

# PROSECUTED FOR BLASPHEMY.

# THE FREETHINKER.

EDITED BY G. W. FOOTE.

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]

"COMIC BIBLE" SKETCHES.—LIV.



## A BIBLE HERO.

*And after him was Shamgar the son of Anath, which slew of the Philistines six hundred men with an ox goad: and he also delivered Israel.—JUDGES iii., 31.*

## DAVID'S TENDERNESS.

We referred, a few weeks ago, to a theological examination paper in which the examinee was told to give some account of "David's tenderness." One of our readers, whose opinion we respect, thought it would be well if we wrote a column or two on the subject, giving chapter and verse from the Bible for every statement we make, for the sake of Christians who are so lamentably ignorant of their own Scriptures. We promised to do so, and here is the result.

David was a man after God's own heart, who walked in God's ways, and kept God's commandments all the days of his life. It will not, therefore, be surprising if we find that his moral character was like Jehovah's, brutal, malignant, and bloodthirsty. Nor will it be strange if we discover that his tenderness was also like Jehovah's, partial, capricious and selfish. After the manner of his God, he had his favorites; but the only one of these who was worth much was Jonathan, and his knowledge of David was limited, and formed at a time when he was very young and had enjoyed few opportunities of appearing in his true colors.

David's tenderness was chiefly directed towards women, and especially towards other men's wives. He was an insatiable lecher, and, like all God's friends except Adam, whose opportunities were limited, a thorough-going polygamist. After his desperate attempt to bring the Ark to his capital, we are quietly told (1 Chronicles, chap. xiv., v. 3) "that he took more wives at Jerusalem," as though he did that sort of thing pretty often. Besides wives, he had plenty of concubines. He left ten of them to mind the house when he fled from Absalom; and as that lively chip of the

old block made too free with them in his father's absence, David when he came back shut them up for life (2 Samuel, chap. xx., v. 3).

The first instance we shall cite of David's tenderness is from his early manhood. He was playing the rebel against his lawful king in the wilderness of Paran, and being short of provisions he did a little requisitioning. There lived at Mount Carmel, near his lurking-place, a farmer named Nabal who had some fine fat sheep and a beautiful wife. David sent ten young men unto this farmer with a curious message. They were to ask for a big present on the ground that David had not stolen any of his sheep; which is very much like Bill Sykes asking for a Christmas box because he has not broken open your shutters and stolen your plate. Nabal returned a sensible answer; he declined to give any of his substance to prowlers and freebooters. Whereupon David paid him a personal visit with four hundred of his band. But Abigail, the beautiful wife, who appears to have disliked her husband as much as she liked David, sent on a present to meet the robber chief. It included two hundred loaves, two bottles of wine, five sheep ready dressed, five measures of parched corn, a hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs. She also went out to meet him, called him "her lord," and herself his "handmaiden," and listened approvingly to David's violent and dirty speech against her husband (1 Samuel, chap. xxv). Ten days afterwards Nabal died. According to the story, the Lord smote him. But as David immediately took possession of his wife and farm, it looks suspicious. If such a thing happened nowadays, there would be a coroner's inquest, and some spicy revelations.

Abigail was David's second wife. His first was Michal,

the daughter of Saul. David's tenderness to her was extremely peculiar. She was a good wife and conducted herself with great propriety. She had but one fault; she once played the fool, and saved her rascally husband's life. And how did he reward her fidelity? Turn to the fifth chapter of the Second of Samuel and read. David danced before the Ark with nothing on except a thin strip of linen around his waist. Michal saw his antics from a window, and "despised him in her heart." When her lord and master came indoors she rebuked him in this wise:—

"How glorious was the King of Israel to day, who uncovered himself to day in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovereth himself" (v. 20).

David flew at once into a towering passion; told her that his family was as good as hers, that he would be as obscene as he pleased, that he would dance in the costume of Adam before the fall, and that the "maidservants" would like him all the better. He further declared that he would have nothing more to do with *her*, and "therefore," in the elegant language of Scripture, "Michal the daughter of Saul had no child unto the day of her death."

Saul's family fared badly at David's hands. He shed tears (perhaps crocodile's) over Jonathan, and sang a song over Saul; but we read (2 Samuel, chap. xxi., v. 6-8) that he hanged seven of Saul's sons who stood in his way, on the pretence that God told him to do so to stop the famine. David's "tenderness" was not greater than his cunning. He was what they call "a knowing file," and a sort of compound of Joe Smith, Brigham Young, and a Turkish pasha.

Another instance of David's tenderness to his neighbor's wives. One day, from the roof of his house, he saw a beautiful woman washing herself, and his heart burned with lust. Her name was Bathsheba. Her husband, Uriah, was away with the army. He was shedding his blood and risking his life in the king's cause, and at such a time his wife's honor should have been trebly sacred in the king's eyes. David, however, was not a man to be moved by such fine considerations. He sent for the woman, "and she came in unto him, and he lay with her." Then he sent her home again. She soon had to tell him that she was "with child." Thereupon David summoned Uriah home, so that he might pass a night in his own house with his wife, and have the bastard child fathered on him. But the brave fellow refused to rest comfortably while his friends were "encamped in the open fields." So the king's plot failed. Then he had this brave fellow put into a position in the battle where he was certain to be killed; that is, he deliberately murdered him. Such was the tenderness of David to Bathsheba and Uriah, all the details of which may be read in the eleventh chapter of the Second of Samuel.

David was no less tender in his piety than in his lust. Nathan rebuked him for his theft of Uriah's wife, and God killed the unfortunate fruit of their adultery; for in the Bible everything is vicarious, and if one person does wrong another is sure to suffer for it. David then felt "down in the mouth," as the vulgar say; or, to speak religiously, penitent. To please his God, and to raise his own spirits, he went to war with the Ammonites. He besieged Rabbah, took it, and dealt with it in his own tender style.

