

PROSECUTED FOR BLASPHEMY. THE FREETHINKER.

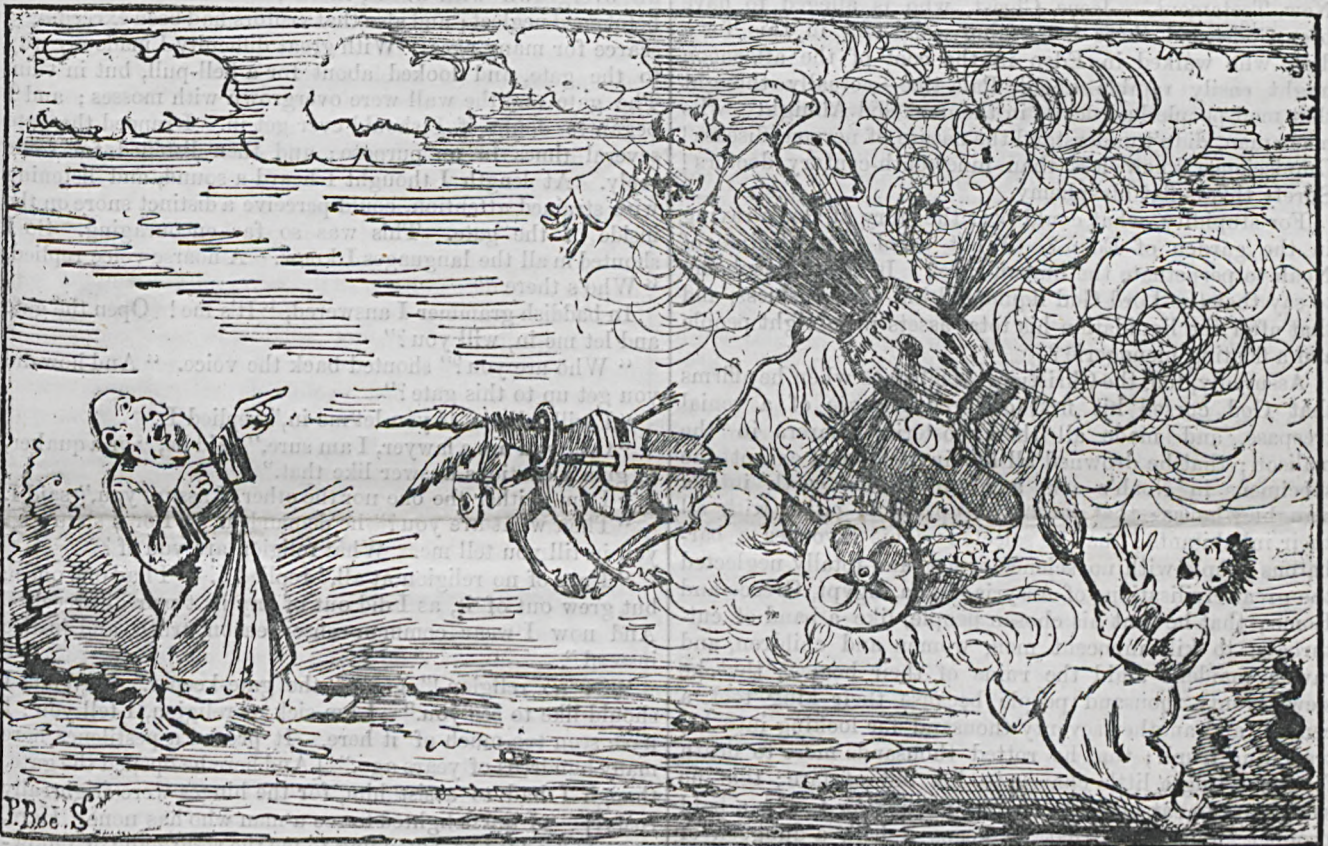
EDITED BY G. W. FOOTE.

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]

“COMIC BIBLE” SKETCHES.—LVIII.



ELIJAH'S EXCURSION IN A FIERY CHARIOT—(see 2 Kings ii.)

REAL BLASPHEMY.

“It were better,” wrote Bacon, “to have no opinion of God at all than such an opinion as is unworthy of him; for the one is unbelief, the other is contumely: and certainly superstition is the reproach of the Deity.” We commend these words of one of the wisest men that ever lived to the attention of our persecutors. They charge us with blasphemy, and we retort the charge on them. We know nothing of God, and therefore we cannot blaspheme him; but our enemies profess to know a great deal about him, and while slavishly worshipping him, they give him a character the most ignorant, stupid and brutal, it is possible to conceive. They declare that the Bible is, so to speak, God's autobiography, that every line of it was written at his dictation, and that every statement it contains about him is infallibly true. We don't believe it. God cannot be such as they affirm, and they, not we, are the blasphemers.

Christians blaspheme every day of their lives. Stay, that is a little hasty. We should say that they blaspheme every Sunday, for that is the time when they put on religion with their best clothes. Every other day in the week they calmly ignore their Bible and their creed, except when they find an opportunity of flinging both at the head of some

heretic who has the courage to shame their hypocrisy, and to express in words what they imply in their practice.

Christianity is the real blasphemy. It represents God as more ignorant than a schoolboy, more stupid than a lunatic, and more brutal than the vilest criminal that ever disgraced the earth. Let those who think the last statement too strong read this passage from John Stuart Mill's “Autobiography”:

“I have a hundred times heard him [his father, James Mill] say, that all ages and nations have represented their gods as wicked, in a constantly increasing progression, that mankind had gone on adding trait after trait till they reached the most perfect conception of wickedness which the human mind can devise, and have called this God, and prostrated themselves before it. This *ne plus ultra* of wickedness he considered to be embodied in what is presented to mankind as the creed of Christianity.”

That was James Mill's deliberate opinion, and his great son's “Autobiography” has made it familiar to the English-speaking world. It is as “blasphemous” as anything that ever appeared in the *Freethinker*, and we should wonder that the bigots do not prosecute Messrs. Longmans if we did not know them so well. They are afraid to prosecute the publishers of John Stuart Mill, but they dare to prosecute us because they imagine we are weak and friendless. But happily we are neither, as they will learn to their cost

before this struggle is ended. They have flung down their challenge, and we fearlessly take it up. We ask no quarter, and we will give none; we draw the sword, and fling away the scabbard.

