

PROSECUTED FOR BLASPHEMY.

THE FREETHINKER.

EDITED BY G. W. FOOTE.

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FEBRUARY 25, 1883.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.

"COMIC BIBLE" SKETCHES.—LIX.



WRESTLING WITH AN ANGEL.

And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint as he wrestled with him.—GENESIS xxxii., 25.

GOD IN THE CITY.

According to Shelley "Hell is a city much like London." But things have greatly changed since he wrote "Peter Bell the Third." The city of London now patronises the Lord. It was from Broad Street that Sir Henry Tyler rushed out to champion Almighty God, and it is the City Corporation which carries on the work commenced by the pious knight of Dashwood House when his pocket was flush with ill-gotten fees. Our second prosecutor has a bigger and safer purse than the first, and what money can do to punish and put down Jehovah's weekly critics will certainly be done.

What induced the City Corporation to take up Tyler's dirty work? Does it fancy that its moribund existence will be prolonged by currying favor with orthodoxy? Will Sir William Harcourt forego his London Municipality Bill because the City fathers have prosecuted the *Freethinker*? Will the fat aldermen be allowed to go on feasting and guzzling on the robbery of the poor, because they have fed Sir Thomas Nelson to start a crusade against Free-thought? Or what is the reason why the City Corporation has resolved to invoke bad old laws which have slumbered within its precincts for over fifty years?

[No. 81.]

Perhaps the Corporation feels that it is expiring, and is only striking a blow at somebody before giving up the ghost, like a wounded serpent which gathers all its strength for a last dart of the fang, before its coils slacken in death. The City fathers may say to themselves, "We shall soon have to relinquish our wealth, the days of our plunder are drawing to a close, before long we must cease to fatten on the robbery of the poor, our very existence will become a thing of the past; but before we go let us make our enemies smart; we cannot touch the strong, but let us aim at those Freethinkers who are the worst of our Radical foes, and vindicate for a last time the insulted majesty of Bumble the Great."

Anyhow it is an extraordinary thing that Jehovah should be obliged to seek his final refuge in the City. Are we to suppose that he has fallen back on his last friend, and that he and the Corporation will perish together? Their common epitaph might read thus:—"To the unholy memory of two great thieves. Their lives were one, and even in death they are not divided."

There is something very appropriate in this amity between the Bible God and the richest and corruptest Corporation in the world; and something no less appropriate in their common hatred of a party which denounces knaves, laughs at hypocrites, and teaches people to think and work for themselves, to assert their mental and moral manhood, and refuse to give the produce of their toil to ghosts and drones.

No God of wisdom and virtue would ever go to the City for his defenders, or seek his worshippers in the temple of Mammon. He would shrink from the gambling-hell of the Stock Exchange, and the commercial dens where bubble companies are floated; he would turn with disgust from the gluttony and swilling of the Guildhall, which is one blaze of meretricious light when foreign despots, pauper princes, or professional cutthroats enjoy its hospitality. His eye would rest with far more satisfaction on the outside of a little shop with the sign of *The Freethinker*, and he would probably drop in and leave a cheque for ten millions for the Defence Fund.

G. W. FOOTE.

A DIALOGUE BETWEEN A MISSIONARY AND A HINDU.

MISSIONARY.—I have come, my dear benighted friend many thousands of miles, to instruct you in the blessed truths of the Christian religion.

HINDU.—Indeed, that looks very kind. But I have a religion of my own which suits me well enough.

M.—Mine is the only true religion which God came down to earth on purpose to reveal.

H.—Why couldn't he reveal it to me as well as to you?

M.—You mistake me, poor heathen, God became man a long while before you or I were born.

H.—That's curious. I never heard of it. How did it happen?

M.—You must know that our first parents ate some fruit which condemned all their posterity to eternal punishment until God the Son became incarnate to appease the wrath of God the Father.

H.—You astound me. Eternal punishment for eating fruit. What a peculiar Father. But his Son, you say, prevented the punishment of all your ancestors.

M.—O dear no! He only came to earth four thousand years afterwards.

H.—Why was he so long in coming?

M.—It was all according to God's good-will and pleasure, that in fulness of time he graciously permitted his only begotten Son to appease his wrath.

H.—So God is a male. May I ask who his wife is? You know our Vishnu has Lakshmi, and Siva has Kali and so-on.

M.—This is blasphemy coming from the foulness of a corrupt heart. God has no sex.

H.—How then did God the Father produce God the Son.

M.—He was begotten from all eternity.

H.—If the Son is Eternal, and as old as his Father, how did he come to be the Son?

M.—He was born of the Holy Ghost, and conceived by a Virgin.

H.—You astonish me more and more. What sort of Virgin was this that gave birth to a God?