"And he brought forth the people that were therein, and put them under saws, and under harrows of iron, and under axes of iron, and made them pass through the brick-kiln; and thus did he unto all the cities of the children of Ammon" (2 Samuel, chap. xii., v. 31).

That is, he sawed them in slices, chopped them into mince-meat, and roasted them alive. What a remarkably *tender* person he was to be sure! It reminds one of Byron's Lambro—

"He was the mildest manner'd man  
That ever scuttled ship or cut a throat."

David was the "tenderest" man that ever robbed, outraged, seduced, murdered, and tried to convert the earth into a hell. In the Nottingham sense of the word, he was the *Lamb* of God.

When David's blood ran cold with old age, his servants recommended a blister in the shape of a young woman. They knew he would never rebel against such advice.

"Let there be sought for my lord the king a young virgin; and let her stand before the king, and let her cherish him, and let her lie in thy bosom, that my lord the king may get heat. So they sought for a fair damsel throughout all the coasts of Israel, and found Abishag the Shunamite, and brought her to the king. And the damsel was very fair, and cherished the king, and

ministered to him; but the king knew her not" (1 Kings, chap. i., v. 2-4).

What a pretty story! And what a tender king! How good it was of him not to thwart his advisers, not to oppose its being a young woman, very fair, and above all a virgin. Such tender regard for other people's wishes is beyond all praise.

Now for the last instance of David's tenderness. When he came to die, instead of giving his son Solomon wise and humane counsels, he urged him to bloodshed and cruelty. He had sworn an oath not to hurt an old enemy, but he reminded Solomon that *he* had not so sworn, and besought him to kill Shimei and "bring down his hoar head to the grave with blood." He desired the same fate for Joab—"let not his hoar head go down to the grave in peace." Then he died with the savor of blood between his lips.

Here endeth the "tenderness" of David, the man after God's own heart, who walked in God's ways, and kept God's commandments all the days of his life.

G. W. FOOTE.

## ANOTHER ABRAHAM.

READERS of the *Freethinker* will be aware that it has frequently reported cases of crimes directly attributable to a pernicious belief in Divine Revelation. The notorious assassin of President Garfield was all his life a sedulous Bible reader, and to the last asserted that his atrocious act had been directly dictated by God Almighty. Why not? God commanded Samuel to slay Agag, and he is not a God "of the dead but of the living." Why should he cease to speak his will to men. His failure to do so can only be explained on the supposition that he has retired from the business, and his business aforesaid was of so bloodthirsty a description that any decent deity would certainly desire to retire as speedily as possible.

Within the past few years we have noticed several cases of Bible readers who have sought to emulate Father Abraham, so highly extolled for his faith by the author of the epistle to the Hebrews. They have slaughtered their children as sacrifices to God and, as they believed, at his instigation. In this they have the example not only of the Jewish saint who was ready to offer up his son upon hearing a voice commanding him to do so, but also the Christian God who, we are told, absolutely demanded the blood of his own innocent Son before he would extend his mercy to his creatures.

The latest case of the kind comes to us from Los Angeles, California, where Josiah B. Smith now lies imprisoned for the murder of his boy. Smith asserts that he had a revelation commanding him to kill his son. Indeed, the crime was discovered by his having so informed a party who asked after the lad. He still considers the sacrifice a meritorious act commanded by God, and, stranger still, it would appear that he induced his wife to accept that view. It seems that he had latterly become a Methodist, since which he had taken greatly to Bible reading. His wife, who is also in prison, declares he has been a good husband to her for sixteen years, showing no symptom of insanity. She says: "He used often to read to me all they say in the Bible about sacrifices to the Lord. He would read over and over again about the Lord commanding Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac, and how he sent a ram to be the victim. When he talked to me and persuaded me that a good woman ought to think as her husband did, I got so as to take whatever he said as the truth. My husband told me about an hour before he did it that the Lord demanded a sacrifice of us, and that our boy had to die. I begged him to spare my boy; I cried, and besought him to consider well what he was about to do, but all the answer he made was that Jesus Christ had died for us, and the Lord had told him that our son had to die for his sake." Upon being asked what her husband did after refusing to listen to her request, Mrs. Smith said: "He called my boy out of the house and told him he had to die for our Savior. The boy asked him if the Lord had commanded us to starve, and Josiah told him 'Yes.' Then the little fellow knelt down and I knelt down by his side, and his father stood up. He raised the knife, looked hard into the boy's face, and then drove the knife into his breast."

This horrible story is another illustration of the evil effects of implicit belief in the teachings of the barbarous old Jew-book and the adoption of its examples. That

curious collection of books is often represented by the interested parties who live by preaching from it, as the one source and support of all morality. The truth is there is no crime, however abominable, that may not plausibly be defended from the pages of that volume. Morality is to be preserved by civilised opinion and not by the teachings of any book. Smith lived almost alone and away from the centres of civilisation. The inspiration of the precious book had room to work unopposed by the prevailing sentiment of society. He had been taught that the Bible was an all-perfect guide in conduct. He read therein of the Lord's commanding sacrifices. He read how Abraham, without one word of expostulation or inquiry, went to offer up his son Isaac upon hearing a voice commanding him to do so, and how for this servile faith and imbecile submission he was rewarded by God. The barbarous legend warped his mind and turned a father into a murderer. And yet to challenge the authority and influence of such a book is to render oneself liable to a prosecution for blasphemy, and perhaps several years' imprisonment.

LUCIANUS.

## ACID DROPS.

The Rev. W. R. Cozens, of Wolverhampton, preached a very stupid sermon on Gambetta's death. Because the great Freethinking statesman died at the early age of forty-four, after much suffering, this worthy parson holds him up as a warning to "all who are being carried away by the insidious force of unbelief." Of course no Christian ever died young or from a painful disease. Parson Cozens also alluded touchingly to the "thousands of priests who were driven from their cures" by Gambetta. What ignorance! Not a parish priest was disturbed in the war with the clericals. The unauthorised religious orders who were expelled lived by themselves and performed no ministerial functions.

