it was his lot to read, "The Devil shall cast some

of you into prison." This is rather hard on the Judge of the Court of Arches.—*Echo*.

DR. PARKER has just uttered a fearful Jeremiad over the fate of Christianity. Preaching in the City Temple last Sunday night he said that the press gave one column to all the church services on Christmas Day, but seven columns were devoted to the theatres. "The people," said he, "all like to know what is going on at the theatres; they care nothing for what is going on in the churches." Well, we dare say this is true enough, but the preachers have their remedy. Let them make their pantomimes as diverting as those in the theatres, and they will get just as good reports. They don't keep abreast of the age. Their show business is all behind.

DR. PARKER further laments that in London "you cannot maintain one single daily religious newspaper. In three months it would be dead." Quite so. People give religion one whole day to itself, and they object to its sprawling over all the rest of the week.

YET it is this God-forsaken perishing creed that has the impudence to prosecute men for criticising it. What has Dr. Parker to say to this?

GENERAL BOOTH states that during the past year no less than 609 of his soldiers have been knocked down, kicked, or otherwise brutally assaulted. We quite admit that this is disgraceful, but it only testifies to the brutal disposition which survives after eighteen centuries of Christianity. Our opinion is that these silly soldiers ought to be protected against themselves, that is, they should be absolutely forbidden to air their imbecility in the streets. We want a change for the better. Abolish the Blasphemy laws, and confine these lunatics to their own meeting places.

THE Tory *North Star* complains bitterly of the fact that Dr. Aveling's expenses at the School Board election are being defrayed by subscription. Why so sore, O pious one? You are not asked to subscribe a halfpenny. What you say about "begging" is sheer nonsense. If Dr. Aveling undertakes to give a considerable share of his time to the cause of education, surely the Freethought party has a right to pay the cost of his election—without asking the advice of Tory editors, many of whom actually live on the subscriptions of Conservative nabobs who subsidise their papers.

WHY did so sensible a paper as the *Pall Mall Gazette* give so much space to a silly letter about the miraculous cures at Bethshan Hospital? As this is not the big-gooseberry season we are almost driven to suppose that the advertising department of the *Pall Mall Gazette* sometimes encroaches on the literary side.

THERE was a pretty little farce enacted at Claremont Hall last Sunday evening. Mr. Mitchell, an itinerant defender of the Christian faith and professional maligner of "infidels," attempted a reply to Dr. Aveling's lecture, and the Doctor very properly declined to answer or hear him. Mr. Mitchell loudly boasted that the Doctor was afraid of him, a colossal joke which nearly asphyxiated the audience. Why doesn't Mr. Mitchell go to school for a bit and learn to speak decent English, instead of lugging about a book of quotations from books he has never read, and from authors whose names he mangles in the most frightful manner? That he will ever be wiser we do not for a moment believe, for he is clearly one of those fools whom Solomon described as hopeless. No braying in a mortar would ever enable him to do anything but bray. Still he might contrive to manage those names a bit better.

GENERAL BOOTH, like many others, is under the delusion that Northampton is a specially wicked town, and this opinion has doubtless been confirmed by the warm reception recently accorded to him there.

THE *Christian World* says that the late Pope spoke contemptuously of the mind and morals of the country clergy as mostly "dirt" (fango). Pio Nono doubtless knew what he was speaking of, but after all the Catholic is the most respectable of the Churches.

Who would think that a bishop with ten thousand or so a year could be troubled by doubts? Yet so thorough-going a dogmatist as Soapy Sam records in his diary that he had often been disturbed by the speculation, "What if there is no future life?"

It is wonderful how stupid pretences of piety make people. The dreadful disaster at Bradford has led various newspapers to speak of those who were "providentially saved." We suppose the poor victims, including innocent children, were out of reach of the superintending care of Providence.

PROVIDENCE does all or nothing. If Providence saved those

who escaped, it killed the others, and if it deserves blessing for the one, it deserves the reverse of blessing for the other. In truth, the writers no more believe in Providence than we do. They know that the laws of gravity will bring ill-built chimneys down irrespective of who may be underneath. But they think it pious to use a word which expresses the ignorance of a time when something analogous to human will was supposed to underly all law, and hence we continually hear of terrible calamities in which some are "cruelly injured" and others "providentially saved."