M.—It was one of God's chosen people the Jews. Her name was Mary, and she was betrothed to a Jewish carpenter, named Joseph.

H.—I think I am beginning to see through it. But who was this Holy Ghost?

M.—The third person of the ever blessed Trinity. There is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, and these three are one.

H.—I am in a fog again. It's against all arithmetic.

M.—It is one of the mysterious truths of our holy religion that is cavilled at by the carnal mind.

H.—But tell me about this Holy Ghost. I suppose he became man also, if he got this Virgin with child.

M.—Oh no; though he sometimes appeared in the form of a dove. He proceeds from the Father and the Son, and together with them is worshipped and glorified.

H.—A minute ago you told me that the Son proceeded from the Holy Ghost. I am really not sure which of your three Gods became man, God the Father, God the Son, or God the Holy Ghost.

M.—Poor sinner; I have chiefly come to tell you about Jesus who is God the Son our precious Redeemer and Savior, perfect God and perfect man, and who suffered for our sins on the cross in our stead.

H.—Dear me! I'm sure I never wanted any one to suffer for me. But I do not see how any infinite being could be finite and suffer. How did it all come about?

M.—He suffered himself to partake of human nature, and worked in his Father's shop till thirty years of age.

H.—I see you have sublime notions of deity's doings.

M.—And then he began to preach, after fasting and being tempted by the Devil. But the chief priests and scribes took counsel and put him to death.

H.—And so because his chosen people put him to death, his Father saved them from their sins. Anyhow, he's dead now.

M.—Not at all, you presumptuous heathen. He descended into hell, and on the third day he rose again from the dead according to the scriptures, and now sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty.

H.—But what proof have you of all this?

M.—We have the record of his disciples.

H.—But what said the chosen people who put God to death about his rising again on the third day.

M.—They denied it. He came to his own and his own received him not.

H.—Then if the people to whom he was sent put him to death and did not believe on him, why should you expect me to do so?

M.—If you do not believe the message that is sent to you, you will be burnt for ever in hell-fire.

H.—But I should soon burn up.

M.—You would be made immortal to be eternally tortured.

H.—Horrible! What must I do to be saved?

M.—Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, thou and all thine house.

H.—How am I to believe on him?

M.—You must have faith in what I tell you.

H.—But you have only given me words to which I can attach no ideas.

M.—You'll be damned if you don't believe as I say.

H.—I'll be damned if I do.

LUCIANUS.

THE ATHEISTIC PULPIT.

[SECOND SERIES.]

X.

My guide, the doorkeeper of heaven, as I told you last week, took up his hat and stick, after our refection, to conduct me over the celestial regions. He was a pleasant companion and evidently enjoyed the task he was engaged in; and no wonder! Most men would be glad of a little work, surely, after sleeping for a thousand years. As we went on upon our journey of exploration, we came to the bank of a deep channel, evidently the old bed of a river, but now perfectly dry.

"That," said my guide, "is where the river of the water of Life used to flow, though there was but little of it left when I first came to this country, and a few years later it was positively dry."

"How," said I, "do you account for this running dry? Or has it merely found another channel?"

"The river is absolutely extinct," replied he. "And I will now tell you how it came about. You remember I told you, as I let you in, that religion had proved a pestilence here. And if that is not literally true it is nearly so. You must understand that this place was awfully religious. Here religion was everything. From the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost down to the lowest saint, everybody regarded religion as the one thing needful, and the only one. Every attempt to introduce common-sense or civilisation was put down with brutal and prompt severity. And they were not content to rule themselves, they must interfere with mankind upon earth, too. You of course remember the story of Noah's Flood, and how the windows of heaven were opened to let down the water to drown the world below. But there is one thing about it you do not know, and that is, that that flood did immensely more harm in heaven than on earth, and proved at last the death of its authors. It came about in this way. The whole quarrel, you remember, was a religious one. The people of the earth had fallen out with those in heaven; the gods were not receiving attention enough. Men were too independent for them, and did not see the utility of supporting them in idleness; and did not know what advantage they were getting in return for all the costly worship they were supporting. So they showed their common sense, if not good policy, by dropping it. This provoked all the gods beyond measure. And the angels came home, after scouring the earth, and reported the most abominable lies respecting what was going on below. The old gods, now in their dotage, instead of instituting an inquiry as to the truth of those reports, took them all as gospel, and resolved on vengeance. It was some time, however, before the method of punishment was hit upon; but when it was, it was at once executed. God the Father said he was sick of the conduct of man, and he would drown the world with a great flood.