SINCE men first took to making gods there has always been a tidy business done in the article. We dare say, however, that many of our readers are not aware that the idolators of India are supplied with images of their deities from Christian manufacturers in Birmingham, who find they can outsell the native manufacturers. The Brummagen men evidently have not the fear of the second commandment before their eyes. We expect soon to hear of some enterprising firm offering to supply cannibals with canned pickled missionary.

SOMETHING is being done in the way of suggesting how the Jew God Jahveh got made. Mr. T. Tyler in the *Modern Review* attempts to derive the name from the Aryan Dyaus the God of Heaven. He refers to the expression Jahveh Tsebaoth Lord of Hosts as confirming this view. Professor Sayce, however, is of opinion that Jahveh, like so many other gods, was originally a solar deity. Both theories have the difficulty that whereas both sky gods and solar gods were usually beneficent, it needs a great stretch of fancy to apply that epithet to Jahveh.

The Church Missionary Society has lately expelled Mr. Denning, one of their ablest missionaries, because he has publicly taught the Conditional Immortality Theory. Mr. Denning, who has labored for ten years in Japan, has been ordered home to answer for his change of views. He does not, however, intend to abandon his work in Japan. The fact is it is no use teaching the barbarous doctrine of hell-fire to a civilised nation like the Japanese, and missionaries find they have to adopt some modification or other. Orthodox Christianity with its blood-requiring deity, its vicarious sacrifice, and hell-fire torments, does well enough for savage Devil-worshippers, but it has to hide its deformity under a fresh coat of paint before it can be presented to Buddhists, Mohammedans, or Confucians.

The *Christian World* says of a Christian contemporary recommended by Earl Shaftesbury: "A narrative that has appeared in its pages week after week, if published as a pamphlet, would not have been allowed to be sold in the streets." No wonder it earnestly advises the committees of the colportage societies to open their eyes and revise their lists of works recommended.

The Rev. John Pulsford has considerable renown among Nonconformists, but he preaches some very funny sermons. In a recent one he says that "walking by sight is a mean path to an ignoble end." This sounds fine, but it is simply a new form of "open your mouth and shut your eyes, and see what God will send you." Mr. Pulsford took Abraham as an illustration—"When Abraham suffered himself to be led, he knew not how nor whither, he began to put on true greatness." If this refers to the time when he was led on to slit

Isaac's wizen, we humbly beg to differ. When Mr. Pulsford says that Abraham, through being "led on," became "the one man, the foremost man of his age," we suppose he knows all about the great men who were carrying on the civilisations of India, Egypt, and Assyria. Historians and archæologists don't, but no doubt Mr. Pulsford has had a private revelation on the subject. We wish he would give us a little of his knowledge. It would be far more edifying, as well as interesting, than all the adventures of Father Abraham.

MR. PULSFORD begins his peroration with these noble words: "Trust Him, and go to sleep." Christians don't want much telling to do that. They usually do it without a hint.

THE *Tablet* crows over the great numerical increase of Catholicism in the British Empire and the United States. In the year 1840 the Catholics of Great Britain numbered 539,500; in 1880 they amounted to 1,384,000. In the United States they numbered 666,630 in 1840; now they have reached a total of 6,143,000. In Australia, while they were only a handful at the accession of Queen Victoria, they are now 600,000 strong. In India there are stated to be 1,318,000 Catholics, or more than four times the number of all Protestant sects put together.

Is Catholicism then really growing? In one sense it is not. The immigration of Irish into Great Britain, the Colonies, and the United States, accounts for the above statistics. But in another sense Catholicism is growing. Those figures are serious facts. The Irish show a tendency to breed three times as fast as the British, and it was this fact which induced Mr. St. George Mivart to chuckle over the future of Catholicism. He expressed an assurance that in a century or two the ever-spawning Irish would breed a Catholic population all over the English-speaking world, and thus restore to the Romish Church far more than she lost by the Reformation. Time will show.

SIR RICHARD TEMPLE, writing in the *Fortnightly* on the political effect of religious thought in India, says "Christianity has not as yet spread sufficiently to become an actual power in the country. It hardly possesses half a million of native adherents." Yet it is eighteen centuries since St. Thomas first went to Christianise India, and three centuries ago St. Francis Xavier and his disciples converted fully more than this number.

A WICKED WAG has grieved the godly by adding "without distinction of sex" to the words "ladies invited," upon the announcement of a meeting for united prayer held by the Young Men's Christian Association.

A PREACHER in an Episcopal pulpit was recently defending the Bible from "infidel science." He said: "These infidels say the prophet Elijah could not have been taken up into heaven because the air above the earth is so rare and cold, he could not have lived there. Ah! if these poor infidels only read the precious Bible they would have learned that the prophet was taken up in a chariot of fire, and so was carried warm and comfortable through that cold region right up into heaven."

THE *Methodist Recorder*, after noticing that no single bishop has been found to rise from his place in the House of Lords to protest against the C. D. Acts, says: "The Christianity which can approve of the Contagious Diseases Acts is more hateful than honest Atheism." [Why is honest Atheism hateful?] "And being the corruption of the best thing, is the worst thing in the world. Let it perish."

ANOTHER reconciliation of Moses and geology has been produced by Dr. Samuel Kinns, who has the audacity to assert that the scripture gives a perfectly accurate scientific record. Of course Dr. Kinns interprets the word "day" as "period," but he entirely overlooks the facts that the "evening and the morning" are stated to have constituted the days.

THERE are at least a hundred different reconciliations of Moses and geology, all of them agreeing in the information that the Mosaic records mean something very different from what they have been telling the world in God's name for more than two thousand years; and yet the world is not satisfied. There is no pleasing some people.