LAST Monday morning a nameless man was fined twenty shillings or a month by the Lord Mayor for preaching in front of St. Paul's Cathedral that London would soon be destroyed by fire. This interesting person said he had a divine mission, and proceeded to give the Bench a religious discourse, but he was unceremoniously pulled up. Dr. Reid had examined him, but could not say he was insane. The poor man was born more than two thousand years too late. He might have been treated as a prophet if he had accompanied Jonah to Nineveh; now he is treated as a criminal. It is very hard lines.

THE Salvation Army down at Plymouth mourn the loss of their "converted Zulu." He went to a free tea and stole the hostess's shawl, which he pledged. Now he is enjoying a free tea in gaol for a month, and we dare say Booth will deny that he was ever an officer in "the Army."

WE have inserted in another column a strange letter from Mr. S. Standing, jun. It is a reply to our last week's article on "Superstitious Freethinkers." Many commendatory letters have reached us, but we prefer to insert this deprecatory one. Mr. Standing is very much hurt when other people's beliefs are roughly dealt with, but he describes the Secularism of everybody but himself and a small party in embryo as "a dreary waste of vague expressions made up of negations and ridicule." Why should I use coarse language? inquires Mr. Standing. We don't know; we never asked him to. If the state of flaccidity described in his fifth paragraph is to be the basis of "the new Secularism" we certainly prefer the old. In conclusion we beg to observe that Mr. Standing's historical sense is very weak. The grand doctrine of love towards all men happens to be a trifle older than Jesus Christ.

THE DIMENSIONS OF HEAVEN.

"And he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length, and the breadth, and the height of it, are equal."—REV. xxi., 16.

TWELVE thousand furlongs, 7,920,000 feet, which being cubed, 496,793,088,000,000,000 cubic feet. Reserving half of this space for the Throne and Court of Heaven, and half the balance for streets, we have the remainder of 124,198,272,000,000,000,000 cubic feet. Divide this by 4096, the cubical feet in a room sixteen feet square, and there will be 30,321,843,750,000,000 rooms. We will now suppose the world always did and always will contain 990,000,000 inhabitants, and that a generation lasts for 33½ years, making in all 2,970,000,000 every century; and that the world will stand 100,000,000 years, or 1,000 centuries, making in all 2,970,000,000,000 inhabitants. Then suppose there were 100 worlds equal to this in number of inhabitants and duration of years, making a total of 297,000,000,000,000 persons, and there would be more than a hundred rooms sixteen feet square for each person. If these are the dimensions of heaven, what are the dimensions of hell?

DEATH TERRORS.—Among the Greeks or Romans, as among many other people, the spirits of the dead were often looked upon as dangerous and wicked beings. It was especially the spirits of those who were deprived of sepulture or those who died of a violent death, that were animated with these perverse instincts. The doctrines of Epicurus fortunately relieved the most sensible minded from those chimerical tortures. There are a certain number of Latin epitaphs which tell us plainly enough that as regards the personality of the individual, death is the end of all things, that it is everlasting peace. But these too rational doctrines were believed in only by a very small minority; the masses still troubled themselves with their notion of Charon and Hell, thus preparing the way for Christianity, which brought to a paroxysm the fear of post-mortem torment.—*Dr. Chas. Letourneau, "Sociology Based upon Ethnography,"* p. 245., 1881

"FREETHINKER" DEFENCE FUND.—*Freethinker* sold to W. H. Spivey, 1s. *Failsworth Branch of the N.S.S.* (per S. Cheetham): H. Clough, 1s.; A. Clough, 1s.; Mary Clough, 6d.; Master Clough, 6d.; J. Taylor, 1s.; S. Pollitt, 1s.; S. Cheetham, 1s. *Sheffield*: Joe Craddock, 2s. 6d.; H. Pashley, 10s.; John Nelson, 5s.; W. Wishaw, 6d.; George Washington, 5s.; Collected, 4s.