The ignorance of the Bible-Christian's God would be truly astonishing if we were not acquainted with the ignorance of the people who made him. Well might King Alphonso say that if he had been consulted at the Creation he would have given the Lord a few useful hints. Just think of it for a moment. God takes five days to prepare the world for man, and on the sixth day produces his masterpiece. Adam is accordingly said to have been perfect. So he was—a perfect fool. He never said a wise thing or did a good one. Is it not blasphemy to assert that God Almighty could turn out nothing better after a hard week's work? And is it not a still greater blasphemy to say that the Devil spoiled all his work in a minute, while he has not been able to undo the Devil's mischief in six thousand years? We might give a multitude of such illustrations, but these must suffice. They lie at the very foundation of Christianity, and vitiate the whole structure.

The Bible God's ignorance is quite as striking in the New Testament. Jesus Christ, who is alleged to have been God—and there is nothing wonderful in this, for a deity who walked in Eden in the cool of the afternoon might easily ramble about Palestine—actually thought that mad people had devils in them. God Almighty, who made man, didn't understand the nature of nervous disease! Omniscience knew less than nineteenth-century doctors! Surely this is flat blasphemy.

For stupidity, what could beat the story of God's raving in the garden of Eden? What excel his selection of Noah to perpetuate the human race? Is it not blasphemy to say that the Lord God liquidated his own business, and that after the liquidation his total assets were eight people and a floating menagerie?

Assuredly, too, the Christian blasphemes when he affirms that God cursed his first children because of a venial trespass, and made all their posterity sharers in the malison; that he drowned all life in the world except the specimens in Noah's ark, and turned the earth into a slaughter-house; that he burnt up whole cities with all their inhabitants; that he selected as his favorites a barbarous people with no science or art, and totally neglected the great civilisations of Assyria, India, Egypt, Greece and Rome; that he sent his chosen people, like a band of cut-throats, to kill innocent men, women and children, and ravish maidens amid the ruins of their homes; that he slew seventy thousand people because their king took a census, and another seventy thousand for looking into his travelling trunk; that he rotted thousands more to death for requesting a little change in his bill of fare; that he sent bears to eat up little urchins for poking fun at a bald prophet; and, lastly, that he keeps a hell, a dungeon of eternal torture, in which he will cast his own children for being what he made them. These things are horrible blasphemies, and the people who teach and preach them deserve imprisonment more than we who revolt against them with all our heart and expose them with all the strength of our mind. Real blasphemy must not be sought in Secular halls or Freethought journals, but in churches and chapels, in religious newspapers, in Sunday-schools, in missionary meetings; wherever the monstrous Christian superstition raises its head in blasphemy against God and worse blasphemy against Man.

G. W. FOOTE.

THE ATHEISTIC PULPIT.

[SECOND SERIES.]

IX.

I HAVE just had another vision. In the course of my wanderings in fairy-land, I came accidentally to the foot of Jacob's ladder, which I recognised at once by several foot-prints of angels, who must have worn spiked Alpine boots, for they have left deep indentations in the wood. There were also lying about here and there a few large feathers, belonging to no species of birds known to me; and I rationally concluded that they must be from the wings of angels. And I also reasoned thus within myself:—Now it is notorious that Jacob never allowed an angel to pass

him without a wrestling bout, and so, no question, these very feathers were plucked from their owners in an unrecorded skirmish between the patriarch and his celestial visitors. I should have brought some of those feathers with me for the British Museum; but I reflected that I lived in a Christian land where dishonesty is the best policy, where lying and hypocrisy are rewarded by law; and that if I told the truth about those feathers, probably I should be prosecuted, and confined in a museum for the accommodation of persons who are insane enough to tell the truth and live in poverty, whereas a few pious lies would enrich and popularise them. So I left the feathers where I found them.

The ladder did not seem much the worse for the ages it had stood; indeed, it seemed to me as good as new. So I began to climb up, and found the journey by no means difficult or long. The height of the ladder was just 190 rungs, for I counted them; and that represents the height of heaven above that part of fairy-land. When I got to the top I found a small platform; and perceived some little distance away a door, evidently leading into a large mansion, whose front, however, was mostly hidden by trees. I observed that the path from the ladder head to the gate was all overgrown with weeds, thorns, and forest trees. This betokened neglect; and also that visitors had been exceedingly scarce for many ages. With great difficulty I made my way to the gate, and looked about for a bell-pull, but in vain. The gate and the wall were overgrown with mosses; and I began to doubt if I should ever get in. I rapped the gate several times to no purpose; and then listened for some reply. At length I thought I heard a sound, and listening with strained attention, could perceive a distinct snore on the inside of the gate. This was so far encouraging. So I shouted in all the languages I knew. A hoarse voice replied, "Who's there?"

In baddish grammer I answered, "It's me! Open the gate and let me in, will you?"

"Who are you?" shouted back the voice. "And how did you get up to this gate?"

"I will tell you if you let me in," replied I.

"Oh! you are a lawyer, I am sure," said he, "or a quaker, to give a cautious answer like that."

"I am neither the one nor the other, I assure you," said I.

"Then what are you?" he demanded. "For I shan't let you in till you tell me. What religion are you of?"

"I am of no religion at all," replied I: "I had one once; but grew out of it, as I did out of my first pair of breeches. And now I wear common-sense, reason, truth, and justice instead."

"Of no religion!" gasped the gate-keeper. "Well, I should like to see you." I am sick of religion, I tell you; I have seen too much of it here. It proved a pestilence here many hundreds of years ago." [And here he opened the gate, though I had to assist him, for the hinges were frightfully rusty.] "I am delighted to see a man who has none. Here, come in," added he, extending to me the right hand of fellowship.

"Thank you very much," returned I. "You are the Apostle Peter, I presume."