FOR an opinion upon Church dignitaries we always go to Church papers. The *Church Times* for Jan. 12th speaks of "the very general distrust, dislike, and disesteem, entertained for Archbishop Thompson by respectable persons who have any knowledge of him. His unquestionable abilities are not supported by any of those moral qualities which win respect or conciliate affection, and his natural and acquired shrewdness is sorely handicapped by his total incapacity even to imagine how a gentleman would think or act on any occasion."

Who would think that a fine comfortable country house

and a useful sphere of sacred work among a village population, would go a begging for someone to take it up. Yet the Bishop of Peterborough says he has such a place in his gift but cannot find an incumbent. The secret is this, the living before the bad time for farmers set in was worth £450 a-year, but now is worth no more than will pay the charges upon it. Clergy with large private incomes are not scarce, but they are very shy at coming forward to tempting offers of this kind.

W. S. LILLY, the Roman Catholic writer who vilely slandered the teachers in French schools, is considered a competent person by the editor of the much degenerate *Contemporary*, to reply to Professor Seeley's "Natural Religion." The first very discursive instalment commences in the current number. Mr. Lilly never reaches the length of an argument. The only thing he makes clear is that "The Religious Future of the World" is a choice between Supernaturalism and Naturalism, Catholicism and Rationalism, and his own incapacity to effect any reconciliation of the claims of the Church and those of Reason. But there is nothing in any way novel in either of these ideas.

THE Bonapartists of Paris attended last Monday the annual Requiem Mass for the repose of the soul of Napoleon III. If there is anything like retribution on the other side of death, the soul of that political burglar and wholesale murderer will require a good deal of praying for before it finds ease.

ON the previous Saturday, according to the French Constitution, prayers were offered up in all the Paris churches on behalf of the Chamber and Senate. Three ministers attended the service at Notre Dame. Last year, when Gambetta was in office, not a single minister graced the performance.

JOHN HARTWELL, the great "Seer of England," is in trouble again. He has been dispensing his talismans at a high price, ranging from 10s. to £5, and this has brought him before the beak, with the usual result. The magistrate expressed surprise that "so many fools could be found in the kingdom." We are surprised at his surprise. If there were not so many fools in the kingdom, how could all the mystery-men in uniform manage to live?

THE vicar of Stratford-on-Avon has been fined 32s. for assaulting one of his choir. That's a heavy sum—two pieces of silver more than the authorities paid Judas for his Master.

W. T. JONES, Sunday-school teacher, and member of the Blue Ribbon Army, of Neath, has been sent to gaol for eighteen months for indecently assaulting a little girl eight years of age.

GENERAL BOOTH asks for £20,000 a-year to carry on the work of his Salvation Army. What brazen impudence these religious showmen have! Their universal motto is "Cash, and again Cash, and always Cash."

THE Irish patriot who passes under the name of Frank Hugh O'Donnell, whose well recompensed devotion to the Papacy is known to all, and whose affectation of superior morality is a standing joke, contributes a long and lying account of Gambetta's career to the *Freeman's Journal*. It is in every respect worthy of its author, and criticism cannot go beyond that. We recommend a perusal of it to English Liberals and Radicals who wish to know the real feelings of Irish patriots on free government outside Ireland. Their attitude on the Bradlaugh question will no longer be a puzzle. Mr. "O'Donnell" raves at the very idea of a Republic, and foams at the mouth at the bare mention of religious liberty.

CHRISTIANS are the people who do most blasphemy. Here is a good instance. The Catholic *Univers*, in writing of Gambetta's death, says: "While he was recruiting his strength and meditating fresh assaults upon the Church, and promising himself victory, the divine Son of the Carpenter was preparing his coffin." If we had insinuated that Jesus Christ was in the undertaking business, it would have formed a count of our Indictment.

TRUE believers know next to nothing of the Bible. A few days ago, while travelling down to Manchester to preach the gospel, I was intensely amused by a conversation that took place in my compartment. One fluent gentleman discoursed against drink, and cited Jesus as a witness on his side. Another fluent and very loud man in the corner, who I fancy must have done a little amateur spouting, broke in with "How about take a little wine for thy stomach sake?" "Oh," said the first speaker, "I don't like Scripture dragged into these matters." But the other continued, and cited the story about turning water into wine. This was too much for the piety of a stout Tyneside gentleman opposite me. He protested against quoting the Bible in a railway carriage; he thought the Holy Book should be kept in its proper place. But the citer

of Holy Writ was not to be put down. He roared out quite a new life of Christ, of which I give a few particulars:—Our Savior was twelve years old when he was circumcised; three years after that he was with the Apostle Paul at a marriage feast, turning water into wine; we don't know any more until he was twenty-eight, when he troubled the waters of Siloam, and that was the last miracle our Blessed Savior performed on earth."—Seven people, six men and one woman, listened to this scholarly gentleman as though he was an oracle; they swallowed it all as Gospel, and not one knew enough of the Bible to contradict him. The most amusing thing was that they "hoped all were Christians there, and no Atheists." As Artemus says, I smole. The conversation was too rich to spoil it by joining in.—G. W. F.

THE Middlesboro' *Daily Exchange* devotes a column to a review of *Progress*. After inveighing against all the writers for their godless tendencies, the editor winds up with a "God help them." We hope he will. He cannot do better than prompt his friends to advertise the magazine.

SINCE visiting the Buddhists, Joe Cook has been graciously pleased to extend immortality to animals. How proud the critters who sent us anonymous post-cards will now be.

THE *Weston-Super-Mare Gazette* reports some lugubrious speeches at the week of United Prayer. The Rev. J. Hutcheson said only a small percentage of the people pretended to have any religion at all. In one parish he had visited 160 persons, and only twenty of these people made any pretence to religion. His heart was almost broken. The people had no Christ; they seemed to think only of cheese and cows and cider. The Rev. Colin Campbell complained that whereas the London School Board is able to raise three millions a year for its own work in London alone, the Church Missionary Society could not, with all its pleadings and labors, raise a quarter of a million for the Lord's work throughout the whole world. These signs may be distressing enough to the parsons but to us they are comforting. The more work for the education and secular improvement of humanity takes the place of such superstitions as "united prayer," the better.