SPECIAL NOTICE.

MR. FOOTE lectures twice to-day (Sunday, January 7th) at the Claremont Hall, Penton Street, Pentonville, London, N. : Morning, at 11, "Who Wrote the Bible?"; evening, at 7, "A Blasphemous Creed."

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

January 14th, Manchester; 16th, Walworth; 21st, Hall of Science, London; 28th, Claremont Hall, London.

February 4th, Leeds; 11th, York; 18th, Plymouth; 25th, Liverpool.

March 18th and 25th, Hall of Science, London.

April 1st, Milton Hall, London.

CORRESPONDENTS.

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THE *Freethinker* will be forwarded, direct from the office, post-free to any part of Europe, America, Canada, and Egypt, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 6s. 6d.; Half Year, 3s. 3d.; Three Months, 1s. 7½d.

RECEIVED WITH THANKS.—J. L. Excel, Charles F. S.

H. C.—In the Hindu mythology Vishnu is the second person of the Divine Trinity and personifies the preserving power of the divine spirit. The word Avatar means Descent, that from the world of Gods to the earth. All the Avatars of Vishnu are said to have been of a beneficent character.

J. BULL.—The Sixth General Council of the Church condemned Pope Honorius to perpetual anathema.

R. BARNES.—See Ezekiel xxv., 36.

LOUISA TRUMPER supplies the *Freethinker* and all advanced publications at 149 Louise Road, Water Lane, Stratford.

J. O'SHAUGHNESSY.—You have a right to your own view as we have to ours. We are not so silly as to expect everybody to agree with us.

C. B. B.—Thanks.

IRONOPOLIS.—Of course if curing diseases by faith is a reality, it is as you say a bad look out for doctors and Freethinkers, but it isn't. There's a one-legged crossing-sweeper near our place, and we defy the "faith" people to pray him on another leg. There could be no deception about such a case. What is there new in the affair? Jesus Christ and all the Apostles did the "healing by faith" business eighteen hundred years ago, and still the doctors flourish.

MR. JAMES CARTER, 21 Vicarage Villas, Willesden, will be glad to hear from any friends in the neighborhood who are willing to assist in forming a Branch of the National Secular Society.

R. W. HOLLOWAY.—Thanks for jokes. All really good ones are welcome. Your second question may be answered in the affirmative. 3. Diegesis means an explanation. It is the title of a work by the Rev. Robt. Taylor dealing with the Christian evidences.

SALISBURY.—Mr. Hillier, newsagent, Fisherton Street, Salisbury, supplies the *Freethinker* and Freethought literature when ordered. FRIENDS who observe notices of *Progress* in the press will oblige by forwarding the same to the editor.

T. WIGGINS wishes to procure Nos. 5, 7, 9, 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17, of the *Freethinker* to make up his set. All are for 1881 and out of print. Can any reader furnish them upon payment?

A. PORTER.—It gives us great pleasure indeed to know that our efforts are appreciated by so many unknown correspondents who will, in the event of our incarceration, do their best to continue and extend the influence of our journal.

W. KING.—We are not despondent. You can be of service by getting petitions for the repeal of the blasphemy laws signed and defence fund sheets filled up.

R. REYMOND.—There will be a little light matter in the next number of *Progress*, which will doubtless meet your wishes.

E. T. B.—Some of the pieces will certainly be used. We are glad to know that *Progress* gives you so much satisfaction.

H. W. JONES.—There are indeed some things hard to understand, and what you refer to is one of them. Thanks.

A. FAGE.—We can find no trace of your manuscript. The object which crowns the Cross at the bottom of the cover of our Christmas Number, is the famous cap of liberty.

ANAN.—You say that our Christmas Number was "the greatest treat you ever had in the shape of literature." We are glad to hear it. Your friend, whose faith was shaken by Mr. Foote's lecture at Milton Hall, should go there again. Persevere with him.

C. TAYLOR.—Thanks for the suggestions. We have had the sermon before.

JOE.—Thomas Carlyle was a Freethinker in the sense that he was not a Christian and that he wished all thinking to be free from outward restraint.