"Devil a bit," said he. "Peter! There was a fellow of that name who kept this gate for a few months; but they had to discharge him. He was too fond of lying and boasting of his own deeds when upon earth. Then they tried to fill up the place by other religious coves; but it would not do. One ran off with the money; another eloped with a beauty just arrived; another of them made love to the Virgin Mary, though I believe he was only joking, for she was the most ordinary female you ever saw, a nose like a sickle, a squint in each eye, and hair red as the setting sun. At last the governor determined to have a change, and so he advertised for a Freethinker to fill the post; and here I have been for 1,500 years and more. I had a good deal of persecution to endure for the first year or two; but I lived it down; and at length they all got to like me. And they all said I was the first honest man that ever kept the gate."

"Your story is very interesting," said I, "but how is it your gate and the path to it are so overgrown with vegetation and deserted?"

"Ah! you perhaps noticed that I said something about a pestilence. The fact is, there is not in heaven a living soul besides me. I have been here long enough, to see the end of the lot of them. For more than a thousand years I have been alone. Nobody comes this way from the earth either. You are the first for a thousand years or more. That is

why I felt so startled to hear you knocking and shouting. However, before you hear my story and visit this deserted region, you must have some refreshment. Hereupon he served up some very good fruit, and some of the best wine I ever tasted. Over this repast we indulged in a very pleasant chat, during which I related my experiences upon earth, how I had grown out of superstition and become an Atheist, and the rest of it. I told him that heaven seemed better off than earth and more advanced, since they put a professed Freethinker to keep the gate; for upon earth they still persecuted that class of persons as bitterly as ever.

When we had fairly finished our refection, he rose, put on his hat, took his walking stick, and told me he was ready to conduct me over heaven, and show me the bones and dust of all its gods, angels, saints, and other animals. What I saw I will relate in my next.

JOSEPH SYMES.

(To be continued.)

JAHVEH AND JESUS.

As a matter of fact, the only real gods that have ever existed, have been manufactured; they have been wrought by the skill and ingenuity of man, out of existing materials; and men have ignorantly bowed down before them. The "unseen gods" are myths—phantoms of the untrained imagination. Man has seen the reflection of himself in the mirror of his mind, and has fallen upon his knees in fear. Nearly all his objects of fear are born of ignorance. If he would but summon up courage and face them, the spell would be broken and he would be free for ever. No god has ever possessed better qualities than the people out of whose imagination he grew. The God of the Jews was an exact counterpart of the Jewish people in ancient times. He was not one whit more advanced intellectually or morally than they. He knew nothing of science, nothing of geology, chemistry or physiology, and what he regarded as highly moral would now be considered low, brutal and base. So stupid was he, that he inspired a murderer to write his biography and reveal his ignorance to the world. Either Moses penned a very wicked libel, or Jahveh is the first God who gave himself a bad character, though other deities had earned a very poor reputation among those who knew most about them. Jahveh was an ignorant, jealous, petty, vacillating, malevolent old-fellow, if his inspired biographer is to be believed. But Moses, or whoever wrote the Pentateuch, is not to be relied on, else we might have heard of a bigger libel case than Belt's before this. Doubtless the biographer of Jahveh could have claimed the "conception and execution" of the Jews favorite God as entirely his own, and nobody would envy him his creation. Jehovah is a fictitious God—a false idea proceeding from the "heat-oppressed" brain. Christians, in reality, have abandoned him, and they object to have any reference made to his early conduct; they find his character will not bear investigation, and they are gradually restoring this God to the Jews from whom they stole him. But the Christians must have some kind of God, and if they cannot get a real one, they are ready to take the best they can obtain. So they take Jesus and call him God. Of course, he wasn't a God, but that doesn't matter; he realises the best idea they have of him. In the play of "Dot," Cabel Plumber is the manufacturer of "wooden horses"; he makes a horse and when he has bespattered the animal with a number of red dots, he says, that that is "as near to nature as he can go for the money." The Christians do the same. Jesus is the best God they can offer us for our money, and many "babes and sucklings" think they have their money's worth. But enlightened men are heard to demur: They say that they decline to worship a man; and as for being "washed in blood" they think that the sanguinary article might be more usefully utilised in being converted into black-puddings. Why should we worship Jesus? He wasn't a wise man, nor a very good man, though he would have made a decent fellow if he had lived in a more enlightened age. Like all pious enthusiasts he was fearfully conceited. He thought himself Lord God Almighty—and ignorant people have been fools enough to accept his estimate of his own qualities. Jesus could not have been very wise, for modesty is the characteristic of wisdom. Nor could he have been very good, else he would not have taught parents to hate their children, and children to forsake their parents in order that they might follow him. But if we take the poor Jewish carpenter off the pedestal upon which

Christians have erected him, we shall see that he is only a manufactured god after all; and if we judge him as a man, we shall find that with all his faults he was not half a bad sort, if we could only get to understand him. Break down the idols then brave iconoclasts! The Christians have done Jesus more injury by making him a God than the Jews did when they brutally murdered him. For one injury was temporary, the other may last through the ages.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

ACID DROPS.

THE city solicitor, Sir Thomas Nelson, has served a summons on Mr. H. C. Cattell, of 84 Fleet Street, who has pluckily exposed the Christmas Number of the *Freethinker* in his window before and since our prosecution. We have no doubt the summons will be dismissed, for Mr. Cattell has only sold the obnoxious publication like hundreds of other newsvendors, and notably one of the City Councillors in Fleet Street. But if Mr. Cattell is to be made an exception, simply because he is known to be a Freethinker, we shall all the better understand the motives of our prosecutors. In any case Mr. Cattell shall have all the support we can give him.

SALISBURY is a nice city. Nearly every voter has his price, and at election time he generally gets it. No candidate stands a chance without a long purse. Prostitution and drunkenness prevail to a frightful extent, trade is dying out, and the population is dwindling away. But of course the city is very pious. The godly turn up the whites of their eyes at the bare idea of Freethought. A newsagent who sold the *Freethinker* was recently waited on by a deputation of parsons, who threatened to ruin him by getting all his customers to withdraw their support if he did not cease the sale of blasphemy. A few Sundays ago one parson declared from the pulpit that all Freethinkers should be boycotted and starved out of the world. Yes, we repeat, Salisbury is a nice city.