AT Wolverhampton county petty sessions last Monday, George William Elliott, M.A., described as a clergyman of the Church of England, and formerly curate at Dagenham, Romford, Essex, was fined £5, or one month's imprisonment, for having obtained various sums of money by falsely pretending that he was collecting subscriptions for discharged and wounded soldiers from Egypt.

#### "FREETHINKER" DEFENCE FUND.

W. P. Ball, £1; A. Amatt, 10s. 6d.; E. J. B., 1s.; Mary, 6d.; G. F. Finn, 2s. Given by Mr. T. Wiggins for eight copies of the *Freethinker*, sent by Mr. Walden, 5s.; — Skinner, 6d.; Stringer, 1s. 2d.; T. Wright, 3d.; G. Gee, 6d.; J. Hobson, 6d.; J. Wilkins, 1s. 6d.; R. Renwick, 6d.; W. Lee, 6d.; — Jones, 3d.; — Small, 6d.; — Boston, 2d.; per A. Hilditch, £1 2s. 2d.; H. Kemp, for copy of *Freethinker*, Jan. 29th, 6d.; W. H. Linton, 1s. 6d.

#### "GUERRA AL CUCHILLO."\*

To you, the converts of the "Prince of Peace!"  
Churchmen, Dissenters, Boothites, each and all,  
We cast the gauntlet down; and will not cease  
Our onslaught, although one by one may fall.  
All scruples banish with the sword's release;  
Thousands spring up at Reason's trumpet call!  
And though you shrink and cower at the sight  
Of Freethought's giant host, you'll have to fight.

Time was when Mother Church shed precious blood,  
And fed the flames of Bigotry with men  
Who dared to stand as noble Bruno stood,  
Smiting the mitr'd ruffians with his pen!  
Then Freethought was a stream—'tis now a flood,  
Sweeping old Error from his murky den;  
And Truth's grand beacon, shining bright and clear,  
Gives hope and courage as the fight draws near.

Our weapon's drawn, the scabbard's cast aside;  
You spared us not; then ask no quarter now.  
With tongue and pen, while life shall with us bide,  
Our swift and biting blows shall make you bow.  
Over your priestly hosts roughshod we'll ride,  
And crush Hypocrisy; nor time allow  
For you to raise again your viperous crest.  
That cleaved asunder—then we'll take our rest.

HENRY R. WRIGHT.

\* War to the knife.

## SPECIAL NOTICE.

MR. FOOTE lectures twice to-day (Sunday, Jan. 21st) at the Hall of Science, Old Street, London, E.C.:—Morning, at 11, "The Politics of Thomas Paine;" evening, at 7, "God and his Friends."

## MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

January 28th, Claremont Hall, London.  
February 4th, Leeds; 11th, York; 18th, Plymouth; 25th, Liverpool.  
March 4th, Manchester; 11th, Edinburgh; 18th and 25th, Hall of Science, London.  
April 1st, Milton Hall, London; 3rd, Walworth.

## CORRESPONDENTS.

ALL business communications to be addressed to the Publisher, 26 Stonecutter Street, Farringdon Street, E.C.  
LITERARY communications to the Editor, Mr. G. W. FOOTE, No. 9 South Crescent, Bedford Square, London, W.C.  
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.—R. G., James Rawlinson, A Medical Student.  
B. JONES.—Dr. Davidson in his "Introduction to the New Testament," p. 390, vol ii., dates the Gospel of John about 150, and this may be taken as approximately correct.  
E. V. HAMILTON.—A notice of M. D. Conway's Emerson will appear in the February number of *Progress*.  
R. PRICE.—Masson's "Life of Milton" is the best. The essays of Channing and Macaulay are worth reading.  
EDGAR T. BENTON.—"Life" will appear in *Progress*.  
BORN AGAIN.—We were under the impression that people who had contrived to get born in England did not require to be born again, but since you say you know, we will not contradict.  
The *Freethinker*, *Progress*, and Freethought literature always on sale at Thomlinson's, 16 King Street, Camden Town.  
J. BROWN.—"The Literature of the Sabbath Question," by R. Cox, will give you full information on that subject. The Liberation Society will send you their pamphlet on Church attendance upon application.  
H. BURK.—There is no proof of the existence of any Hebrew writings before the time of the Captivity.  
D. A. W. G. C.—We cannot possibly bring out a German edition of the *Freethinker*. We hit hard because it is a waste of energy to hit otherwise.  
SINGER OF ISRAEL.—Thanks. We are always pleased to receive good jokes and cuttings.  
H. R. WRIGHT.—We are glad to hear that the first number of *Progress* pleases you so much, and we hope the second number will sustain your interest. Lending the magazine about to friends is one of the best means to promote its sale.  
J. B. writes that William Watts has just been buried by the Secularists of Northampton, the Burial Service being read by Mr. Bates. The deceased was 64 years of age. He was a native of Northampton and a warm supporter of Mr. Bradlaugh. He was an Atheist to the last.  
W. WALLACE.—Thanks. We are glad to hear that Mrs. Besant had such a good reception at Edinburgh.  
MARY K.—It is always pleasant to hear from those whose minds we have helped to free from superstition, and whose lives we have helped to brighten.  
E. J. B.—We should like to see a printed report before criticising.  
G. WALKER, 210 Clowes Street, West Gorton, Manchester, has the *Freethinker* on sale every Thursday evening.  
LEONOPOLIS.—We will take your hint.  
G. TAYLOR.—We have too much verse in hand already.  
H. BOLTON.—The story has appeared in the *Freethinker*. The doctrine we referred to was assassination. It is simply a crime to preach it where universal suffrage exists.  
SUBSCRIBER.—Mr. Foote's "Bible Romances" and Mr. Bradlaugh's "Genesis" would help you.  
E. H. DYAS writes that an Anti-clerical Society has just been formed at Milan.  
T. FARQUHARSON.—Our publisher will supply you.  
J. W. LUCK.—The doctrine of "love towards all men" has been taught by every great moralist. It was taught by Buddha, Confucius, Socrates, Plato, and many others, centuries before the birth of Christ.  
C. Y.—The statement that Thomas Paine had his theological works burnt before he died is a silly falsehood.  
Mr. J. A. SLATER, 18 South King Street, Manchester, will be glad to hear at once from those who wish to come to London by the special train which is being arranged for on the date of the Bradlaugh demonstration. It is impossible to organise the excursion without knowing the number of tickets required. The fare from Manchester and back will be 10s. third class, and 20s. first.  
W. BEALE.—The tract is too silly to waste time over.