A. WHEATLEY.—We do not give gratuitous advertisements to such journals, and second and third hand falsehoods are not worth replying to. We thank you all the same.

S. BENDALL.—We will take your advice, and "give a column or two" on David's virtues, with quotations from the blessed Book for every one.

THE NEW YEAR.

READERS, one and all, we wish you a Happy New Year! The *Freethinker* is now in the second half of its second year, and this week we begin our third volume. It is gratifying to know that our circulation has doubled since we began the second, and we hope to chronicle a similar increase next January. We thank the many friends who have helped to give the *Freethinker* publicity in various ways; we solicit their kind assistance during the new year; and we promise to make the paper, as far as we can, worthy of their support. Whatever risk this involves we will run it; whatever danger, we will face it. The *Freethinker* is now an institution, and the bigots shall not put it down except by absolute physical force. Intimidation is useless. When Christianity is dead we will bury the *Freethinker* in its grave; but until then it will be kept very much "alive and kicking."

SUGAR PLUMS.

MR. FOOTE'S "Arrows of Freethought" have been shot as far as Canada, India, Australia, and even to Odessa. Christianity cannot now wing its flight where the barbed darts of criticism cannot follow it.

THE inhabitants of Geneva have been startled by a volume of sermons on the Epistles by Prof. Beauvoir. The professor is of opinion that St. Paul does not intend by God any personal being, but an impersonal influence.

WE are pleased to hear that a Freethinker has offered to find all the money that may be needed to complete the purchase of the contemplated "Balls Pond Secular Hall." It would be well, however, if all who possibly can take up shares before the 14th. inst. will do so, in order to reduce the amount to be borrowed. The Secretary's address is, Mr. Thomas Shore, 33 Newington Green Road, N.

THE favorite game in Paris during the mild weather of the New Year holidays, has been an Anti-Clerical Aunt Sally. A number of dolls, dressed in the garb of priests, are set up and bowled down with a little red ball. The working men of Paris find a great attraction in knocking over symbols of what their late great statesman well called "the enemy."

ANOTHER sign of the times. The *Christian Chronicle* gives a portrait and biography of Prof. Huxley, and actually does not indulge in any Christian calumnies. Surely the millenium is approaching.

THE Rev. Ward Beecher says the God depicted in orthodox creeds was an infernal demon, worse than any imagined by Dante, and he would not worship such a God even if he were damned for it. Every manly mind will endorse this utterance.

THE Rev. Dr. Hicks, of Washington, who made himself notorious by his attentions to that divinely-commissioned criminal Guiteau, has come again to the front as a disbeliever in hell. He says he is willing to be damned for disputing it. If there is no such place as hell he is quite ready to go there. No wonder this heresy is spreading in all directions. When Guiteaus go to glory it is quite time to mitigate the temperature of the lower region. The preaching of all heaven and no hell, however, is making theology quite too sweet. It is all treacle and no brimstone now-a-days. We believe the old-fashioned dose was a better working mixture.

MR. H. SEYMOUR, of Wood Street, Tunbridge Wells, writes to us as secretary and treasurer of a committee which has been formed to assist Mr. Edwards, who is systematically prosecuted by the police for keeping his shop open on Sunday. Subscriptions and accessions to the committee are earnestly invited.

READERS of "Progress and Poverty" will be interested to know that the current number of the *Republican* contains a portrait and biography of its author, Mr. Henry George.

By the way, that joke about Mr. Foote's new magazine and "Progress and Poverty," which has cropped up in so many papers, is happily *mal a propos*. There is no poverty with this *Progress* anyhow. The magazine has sold beyond expectation.