THE Protestants in Madrid have a hospital with eight beds. They found that it would not do to send their converts to be nursed by Sisters of Mercy in the Catholic hospitals. They were constantly importuned to confess and return to the Church of Rome. Mr. Fliedner says he once followed two sisters in the largest hospital in Madrid from bed to bed. They carried a large basket of clean linen; at each bed they asked if the patient had confessed. If the answer was in the affirmative he was provided with clean linen, if the contrary, he got none. How these Christians love one another!

ACCORDING to *Truth*, one of the largest landholders in Devonshire inserts a clause in all his leases "prohibiting the letting of either buildings or ground for any religious service not in conformity with the ritual and tenets of the Church of England." Can this be the Duke of Bedford? He has estates in Devonshire, and he recently vetoed the letting of the Floral Hall, Covent Garden, for a meeting on the Bradlaugh question, after the directors had unanimously voted in its favor.

By the way, it is said that the Marquis of Salisbury guards all his London leases against sub-letting to any of the caosen people; and we understand that down at Cardiff no religious or other institution can exist without the permission of the Marquis of Bute. Still we are free people, you know.

THE city detectives don't seem a very 'cute lot. They have been watching Mr. Whittle's to see whether he still prints the *Freethinker*, and some of their little tricks are worthy of a prize idiot. One evening last week a young woman walked up the stairs and asked whether So-and-so worked there. She was told no. "Oh doesn't he," replied the artless female, "he told me he did, and I was to meet him here at eight. I can't have mistaken the place. This is where the *Freethinker* is printed isn't it?" It was a trifle too thin, especially as there was a man behind her down the stairs. We say nothing as to the morality of all this underhand work, but we do say that the detectives might be a little more cunning. That interesting young woman wasn't hard to read; she was as open as a hat.

SCENE, a West-end hotel—Time, luncheon. Gentleman just finished his knife and fork exercise, takes up morning paper, and stretches his legs amid other legs before the fire. Exclaims "Ah, I see those fellows in the *Freethinker* case are committed for trial with bail in a hundred pounds."—Another proprietor of two legs strikes in "Oh, I'm a bit of a Freethinker myself, but I don't approve of that paper, don't like the style of its articles, you know."—First speaker, "Ah."—Profound silence.

THIS overheard talk is pretty common. People don't understand that you have any right to differ from them. If you are illused they say "Ah I don't agree with him in every-

thing," just as though their opinions and tastes were the criterion of what is to be tolerated. They are just like the villager who cries "Here's a stranger, shy half a brick at him."

At Forfar last Monday, Hugh Townley, a young gentleman of eighteen, pleaded guilty to having two wives alive, and committing perjury in order to marry a third. Sentence nine months' hard labor. What a pity he was not born in Palestine three thousand years ago! He might then have become one of Jahveh's prime favorites, and perhaps he would have excelled David and Solomon. Three wives at eighteen gives a fine promise of extensive polygamy at forty.

WE have seldom read anything funnier than the report of a meeting of the Rural Deanery of Ealing in the Brentford Town Hall. When the sky-pilots came to discuss the subject of the growth of Secularism and Agnosticism, the Rev. E. W. Relton rose to make a complaint of blasphemous literature which had crept into their district and was disturbing even the bucolic mind. One of his friends, the Rev. Templeton King had seen the *Freethinker* actually exposed for sale in a shop window in his parish, and he went into the shop and bought up every copy there, so as to prevent their falling into the hands of his flock. Another parson, however, objected that Mr. King's method was a strange way to put a paper down. Then the *Freethinker* was described in true priestly language as "horrible, hideous, loathsome," etc. This description tickled the palate of the Rural Dean, who asked where the thing could be bought. Altogether it was a very edifying spectacle. We are rapidly getting a large sale among the parsons and preachers.

BISHOP ULLATHORNE, in his Lenten Pastoral, denounces such wicked literature as the *Freethinker*, and regrets that "the old Christian laws against Blasphemy are allowed to slumber in the statute book." This is rather cool, considering that we have been prosecuted twice in seven months.

THE Bishop does not spare "another class of publications," books written for the more educated classes, which are quite as blasphemous "when the cloak of polite language is removed." Whereupon the Birmingham *Daily Mail* asks "Are the vulgar to be struck down while the daintier scepticism escapes?" Ay, that is the question. Blasphemy is no worse in a penny paper than in a twelve shilling book.

THE following remarks of the *Mail* are very much to the point:—"It may be deplorable, but it is a fact, that the people who issue that literature are, for the most part, as sincere as those who condemn it. They regard much of the Biblical narrative as on a par with the fabulous myths of ancient Greece and Rome, and they think themselves justified in expressing their incredulity in a way that is an outrage on the sentiments of Inspirationists. But their method, after all, is only a coarser manifestation of that critical spirit which is seething all over Europe, and which no law, even if it be backed by all the Churches, is powerful enough to suppress."

SAMUEL THOMAS PAYNE, said to be a Salvation Army Captain, has been sentenced at the Middlesex Session to one year and eight months' imprisonment for wholesale robberies.

MRS. ZIMBRICK, the woman now imprisoned at Milwaukie for slaughtering her three children, took her arrest very calmly, saying she had read in the Bible that it was right to sacrifice children. She is evidently afflicted with that kind of mental disease known as pious belief in the Bible, in the case of an innocent person, and as "religious insanity" in the case of a criminal.

POOR TALMAGE has been pretending to fight Darwin and Spencer. He declared the doctrine of evolution had been taken from Lucretius. They were dragging about the old putrefaction and boasting of it as their originality. He described the evolutionists at the banquet given to Mr. Spencer in New York, as "chewing their own cousins." Ridicule and invective are admirable things when used on behalf of religion, but eternal damnation is too good for those who use them on the other side. Talmage says there is nothing in the Bible staggers him. He can gulp the rib story and swallow the whale. But he hedges a little over the sun standing still. That was only an appearance.