## AT LAST.

THE struggle is near at last. Soon after this number of the *Freethinker* is in the readers' hands the great Blasphemy Trial may begin. It is the first serious trial of the kind for twenty-five years. We do not know how it will end, but no termination will find us unprepared.

Whatever happens, the *Freethinker* will go on. On the eve of the battle we ask all our readers to stand by it through thick and thin. It will, we believe, always be worthy of their support, even in the worst circumstances. But if accidents cause temporary shortcomings, we ask them to overlook these; nay more, to remember the cause of them, and to feel still more incumbent the duty of supporting it against Christian bigotry and malevolence.

We have a claim on the active help of all lovers of Free-thought. Since the prosecution was commenced we have never blenched. We have continued our old policy, without swerving a hair's-breadth, in the face of obstacles which might well have overcome our determination if we were not actuated by an unconquerable sense of duty, and resolved to keep the flag flying at all hazards. How often, as we have heaved a sigh of satisfaction over some difficulty removed, and looked at the *Freethinker* still out, and still bearing its old message to thousands of readers, we have thought of Byron's heroic words!

"Yet Freedom, yet, thy banner torn but flying  
Streams like the thunderstorm against the wind."

Happily, however, *our* banner is not even rent. It is as sound as when the trumpet first rang to battle, and we hope it will continue sound to the end. If one standard-bearer is stricken down, another will take his place, and if need be another his, and another his. Danger never terrified Freethinkers in the old stormy days, and it will not terrify them now. The heroic shades of our great dead point with swerveless fingers to the path of duty, and their brave smile banishes every craven suggestion of fear.

Should misfortunes occur, our friends will remain true. They will strain every nerve to counteract Christian spite. They will take enough copies of every publication attacked to insure its success until the hand of insolent power is withdrawn. They will give their fullest support in ways that will be pointed out to them as the need arises. We have the fullest confidence in them, as we have in the few stout hearts who are ready to stand in the dangerous breach.

Yes, the *Freethinker* will go on, and everything else issued from our office will go on too. All dread of a collapse in that direction is removed, so we enter into the war with a light heart. Our course is now clear. Gambetta turned his defence of Delescluze into an impeachment of the Empire; and we (however far after *him*) will try to turn our defence into an impeachment of Christianity. The colossal imposture of eighteen centuries shall, if we can do it, be dragged to the bar and tried with us.

G. W. FOOTE.

## SUGAR PLUMS.

WE are pleased to note that Sunday lectures on Secular subjects are given by the Progressive Association at the Islington Hall, Islington Green, N.

THE *Inquirer*, which has been the high-class Unitarian organ for forty years, has reduced its price to twopence, considering "the time has arrived when it is the duty of religious Liberal thinkers to combine in a wider and freer movement than that of a mere denomination."

FATHER SHEEHAN has been lecturing at Pittsburgh on Ingersoll and Beecher. He describes the great Freethought orator as "a man gifted with an intellect capable of swaying the multitude." But he falls foul of Ingersoll's teachings. As, however, he admits that "there is no human argument that will prove the inspiration of the Bible," he does not do them much harm.

WE are glad to see that Dr. Aveling has called the attention of the London School Board to a letter which appeared in the *Pall Mall Gazette* on the election of an assistant master at a Brixton school. The managers put to the candidates such questions as these:—Do you follow teaching for the love of God? Are you a Churchman? What places of worship do you go to on Sunday? Do you love to read the Bible as you

would a novel? We could have conscientiously answered the last question in the affirmative. Read in a proper spirit, the Bible is wonderfully entertaining. It's the most comical book we know; *Punch* and *Fun* are as dull as a wet day beside it. On the whole we think we should have got that place.

BISHOP ELLICOTT says that "Party spirit and party societies are largely countervailing the work of the Church, and unless the present bitterness be allayed, great changes must come." As these great changes simply mean Disestablishment, we are very glad to hear it.

IN a pamphlet put forward by the Liberation Society, statistics are given from the newspapers of the attendance at various places of worship. The result shows a great decrease in the power of the Church of England since the census taken in 1851. In Hull, for example, the population then was 50,670, the attendance at the Establishment 4,463; now its population is 154,250, the largest attendance 7,278. At Darlington in 1851, with a population of 21,618, the attendance numbered 3,818; now with a population of 35,104, the attendance has decreased to 1,805. In the city of Liverpool, of 552,425, only 64,887 were found in all the churches and chapels together.

MR. PROCTOR has been roused. He opens the current number of *Knowledge* by saying "Readers have reminded us that the opinion of a Darwin on the question of a future existence ought to be balanced here 'by that of men who have devoted a whole lifetime to theological inquiry.' We do not know how much of a lifetime would suffice to deal with the doctrine of a future life or existence, or to determine the conditions under which it would be passed, but we accept the suggestion, and although the study of Bishop Wilberforce's 'Life' rather conveys the idea that a considerable part of his time was given to matters a little outside theology, we assume that he was the sort of man to set science right. We quote then from him the statement that 'the scholar, the man of refined and elegant mind, who nauseates everything coarse, mean, vulgar, must (if he die in disbelief of the Bishop's doctrine) for ever dwell with beings on whose horrible passions no check or restraint can ever be peace,' while women of gentle breeding of refined and modest tastes, but similarly incredulous, must 'dwell for ever among the worst of men with every spark of human feeling extinguished, without any law to moderate the fury of their desperate rage.'"