M. RENAN has concluded his "Souvenirs" in the *Revue des*

Deux Mondes, and as soon as they are published in a volume we shall have the pleasure of reviewing it at length. Meanwhile we select a tit-bit which is germane to the experience of a good many Freethinkers. "I am in the habit," writes M. Renan, "of receiving several times a-year an anonymous letter containing these words, and always in the same handwriting: '*Si pourtant il y avait un enfer!*' (Yet if there were a hell!) Surely the pious person who writes me this is anxious for my soul's health, and I am obliged to him. But hell is a supposition very inconsistent with what we know of the divine goodness. Moreover, if there be one, I can conscientiously affirm that I have not deserved it. A small amount of purgatory would perhaps be fair, and I would run the chance of that, as paradise would come next, and pious souls, I hope, would obtain indulgences to shorten my stay in purgatory." M. Renan's mastery of irony is as great as ever. We should like to hear his criticism of paradise when he gets there.

THE ATHEISTIC PULPIT.

[SECOND SERIES.]

V.

JESUS ONLY A GHOST.

Being put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the spirit.—
1 PETER iii., 18.

So says Peter, or whoever wrote the letter I am quoting. And this leads to the remark that possibly we have much misunderstood the New Testament writers respecting Jesus and his resurrection. Indeed, nothing is more certain than that all people who read the Bible do misunderstand it. It was *given*, I think, to make fools wise and wise people fools. It has done its work, no doubt; at least, in so far forth as making men fools is concerned.

But it is evident from this text that Peter did not believe that Jesus had been raised literally and bodily to life after being once dead. Peter was hardly so far gone as that, we may hope; though the writer of Acts ascribes all that madness to him. Peter says Jesus was put to death in the flesh. Well, I presume that admits of only one explanation—viz., that he was put to death in a literal sense; that he was killed. That need cause us no difficulty. We need not doubt that Jesus, if there be any substratum of truth in his story, was murdered by the Newdigates and Tylers of his day; by the orthodox of that age, who valued their creed above all things—except their own welfare and glory. But most Christians hold that Jesus was as literally raised from death as he was killed; that the same body which suffered, died, and was buried, became a living body again. This absurdity was evidently not held by Peter.

He merely says Jesus was "quickened in the spirit." No doubt he would have been completely puzzled had he been asked to explain his words; and yet we can understand pretty well what he meant. He meant, evidently, that the ghost of Jesus "walked" after death, like the ghost of Hamlet's murdered father. Else what can he mean by saying *in the spirit*? Had he supposed that Jesus really came to life again he could not have spoken thus. He must have said, unless he desired to bamboozle his readers, that Jesus was put to death and rose again to life.

Of course, to those who have no spiritual insight, that is, who are not intellectually blind, it is no easier to explain a ghost-walking case than a real resurrection. It is well known that all decent and respectable corpses when once dead remain so for ever; and whatever ghosts may be, all those that value their character keep out of sight from the time when they first become invisible. However, Peter asserts that Jesus was up again after being killed. Be it so. Let us see if he has any support in the rest of the New Testament.

I think he has; there are several stories told of Jesus after his so-called resurrection which are in entire accord with Peter's views:—

He appeared in "*another form*" to two of his disciples as they went into the country, says Mark (xvi., 12). This is curious. What does he mean? In another form? What shape did he take? The shape that so terrified Macbeth? Did they too say, "Take any shape but that!" as they saw him? Luke tells a similar story in much greater detail (xxiv., 13). He there joined the company of two of his disciples as they went to Emmaus, about 60 furlongs, or 8½ miles, from Jerusalem. And on the road, Jesus, who had been murdered but a few days previously, came near and entered into conversation with them; and they did not know

him! "Their eyes were holden," says Luke. What with? Had they taken a "wee drappie," or what? Any way, they did not know him. Either their eyes were much at fault or else he must, as Mark explains, have been "in another form." By the way, who knows that he may not be about the world in other forms to-day? However, those disciples knew him by his manner of breaking bread. His disguise or transformation was not perfect; but, like ghosts in general, the moment he was discovered, he vanished away! Here we find confirmation of Peter's doctrine that Jesus was only a ghost.

More confirmation follows. Those two bewildered disciples returned forthwith to Jerusalem, and told the others what had happened. And, quick! Presto! There was Jesus in the midst of them, as openly visible as ever ghost was at a dark *séance*.