THE *Christian Union* suggests as a title to Joe Cook's last utterance, "What I do not know about the new theology." A collection of all Joe Cook does not know would dwarf all he has written, by including the larger portion of his discourses.

BARON DE WORMS has tried to justify his attitude on the Bradlaugh question in a most ridiculous and impudent letter to Mr. Ebenezer Davis, of Plumstead. The impudence is shown in that part of the Worms' letter in which he asserts that although the recent great meeting at Greenwich was held under the auspices of the Liberal Club, he has "good reason

to know that it did not represent the feelings of the great majority of the Liberal party in the borough." And the silliness appears in his statement that Christians and Jews should sit amicably together in Parliament because they have "a religion," but Mr. Bradlaugh should be kept out because he has "no religion." Could anything be more absurd? Mr. Bradlaugh is only a disbeliever in Christ, while the Jews say he was a bastard who consorted with drunkards and prostitutes, and was finally crucified for his wickedness and folly. Yet Mr. Bradlaugh is to be persecuted, and Christians and Jews are to hobnob together. Oh ye gods, and little fishes! What an admirable logician.

THE Catholic *Universe* last week contained a rabid article on "Blasphemous Publications." The editor states that he was beguiled into buying a copy of our Christmas Number by its tempting appearance, but when he opened the leaves his blood positively curdled, and it seems to have remained in that state ever since. After thirty or forty lines of denunciation, which appear to have been written by an elevated Irishman, the article goes on to say that "the fellows who are responsible for these atrocities in pen and pencil had the Satanic courage of their opinions; they affixed their names to the infamies." But that is no mitigation of our offence, and now that Bishop Ullathorne has cursed us in his Lenten pastoral (we are not a penny the worse for it) the pious scribe hopes we shall get our deserts. What they are, in his opinion, is only too plain: fine, imprisonment, the lash, and even the halter. What a loving set these Christians are to be sure!

THE elevated Irishman is good at epithets. He reminds us of Heine's "dictionary with a diarrhoea." Here are a few of his plums: "loathsome, pestilent, base, hideous, awful, horrid, impious, diabolic, ribald, blasphemous, Satanic."

As the *Universe* urges that "the penalties permissible by modern law are not meet for such malefactors," it is easy to see that it would like to revive the Inquisition. Fortunately the Church has no such power, but it is nevertheless true that there are thousands of Christians, especially Catholics, who would sooner witness the torturing of a heretic to death than any other entertainment. Dear sweet souls!

WE often hear that but for the Bible we should know nothing of the blessed hope of immortality, and this despite the fact that the Egyptians held this doctrine long before any of the Jew books were in existence. Yet the *Church Times* says, and says truly, "There are no texts which expressly assert mutual recognition in the next world." What comes then of the blessed assurance? What comfort in one immaterial entity flying about and meeting without recognising other immaterial entities?

JUSTICE GROVE, in charging the grand jury at the Devon county assizes, declared that nothing had so impressed him during his judicial career, as the laxity with which evidence was given. False swearing was a very common occurrence, and people who were considered truthful persons in every-day life, immediately they entered the box and were sworn, thought they were privileged to tell falsehoods. These observations from the learned judge show what a farce the invocation of a Deity is now considered to be.

THE Baptist Missionary Society are behind in their accounts, and appeal for £4,000 before the close of March.

SOME London clergymen, who are members of the committee of the London Bible Society, have tried to have the name of Sir William McArthur erased from the list of members of that committee, on account of his vote for permitting Mr. Bradlaugh to take his seat. The littleness of these vermin excite our contempt too much for their bigotry to arouse indignation

CHRISTIAN INCONSISTENCY.—We still pray for a fine harvest; but we really consult the barometer, and believe more in the prophecies of meteorologists than in an answer to our prayers; *The Deums* for victories excite more ridicule than sympathy; and we encounter the cholera by improved systems of drainage without attributing much value to fastings and processions. In other words, the old belief in the supernatural is so far extinct that it could not be restored without encountering some of the most vigorous beliefs of the time.—*Leslie Stephen*, "North American Review," p. 456; May 1880.

PROTESTANTISM AND FAITH.—The Reformation, in restoring the empire of Reason within the realms of theology, practically destroyed the doctrine of Justification by Faith; for if its chiefs might legitimately exercise the right of private judgment by rejecting the Eucharistic miracle, we also, in the fuller light of our generation, may disavow the Christian mysteries which they left untouched, and seek our justification, not by the faith that fosters credulity, but by the scepticism which worships truth.—"The Evolution of Christianity," p. 311; 1883.

SPECIAL NOTICE.

MR. FOOTE lectures three times to-day (Sunday, Feb. 18th) in St. James's Hall, Plymouth:—Morning at 11, "Hell Fire and Salvation by Faith;" Afternoon at 3, "Gambetta: Republican and Freethinker;" Evening at 7, "Buddha before Christ."

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

February 18th, Plymouth; 25th, Liverpool.
March 4th, Manchester; 11th, Edinburgh; 18th and 25th, Hall of Science, London.
April 1st, Milton Hall, London; 3rd, Walworth; 8th, Claremont Hall, London; 15th, Leeds; 29th, Oldham.
May 6th and 13th, Claremont Hall, London.

CORRESPONDENTS.