It would seem, says Mr. Proctor, that only the worst of men will be able to indulge their tastes hereafter. How severely then ought Mr. Darwin, and men like him, to be reprehended for saying aught that might tend to deprive mankind of these blissful expectations. And how wrong of them to speak of doubt in a matter on which such clear and precise information was obtained by one of the most eminent of those who "have given the best part of a lifetime to such studies."

MR. PROCTOR might also have noticed the fact which cannot too often be insisted upon, that these persons, who are cited as authorities because their lives are dedicated to preaching about the other side of the moon, are pledged to the endorsement and promulgation of particular opinions of our barbarous ancestors, which they dare not outgrow, or at least challenge, under pain of losing their high emoluments.

*Knowledge* further remarks that while a great part of the Christian religion is of Hebrew origin, a much larger portion is derived from Egypt.

MR. W. R. COOPER, the Secretary of the Society of Biblical Archaeology, in his "Myth of Horus" shows that the doctrines of the Trinity, the Incarnate redeemer, and vicarious atonement were a part of Egyptian religion ages before Christianity. Mr. Bonwick's "Egyptian Religion and Modern Thought" also gives much evidence in the same direction.

THE Rev. Alfred J. Bray, pastor of the Second Congregational church of Montreal, has followed Mr. Beecher's example by making a formal declaration of his disbelief in the Trinity and in eternal punishment.

THE West Gorton Branch of the N. S. S. has its first special lecturer to-day. Mr. Symes lectures in the Coöperative Hall, Ashton Old Road, Openshaw, at 11, 3, and 6.30. We hope all Freethinkers in the neighborhood, and there are many, will rally round Mr. Symes and the Branch to-day.

THE Manchester Branch goes on splendidly. All its work prospers. Last Sunday there were splendid audiences to greet Mr. Foote, the largest he has ever addressed in the city.

THE Church, in ancient times and in old communities a centre of awe and mystery, a perpetual stimulant to the

imagination, the soul's support and nutriment, is, in the United States, rapidly breaking in pieces, under the action of secular forces. Theological controversy is substituted for faith. The swelling tide of agnosticism washes away the shores of belief. Symbols, forms, doctrines, words, are deprived of their meaning. Lectures take the place of sermons. The clergy wear the costume of the laity. The original unity is broken up by the sectarian spirit, which multiplies divisions and subdivisions, till the substance of faith is disintegrated.—*Atlantic Monthly*.

THE Bradlaugh Demonstration, to be held in London, on February 15th, promises to be a grand success. The London Trades' Council, the National Reform Union of Manchester, the Northumberland Miners, and the London Radical Clubs, are calling on all their members to support the meeting. Scores of towns will send delegates, and special trains will be run from various popular districts in the North and West. Friends who can exhibit placards announcing demonstration will please write to Mr. H. A. Kemp, 28 Stonecutter Street.

A NOTEWORTHY book of 400 pages on "The Evolution of Christianity," from which we give an extract on our next page, has just been published by Messrs. Williams and Norgate. A review of this important work will appear in the February number of *Progress*.

## THEOLOGY AND MORALITY.

THEOLOGY is the deadly enemy of morality. The latter never came into contact with theology without being defiled. The marriage of the ill-mated pair, solemnised by cunning priests and cursed with their blessings, has resulted in the prostitution of morality to the impure purposes of theology. Her luckless fate is an unhappy illustration of the truth that virtue can only serve as the handmaiden to vice by becoming a strumpet.

Morality has nothing in common with theology. Its concerns are with human life and conduct, with the tangible things of time and sense, whilst theology busies itself with the mysterious ways of God, and explores the unknown deserts of supernaturalism. In a word, the dealings of theology are with God, and those of morality with man. His friends assert that God is above, beyond and independent of all morality and moral responsibility; that he can do just what he likes, however abominable, without incurring moral guilt. Such a claim, though very gratifying to the vanity of God, is disgracefully immoral. The theologians who advance the claim are impious blasphemers. No man, not an idiot, would dare to prefer such a claim on his own behalf, inasmuch as the common-sense of humanity would instantly revolt at such an outrage on the rights of others. But by a strange inconsistency what would be arrogance in man is considered as a divine right in God. Theologians apply no other test of the moral value of the acts of God than the divine will, which is thus constituted the disinterested arbitrator between God and morality. Doings of Deity, which if performed by man would be denounced as base and bad, are in this conjuring manner purged of moral heinousness, despite their glaring immorality. In this style, God is taken out of the list of morally responsible beings and elevated to a sphere where morality cannot reach, but from whence he fulminates moral laws from the jurisdiction of which he is careful to specially exempt his own actions. By this vicious reservation the "divine" laws are deprived of all sanction and authority and divested of moral value with man, inasmuch as no reasonable God can expect his creatures to show more respect to morality than he himself exhibits.