Now, only a real ghost can do tricks like those. I mean that no one with a good, sound, honest body could do them. And John confirms the story by relating two other cases of the same sort. I say confirms; for it is well-known that though one impossible story may be doubted two or three together cannot be. Only tell enough of them, and all unbelief must vanish. A solemn face and earnest reiteration will make any story go. If you don't believe me, try it. Preach the most absurd story you can find—the resurrection of Jesus, for example; tell a few other miracles to tone down its loneliness; and people will believe you, and dub you "saint" for your pains.

John, I say, says Jesus twice stood in the midst of the disciples when the doors were shut (xx.). Now there were no chimneys then in Jerusalem; how did Jesus get in? That is a trick the writers have not explained. Our jugglers could no doubt enlighten us upon the subject—Oh! I forgot. Jesus was only a ghost, and there is no difficulty. A ghost being nothing in the world but an optical illusion, of course, walls and doors are no barrier to it. Where the visionaries are, there are the ghosts, doors or no doors.

It is interesting thus to find from the New Testament itself that Jesus was only a phantom, as many early Christians believed. Though we should never forget that ghosts are the most difficult subjects to get rid of. Realities can be expelled in various ways; but phantoms!—you can neither blow, brush, wash, nor sweep them away. At least, there is but one besom will touch them. That is, sound and general education.

JOS. SYMES,

CORRESPONDENCE.

SUPERSTITIOUS FREETHINKERS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I think your article upon this subject, which appeared in No. 53 of this journal, calls for some reply; and I trust to that love of fair play upon which the Freethought party pride themselves so much, to procure its publication if you can spare room for one.

In the first place it is such articles as this which prevent many of the less bigotted unbelievers from openly joining the Secularist ranks. The spirit which you breathe in your writings is painfully visible in the speeches and writings of other members of the party and is, rightly or wrongly, as objectionable to us as to believing Christians.

This is the ground you stand on and for which you make some kind of apology, settling the question, as you seem to think, in the three last paragraphs of your article.

Why should it be necessarily the presence of a superstitious belief which causes unbelievers to feel shocked at the coarse ridicule of the Secularists in respect to religious creeds? The true Christian does not ridicule and is not spiteful towards the Secularist: he is sorry for him. A similar feeling animates the breast of a true Secularist. He feels the hollowness of the Christian faith; he also respects the earnestness of the conviction which a Christian feels. This being the case he shrinks from the use of words or a line of action which would give unnecessary pain or offence to those whose religious belief he knows to be real.

Although I do not feel myself able to subscribe to a single article of the Christian faith, I am by no means prepared to say it is untrue. My faith is limited by my powers to believe: beyond what I am able to believe I neither affirm nor deny. God may be, and even the Christian's God may be: my belief or unbelief does not in the least affect his existence. Why, then, should I use coarse and ridiculous language about what I know so little of?

This I will say. The Secularists have brought out no rule of life equal to that laid down by Christianity. As at present

formed, Secularism is a dreary waste of vague expressions made up of negations and ridicule.

The new Secular party which is gradually forming, and to which I claim to belong, finds in the Secular life of Christ the true basis of a Secular life—rejecting any conceptions of a divinity, but accepting the grand doctrines of love towards all men.—I am, Sir, a squeamish Freethinker,

SAM. STANDRING, JUN.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Will you allow me to offer a word of explanation in reference to the statement in your article, "Superstitious Freethinkers," on the "religious service" and sacred music of the "Sunday evenings" as given by the League. The original promoters used the word "religion" not in the superstitious sense with which it is associated in so many minds, but in the larger and more comprehensive sense of "re-creation." As Carlyle said, "All true work is sacred," and many have smiled at the contradiction between the teaching of the scientific and critical lecturer and that conveyed in the musical selections which follow the lecture, but the aim of the management is to give to the best of its ability the grandest and best music: for this reason oratorios have been selected, and I am of opinion, those who listen so attentively do so not from love of, or superstitious reverence for the words used, but from a love of the grand music to which those words are set. I think if some modern musician would do for Shelley's "Prometheus" what Haydn did for the legend in Genesis, or Handel for the Messianic stories, the National Sunday League would not hesitate to place such a work before the public. In conclusion, I beg to thank you for your appreciation of the work of the League, and your exact definition of its true position among societies. The League asks only agreement with its objects, and gratefully accepts help from all.—I am, Sir, Yours faithfully,

HENRY SAVERAUX,
Secretary.