- ALL business communications to be addressed to the Manager, H. A. KEMP, 28 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.—E. J. Baxter, Chas. Cooke, "Bilderstürmers," W. P. Ball.
B. BRIGGS, who writes that *Progress* is an honor to the Secular cause, is thanked for his scraps.
ANTI-PRIEST.—We are greatly overset, but will try and make room for your letter on "Dying Declarations" before long.
ARABI.—We are not Sir C. Dilke's keeper; you had better inquire of himself.
H. SEYMOUR, Tunbridge Wells, reports that Mr. Edwards has been tried again for keeping open his shop on Sunday and this time got off with one shilling fine. This practically means the defeat of the bigots.
G. C., J. R. C. S. J., who promises to take six copies of the *Freethinker* while the fight lasts, is thanked for his sympathy.
D. M.—Some of the back numbers you require are out of print. The first prosecution is instituted by Sir H. Tylor, the second by the City Solicitor, Sir T. Nelson. The object is to stop us at once. There is no fear of that purpose being successful. We know no English edition of Voltaire's "Pucelle." Stamps are as good as cash.
J. A. B.—Thanks. We shall shortly publish a collection of Profano Jokes in a separate form at a small price.
J. THOMSON.—No doubt your good wishes will be realised.
R. GARBUTT.—There ought to be something done at Blyth, but the local Freethinkers must move themselves before anything can be done for them. The paragraph from the *Morpeth Herald* has appeared in several other papers. It is a fine sample of Christian charity. We cannot print separate bills as you suggest; the cost would be too great.
E. BAINES.—It is always pleasant to hear from converts, and we are glad to find that you like our writings because anybody can understand them. Unfortunately we cannot recommend any simpler books on the subject of Atheism, but you will find Mirabaud's "System of Nature" clearer because fuller.
MR. ALEX. STEWARD, will give 6d. each for Nos. 17, Vol. I., and 19, Vol. II., of the *Freethinker*.
H. WHITTAM will take two dozen of the *Freethinker* in case of a committal.
MANY correspondents stand over for reply till next week owing to press of matter.

SUGAR PLUMS.

Progress is attracting considerable attention in the press. We have received many newspaper notices, and we shall be glad if our readers will send us any that may have escaped our eyes. The March number will be ready next week. It will contain many interesting features, besides a Biography and Portrait of M. Clémenceau, the French Radical leader and the coming man of the Republic. We are happy to state that *Progress* is a success, but a still larger circulation is desirable, and we hope our friends will do their best to advertise it in their own circles. It will be one way of assisting us in our struggle.

THE *Jewish World* terms the article on "England's Rule in India," in *Progress*, "a terrible bill of indictment against this country."

Reynolds' Newspaper, in noticing our new prosecution, calls attention to the old statutes under which Unitarians and non church attendants could be subject to fine and imprisonment.

MR. WHEELER, who has made a special study of matters connected with the history of Freethought in England, will contribute a paper on "Past Prosecutions for Blasphemy" to

Progress, reviewing all the trials from the time of Bartholomew Legate (1611) to that of Pooley (1857).

In an article on "Liberty of Prophesying" the *Weekly Dispatch* speaks out bravely against the prosecution of the *Freethinker*, and says that "the time has come when Englishmen should wake up and ask themselves whether they are drifting."

We have pleasure in quoting the following passages from Mr. Frederick Harrison's recent lecture on Gambetta:—"Gambetta was the one European statesman of this century who systematically and formally repudiated any kind of acceptance of theology. They saw here in Gambetta a new thing. They saw a statesman of the first rank in Europe who formally repudiated theology in every shape: the first ruler of France in this century who had chosen to rest his right to rule on purely human sanctions. Referring to his funeral, the lecturer said it was one such as no Emperor ever had—a day when all France helped to bury the one Frenchman who had stood before Europe as Bismark and Gladstone alone of living men stand before Europe to-day. From first to last in that vast throng there was no emblem of Christ; no priest of God; not one mutter of heaven; no hollow appeal to the mockery of the resurrection; no thought but for the great human loss and human sorrow. Surely this was something to think over. It was the first time in the history of Europe for a foremost man to be laid to his rest by a nation of grief without priest or church, prayer or hymn. "Shall any one, concluded the lecture, say after this that theology is still a living thing? Shall any one doubt but that the Religion of Humanity is at hand?"

A LEADER writer in the *Baptist Freeman*, urges its readers to obey the Scripture by not taking oaths in courts of justice, but to demand to affirm under the Evidence Further Amendment Act (32 and 33 Vict., c. 68). It is thus seen that the agitation of Freethinkers against their disabilities serves to relieve the consciences of some religionists.

THE SEA-GOD, PROVIDENCE.

Of the five gods of the orthodox Christian: Jahveh, Jesus, Paraclete, Satan and Providence, perhaps the last-named gentleman has always had the roughest employment and the strangest constituents, who only in extreme cases of emergency laid their requirements before their representative, and then did so through the weak medium of the most unsophisticated delegates.

Providence has always been exclusively the sailor's god, nurtured and fed only in the rare intervals of hopeless despair on the scant fare of "less profanity than usual," or small snacks of passing prayer and praise of a very meal-and-water character.

There is an old and somewhat thumb-worn adage to the effect that a superabundance of culinary artists are in danger of irretrievably ruining the nourishing article of diet known as broth, and it would seem that when the priests drew up the plans and specifications for their huge structure of imposture, a superabundance of contradictory deities and sub-deities spoiled the sweet theological hash beyond all possible hope of redemption. It might or it might not be a good stroke of policy in the primary arrangements to plan an earth-born progeny for the boss deity; the idea of linking the sky-realms with "this mundane plain" by such a means wasn't bad in the conception I make no doubt, but in the execution it was a clumsily managed and careless piece of work.

Some one says "a big liar should have a good memory," the error in god-making might have been obviated in some degree had it rested only on the memory of one, but so many "prentice hands" were laid to the work in the first stages, that as a consequence, though each particular god was assigned his own particular duties, one or other have been for ever engaged in patching up the clumsy failures of the others, and undoing what his celestial coadjutor has done.

When the honest sailor is in extreme trouble and danger, he tries first of all every effort he can devise for his safety, and it is only when skill seems to avail nothing that he will condescend to ask his god Providence to chuck him a tow-line; he calls up the cook or bo'swain to parley Providence for him, and only out of a sort of conciliatory compliment he doffs his sou'wester while his shipmate runs up the distress-bunting for this invisible

"Cherub that sits up aloft,
Keeping watch o'er the life of poor Jack."