Morality can only exist where there is a mutual recognition of moral rights and duties. Where one being claims everything as of right, and imposes his burden on everyone else as a duty, moral relations cannot subsist. Arrogance and slavery are not the atmosphere which morality can healthily breathe. Thus, when God claims that he can do what he likes with "his own," and may raise one vessel to honor and another to dishonor, or fore-ordain one man to heaven and another to hell, and that, too, without reference to the merit or good works of the predestinated ones, there is an end of all morality as between God and man. Such arbitrary behavior cannot be justified by appeal to any principles of moral right. A justification must therefore be sought on other than moral grounds—a conclusion which puts the stamp of immorality on the whole conduct of God. The theologians, consequently, appeal from morality, which condemns God, to the divine will which shields him. In

this manner they manage to whitewash the character of their Deity. They then arrive at the principle of the divine right of God to govern wrong, and declare that God cannot sin against man, in spite of the woeful evidence to the contrary. We beg to inform these ingenious gentry that man has no moral obligation in regard to a being who is not governed in his acts by any sense of moral responsibility. Moral relationships imply equality of right and reciprocity of moral responsibility. Man has his duties but he has his rights also; and, assuming any rights on the part of God, we must also assume the corresponding duties. If therefore they lift the actions of God above the jurisdiction of moral right, they virtually make the confession that those actions will not bear the test of a rigorous investigation; and then—good-bye to the moral character and excellence of God! If, however, they are willing to submit the doings of Deity to the judgment of morality, then it follows that morality is more sacred and of higher authority than God, inasmuch as it is conceded the right to execute justice against God. In that case the will of God must submit its wayward wantonness to the judicious correction of an independent moral monitor.

Theology not only presents us with a God who substitutes his own will and pleasure for and as the behests of morality, but it imparts to us vitiated principles of action diametrically opposed to the pure instincts of good morals. We refer generally to the absurd so-called moral regulations in the Bible, but especially to the more abnormal departures from moral rectitude found in the blackguardly or bloodthirsty deeds of Jewish saints and prophets which Christian blasphemers declare God either winked at or approved. We may instance the lying and cheating, and duplicity of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; Abraham's attempted, and Moses' effected murder; the wholesale spoilation of the Egyptians; the detestable barbarities of the Israelites in their wars; the stoning of Sabbath-breakers, blasphemers, and idolaters; the adulteries of David and Hosea; the crimes and persecuting zeal of Jewish prophets; besides hosts of other monstrosities, which were either enjoined as religious duties or condoned or approved by a kind considerate God.

Theology is not dead yet. It still works miracles as of yore—especially in blunting the moral sense of millions of men and women in other respects not immoral. Good people who would tremble if asked to justify the massacre of St. Bartholomew, can somehow manage to whitewash the bloodthirsty reputation and condone the moral monstrosities of General Joshua. They keep quite cool while meditating the flaming torments of hell, though they are fired with righteous indignation in thinking of the martyrs of religious liberty who suffered at the stake. The secret of this inconsistency in judging of deeds intrinsically of the same moral character is that man's acts are brought to the test of moral right whilst those of God are spared that ordeal.

Theology and morality are thus in violent antagonism. Nothing but shame and degradation have been the lot of morality through her adulterous connection with theology. For her reputation's sake a speedy divorce must be effected. Her concern is with man, in cementing the brotherly union of humanity, and in teaching men to know the true conditions of terrestrial welfare. Let her leave the gods severely alone. They neither heed nor need her, but carry out their whims and humors to their honor and glory and the misery of man. True morality would act as a capital scarecrow to frighten away the pests of theology.

W. H.

**CONCLUSIONS OF CRITICISM.**—What, therefore, are our conclusions? That the tribal Jehovah was a Semitic myth; that Jesus claimed to be nothing more than man, worshipped an Aryan ideal of paternal Divinity; that his posthumous deification, in fellowship with the Holy Spirit was an Æonic fiction; that the Trinity was a compromise between Monotheism and Æonism; and that, finally, our modern ideal of Supreme Divinity is the product of the ages, evolved in absolute independence of the supernatural, through the spiritual conceptions of the highest minds of all time, dwelling on the momentous problem of man's relationship with the Infinite.—“The Evolution of Christianity,” pp. 389, 390; 1883.

“WHAT kind of little boys go to heaven?” A lively four-year-old boy, with kicking boots, flourished his hat. “Well, you may answer,” said the teacher. “Dead ones,” the little fellow shouted to the full extent of his lungs.

## CORRESPONDENCE.

### TUNBRIDGE WELLS SUNDAY PERSECUTION.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE “FREETHINKER.”

SIR,—I beg to inform you that a Committee has been formed in London to act with the Committee at Tunbridge Wells, to encourage Mr. Edwards in his resistance to the local Police Commission, who have summoned him fourteen times since October 12th, 1882, for selling sweets on Sundays. Mr. Edwards (who has a family of seven to provide for) has thus incurred for fines and costs, £10 19s. 6d. A sum of £3 13s. has already been sent to Mr. Edwards from London, being made up by the weekly subscriptions and contributions of a few friends here.

It is the intention of a few individual members of the Committee to visit Tunbridge Wells in a few days and confer with the local friends as to a future course of action.

I shall be glad to forward subscription-cards with printed headings to friends willing to assist in the work of attempting to stop these vexatious Sabbatarian persecutions.

W. E. PETHERICK,

Hon Sec. Edwards' Defence (London) Committee.  
29 Osnaurgh Street, London, N.W.

## PROFANE JOKES.

THE title of the lesson was “The Rich Young Man,” and the text, “One thing thou lackest.” A Sunday-school teacher asked a little tot to repeat the two, and looking earnestly into the young lady's face, the child said, “One thing thou lackest—a rich young man.”

A LITTLE girl was asked by her mother, on her return from church, how she liked the preacher. “Didn't like him at all,” was the reply. “Why?” asked her mother. “'Cause he preached till he made me sleepy, and then hollered so loud he wouldn't let me go to sleep.”

LAWYER BROWN is a Sunday-school teacher. He was endeavoring to inculcate into his pupils' minds the necessity of a firm belief in things spiritual, when one of the class, with open-eyed astonishment, exclaimed, “Why, Mr. Brown, I heard you tell a witness in court the other day that you didn't care what he believed. All you cared about was what he knew.”

A St. Louis editor accidentally received in his morning mail proof-sheets intended for the employés of a religious publication house. After glancing over them, he rushed to the sub-editor, yelling, “Why in the world didn't you get a report of that big flood? Even that slow, old religious paper across the way is ahead of you. Send out your force for full particulars—only one family saved. Interview the old man. His name is Noah.”

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