FREETHOUGHT GLEANINGS.

CHRISTIANITY INSUFFICIENT.—Christianity, after its establishment by Constantine, was left to exert its own influence over the Roman Empire, unaided by printing and natural science. It is recorded in history that it did not suffice to arrest the decline of morals and the downfall of the State, but was itself corrupted and perverted. In the dark ages which followed the subversion of that Empire, it was again left, unaided by human learning to do its best for the regeneration of mankind; and it became a vast system of superstition. Nor was it till after the invention of printing, and the revival of letters, that the barbarous superstructures which had been raised on the simple foundation of the Gospel were cleared away.—George Combe, "The Constitution of Man," chapter ix.

THE DUKE AND GOD'S ROGUES.—The country seat of Freyberg was the residence of Duke Henry, brother of Duke George. His wife, a princess of Mecklenburg, had given him, the year before, a son who had received the name of Maurice. To a love of good living and of pleasure, Duke Henry joined the bluntness and unpolished manners of a soldier. As for the rest, he was a pious man according to the piety of those times, and had made one journey to the Holy Land, and another to St. James of Compostello. "At Compostello," he would often say, "I laid a hundred golden florins on the altar of the saint, and said to him,—'O St. James! to please thee have I come thus far; I make thee a present of this money; but if these rogues there (the priests) take it from thee, I can't interfere; so take good care of it.'"—Dr. Merle D'Aubigné, "History of the Reformation in the Sixteenth Century," Book Ninth, chap. xii., p. 53.

RELIGION AND CIVILISATION.—It is remarkable that grandeur of religious ideas does not appear to have been developed by civilisation. The three most civilised nations of antiquity were undoubtedly the Egyptians, the Greeks, and the Romans. How poor were the religions of each of these three great nations!—Sir Arthur Helps.

PROFANE JOKES.

WHAT is your mother going to do with so much flour?—She's going to turn the stones into bread.

HIS ARCADIAN SIMPLICITY, OF COURSE.—Teacher: "Noah pitched the ark within and without with pitch." Boy: "Why did he not use turpentine, sir? He could have finished it quicker."

THE Orientals are very trusting to each other. "Are you not afraid to go away from your shop without locking it?" a traveller asked of an Egyptian. "Oh, no," answered the man, coolly; "there is not a Christian within three miles."

THE depôt pay-master of a certain Regt. of the Line, being in want of a servant, said to the Sergt. Major—"Sergt. Major, do you know a man whom you could recommend to me as my servant?" "Yes, there's Providence; he is a very good man, and has been employed as a servant frequently." "No, no; I'll not trust Providence any more; he stole my sheets!"

AN old-fashioned clergyman passing a new-fashioned church, on which a spire was going up, was asked how much higher it was going to be. "Not much," he answered; "that congregation don't own much higher in that direction."

Two little girls, aged four and six years, had just had new dresses, and were on their way to Sunday-school. Said Etta, the elder, "Oh, I have forgotten my verse." "I haven't forgotten mine," replied the other. "It is, 'Blessed are the dressmakers,'"

A SCOTCH sailor in the Arctic Regions, turning a corner of an iceberg while exploring, came upon a huge Polar bear, and seeing a fight inevitable, he unclasped his knife, rolled up his sleeves, and flopping on his knees for a moment, said,— "Laird I hae niver askit ye for onything before, an' gin ye help me this time I'll bash ye nae mair. Gin ye canna help me, Laird, dinna help the bear, but just staun' by an' see fair play, for this'll be sic an' awfu' ficht, Amen."

HE bowed to her across the table, smirked, washed his hands in invisible soapsuds, and said, "Oxuse me, miss, I dink I haf med you at Saragosa dis summer,—my name is Moses." "I cannot recall your face," she airily answered, "but your name is quite familiar."

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