If one may judge from the accounts of notable disasters at sea given by pious Christians who never sailed beyond that hackneyed passage from the Jew book having reference to "they who go down to the sea in ships," it never enters into the poor ship-wrecked mariner's mind the question *who* threw him on the waves in an open boat if this sea-god Providence *did* pick him up. It is most remarkable, at least so it seems to me, that storms of the most furious kind come over the sea of their own free-will, that fires start without the knowledge of the celestial squad, and it is only when the bo'swain hails that Mr. Providence rushes out in answer to the signal. I am more than half-inclined to the suspicion that the father-god brings on his winds just to "show forth his glory," but then, this is hardly fair to Providence who has to do double shift not unfrequently in hunting out his saving apparatus.

Providence, it is true, may reap considerable credit for his benevolence in saving many poor brave fellows, but what are we to say of the one who wrecks six-hundred emigrants, men, women and children, just to give his chum Providence the opportunity of saving twenty-five or thirty out of the whole shrieking and praying six-hundred. Whoever commences the slaughter, it is evident on the authority of the pious that Providence does the saving part; I don't deliberately blame Jahveh, but for the life of me I can't blame Paraclete as I have no history of his misdemeanor otherwise than in the instance of that unfortunate affair of Mary's; I cannot bring myself to believe Jesus would do it, and if Satan can be guilty of such ill-conduct I think *even* I could suggest a remedy for that.

I have before me a book called "Memorable Shipwrecks," by a very pious person, J. F. Layson, and published by Walter Scott, of 14 Paternoster Square, London, and of Newcastle-on-Tyne. Now the opening words of the preface of this book clearly lay the blame of sea-disasters at the door of Providence himself, the words are these—"To the people of a maritime country, stories of the perils and Providences endured and experienced by those who have had 'their path in the great waters,' must always present points of interest peculiarly their own." No doubt about that. Had I been a "good" pious Christian like this writer, I should have paused before I exposed my dear good God like that, but again, here is where a puzzle comes in; the account of the wreck of the *Lady Hobart* on June 25th, 1803, given by the captain himself leads to another impression, he says: "Exposed as we were in two open boats in the great Atlantic, bereft of all assistance but that which our own exertions under Providence could afford us, we narrowly escaped being swallowed up in the vortex. Men accustomed to vicissitudes are not easily dejected, but there are trials that human nature alone cannot surmount. The consciousness of having done our duty, however (that's Secularism), and reliance on a good Providence (that isn't), enabled us to endure the calamity that had befallen us. Here is the funny item. The calamity befell them; the escape by being picked up, *didn't* befall them; Providence came all the way from heaven with a ship to seek them.

Another puzzling thing about this Providence is this—certain people he wouldn't come in time to save on any account. Women in the agony of distress forgetting in their excitement that Jesus is not a sea-faring god now, make the mistake of calling to him; Providence, of course, going in for a business of his own, declines to save any of Jesus's women, and with admirable courtesy lets them drown and saves a few of his own clients who are probably great rascals, and who rob their companions when they reach a coast, and make tracks.

I believe there are people who can see good in being hungry for the pleasure of eating;—who think it worth while to be sick for the pleasure of getting well;—Indeed I once heard a preacher in a northern town argue for the goodness of God in that he made it a pleasure to eat, when he might as easily have made eating extremely painful. By the same wonderful process of reasoning such individuals I doubt not, could make it appear worth one's while to be half-drowned, one-fourth hungered, and within a thirty-second of being scalped and eaten by savages, for the exquisite delight of being saved alone to find one's friends all drowned or murdered in the exercise of the unfathomable wisdom of Providence.

JOHN ROWELL WALLER.

(To be continued.)

AN APPEAL FOR A PARSON.

Wanted, a rector, a vicar or curate,
Peterb'ro isn't particular which;
One who will grab at a minimum pew-rate
Fully convinced that it's wrong to be rich.

Listen ye black-coated brigands who prey on us,
Here is a living for one of your crew;
High, Low, or Broad is a matter don't weigh on us,
Salary's small but there's plenty to do.

Pity your bishop who's pleading appealingly,
Pity the souls that are sinking in sin;
Don't run away in a manner unfeelingly,
Don't let Sathanas go in there and win.

Can it be want of the Mammon delaying you?
Think of the woes that to riches belong;
Can it be thoughts of the work that is staying you?
"Gird up your loins" like Samson the strong.

Oh! 'tis a sight to set angels despairing,
"Cherrybuns" weep and the seraphims scowl,
As they discover, when out for an airing,
No one responds to the bishop's loud howl.

Wanted, a rector, a vicar or curate,
Peterb'ro isn't particular which,
One who will serve for a minimum pew-rate,
Fully convinced that it's wrong to be rich.

Here is a chance seldom seen for converting 'em
Snatching the brands from the wrath of the fire,
Should you be charged before Christ with deserting 'em
How will you answer his terrible ire.

Gather around then, and bring the old story to
Tickle their feelings with heavenly bliss,
Read of Jehovah, the grand and the gory too,
All that is naughty and nasty why—miss.

Tell them he worked very hard when creating us,
Taking six days ere he finished the earth,
Tell them he's awfully fond of cremating us,
How we are damned from the moment of birth,

Tell them the millions of worlds all surrounding us,
Took but a moment to form, so to speak;
Tis little fact then explain that's astounding us
Why over us was he working *a week*?

Tell them how grand was the old vegetation, and
Picture the earth when of beasts there were none,
Then be prepared with a good explanation, and
Say how it flourished *without any sun*.

These little things may appear contradictory,
Scoffers may sneer at the story inspiréd;
Faith is the weapon that gives you the victory,
Only believe, and that's all that's desired.

Come along parsons, the harvest is waiting a
Psalm-twanging reaper to gather it in;
Seems that the Lord is a long while inflating a
Windbag to wollop the Devil and sin.

Wanted, a rector, a vicar or curate,
Peterb'ro isn't particular which,
One who will serve for a minimum pew-rate;
Fully convinced that it's wrong to be rich.

D. EVANS.

ACCORDING to the *New Zealand Times* of December 29th, 1882, the latest census returns in the colony show that while 13,978 persons objected to state their religious belief, the professed Freethinkers have increased from 400 in 1878, to 2,422 in 1881.

THE Christmas Number of the *Freethinker* has had an unprecedented and well-nigh incredible sale, and our persecutors say we simply published it for money. Well, even if we did, we should be acting after the fashion of every religious journal in the kingdom. But, as a matter of fact, we had other objects in view. We spent lavishly on our Christmas Number in order to cause a stir and carry our ideas far and wide; and the result is that, notwithstanding the enormous sale, we are actually several pounds out of pocket by it.

WE are always delighted when we can record a case of brotherly love among the Christians. A very striking one recently occurred at Milwaukee. After the great fire there were forty-three corpses unrecognised. All the denominations came to an agreement to divide the corpses according to numbers; the result being that the Protestants got twenty-three, and the Catholics twenty. The only thing that mars this pleasant harmony is the distressing thought that at least three-fourths of the corpses must have been buried in the wrong faith.

CORRESPONDENCE.

THE EMPLOYMENT OF FREETHINKERS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR.—I was very glad to see the letter of your correspondent Mr. Dyas on the above subject in your last week's issue, and I am sure it will meet with a most hearty response in the minds of a large number of your readers.

Ever since I have been connected with the N. S. S., I (in common with many others) have seen the necessity of something being done by the Freethought party in this direction, with a view of counteracting the persecuting spirit of the times.

As a member of the committee of the Manchester Branch, I know from experience that many people are prevented from joining our ranks, solely because of the prejudice which exists and the fear of losing their situations in the event of their connexion becoming known, and many instances could be given of petty persecution on all the part of employers, etc.; and under these circumstances, there can be no doubt that the time has arrived when some action should be taken in the matter, and for that reason I shall be very glad to act as a medium between employer and employeé, if friends in this district will communicate with me as below, or will arrange a meeting of all interested, with a view of forming a committee to come to some arrangement on the subject.—Yours, very faithfully,

W. WILMER.

101 Exeter Street, Ardwick, Manchester.

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[Collecting sheets will be sent to any Freethinker on application to Mr. Foote.]

"STUDIED DE SUBJECT."

"WHAT luck did you hab las' night, parson?" asked Rev. Aminidab Bledsoe of Whangdoodle Baxter, two of the most popular colored clergymen in Austin, or in this section of Texas, for that matter.

"Didn't hab no luck at all. Dar was no chickens in reach. I found a lot ob shirts hangin' on a line, but the wedder was so inclement dat de shirts and ilder close was froze to de line so tight I couldn't pull em off. Maybe de Lawd will temper de wind to de shorn lamb, and moderate de wedder, so I kin pull dem close offen de line ef dey am still out ter night."

"Why de debble didn't yer ent de line at bofe ends and go off wid de line, close and all?"

"Brudder Whangdoodle, nex' time I'll be proud ter hab yer go along. You has studied de subject line upon line and precept upon precept."—(Texas Siftings.)

MR. J. D. STONES, whose letter on Smith and Son's notice that they would no longer supply the *Freethinker*—(which appeared in our issue for February 4th)—sends us a copy of their answer to his reply, in which they coolly urge that they take their stand on the principle of liberty. In the same sense of the word people were boycotted in Ireland, yet W. H. Smith thought it infamous. In the same sense of the word heretics were excommunicated and cut off from human sympathy; the true believers only had to say, "You do as you like and we do as we like," and the verdict over the heretic's corpse would be, not religious murder, but *felo de se*. Smith and Son are wholesale newsagents, and they have no moral right to "burke" any particular opinions they happen to dislike. Mr. Stones has closed his account with them, resolved to deal with a house that understands liberty in a different sense. We hope all other retail newsagents will follow his example.

W. CUFF, of the Shoreditch Tabernacle, has just issued a begging letter to the members of his congregation with a view to extracting from them the "noble sum," as he describes it, of £1,579 16s. 8d. a year. The way in which he points out how they can give this sum without feeling the loss is truly admirable, and shows a good financial instinct. If Jesus Christ had been as 'cute as W. Cuff, he would never have brought the exchequer so low as to tempt Purser Judas to sell up the whole concern for "thirty bob."

PROFANE JOKES.

ALL THERE.—A minister who had been accused of preaching a sermon that was not his own went to a parishoner who had made the charge, and asked him to retract it. "Well," said the parishoner, "I thought when I heard that sermon, that it was taken from a book I had at home; but, to make sure, I went home and looked in the book, and—it was all there."

WHAT did Lot do when his wife became a pillar of salt?—He took a *fresh* one.

WHY did Ruth treat Boaz roughly?—Because she pulled his ears and trod on his corn.

A CERTAIN church in Michigan has been struck by lightning a dozen times, and now, whenever the preacher shows signs of getting long winded, and passing from his "seventhly" to his "eighthly," the organist slyly imitates the sound of approaching thunder on the pedals. The result is that the preacher finishes his sermon and starts the doxology in an amazingly short time. The congregation has increased the salary of that organist.

THE FINDING OF MOSES.

On Egypt's bank, contagious to the Nile,
Great Pharaoh's daughter went to bathe in style;
And as she ran about to dry her royal skin,
She kicked the bulrush that had little Moses in.
At that event surprised, awhile she stud,
In silence gazing on the sacred flud;
Then turning to her maids, she said in accents mild,
Blood an' ages, girls, which of yez owns the child?

THREE men working in a field sat down for rest and refreshment, when they were accosted by a tramp, who said he had tasted nothing for two days. As they appeared to doubt him, he added, "God strike me stiff if I tell a lie." He immediately became rigid as stone. The men, horror-stricken, ran off to the village to tell the dreadful news. Upon returning with the police, a stretcher, and a member of the Christian Evidence Society, they found that the tramp and their provisions had vanished.

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Feb. 18, Burnley; 25, Milton Hall, London; 26, Kilburn. March 4, Bradford; 11, Portsmouth; 18, Grimsby; 25, Halifax. April 1, Brighouse; 8, Huddersfield; 15, Baskerville Hall; 22, West Hartlepool; 29, Manchester. May 6, Edinburgh; 20, Liverpool; 27, Plymouth.—All applications to be addressed to Mr. J. Symes, 142 Hagley Road, Birmingham.

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- The Generalisations of Charles Darwin.—II. By EDWARD B. AVELING, D.Sc.
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