"The water was ready to his hand. The whole of that vast hollow you see the beginning of yonder, which stretches away for thousands of miles, was full of water. That was the celestial ocean, resting everywhere on the sky, in which there were many trap-doors or windows through which rain, etc., were let down upon earth. Now, no sooner did the principal gods decide upon drowning the world and give orders for the trap-doors to be opened, than the angels, great and small, old and young, shouted for joy, and rushed away to open all the windows of heaven, as they called the trap-doors. They pulled these right up, and turned them back upon their hinges; and so thoroughly eager were they in their barbarous mischief that many of them went through the windows in the rush of water, and fell headlong to the earth; though, I believe, most of them survived the disaster and soon recovered of their injuries.

"When all the windows were open, and the water pouring down in a thousand cataracts, and while the poor wretches upon earth were drowning by myriads, the poor wretched barbarians here got up a grand procession which they called a thanksgiving to the chief gods for their mercy and goodness in destroying the earth. The bishops and clergy used to do the same upon earth; I hope they have long since given up that indecency."

"Not at all," I replied. "It is not long since the Archbishop of York published a fulsome and disgusting piece of blarney addressed to his God, in which he was thanked and lauded for murdering Egyptians."

"I see!" said my guide, "you upon earth have not yet

grown out of the old and cruel superstitions. The best thing you can do when you go back is to send a few of the clergy hither to see the desolation religion has wrought here.

"As I told you, the angels opened the windows of heaven to let the water down upon the poor earth; but they could never shut those windows again; and so the ocean ran itself dry! At first, as they saw the water diminishing, they seemed not to care; but when they saw that the ocean was well nigh empty they reported it to God Almighty. He in a great rage swore at them, and vowed to hurl them into hell for their stupidity. He never meant, he said, to waste all the celestial water in that fashion; but only to let down enough to drown the rebels below. Now what was to be done, he demanded of his crest-fallen flatterers? If the ocean is empty there can be no more rain or snow; the rivers will run dry, even the river of the water of Life; the springs and lakes will also disappear, and the whole of heaven will become a desert destitute of all life. 'Ye fools, and blind!' continued he, 'see what you have done! In destroying the earth you have also destroyed heaven; in drowning man you have ensured the death of gods and angels and all in heaven by drought! Our days are numbered. I am too old to fill up that ocean again, nor is there any one else that can do it. Woe is me! I repent of making man. I repent of drowning him. I repent of everything. My creation turns out to be one huge blunder. I am a blockhead, and my creatures are just like me.'

"Then was there silence in heaven for the space of half an hour, for every one was dumb-founded at what had been done, and at the language and wrath of the Father, with whom the Son and the Holy Ghost entirely concurred.

"Henceforth peace and joy were unknown in heaven. Religious mania had destroyed its prospects. All knew what their fate must be—famine and pestilence. These awful forebodings turned every one against his fellow, and very soon smothered animosity became engendered in the hearts of most. And though things had come to so dreadful a pass, no alteration was permitted in heavenly etiquette—religion must be supported at any cost; and all those who counselled civilisation, arts, and science, even to relieve pain or to supply the wants of nature, were dealt with as heretics and ruthlessly cast out of heaven!"

JOS. SYMES.

(To be continued.)

JAHVEH AND HIS ELECT.

The defence of deity is not to be left entirely in the hands of Sir Henry Tyler; other champions have arisen, and in the House of Commons. The Parliamentary Oaths Amendment Act having been brought forward, Mr. Newdegate who, is nothing if not veracious, says he has been taken by surprise, and hoped the Attorney-General would exonerate himself from the imputation of having introduced the Bill under terror of Mr. Bradlaugh's very weak mob. Mr. Newdegate seems to be Jahveh's whip; he may be very pious, but he is also excessively narrow-minded; does he imagine that the British nation is to be guided by his political and theological views; a deity who is so hard up as to trust his defence to Mr. Newdegate is not worth taking any notice of.

The next of Jahveh's elect is Mr. Alderman Fowler, who gets up and howls most lustily that it is simply a Bill to allow Atheists to sit in Parliament. Dear me, how very extraordinary, good Sir Oracle, we scarcely needed the information; but the worthy alderman is, I presume, not prepared with any logical conclusion why Atheists should not be represented in the House; although he is perfectly aware that it is Northampton who has elected Mr. Bradlaugh, not British Atheists. It is also, according to him, a Bill for the national renunciation of God. But this is simply false, and even if it were true, it would not be one jot too soon to be rid of such a God as Jahveh. If Alderman Fowler is so fond of Jahveh and his works, why does he not elect to leave the affairs of the nation wholly in his hands. The spirit of the age has left Jahveh and Fowler hopelessly in the rear.

Mr. Warton follows with his usual venom, which, after all, is quite as harmless as he is; the wonder is that he does not have a fit at the very thought of Bradlaugh sitting in the House. He informs us that there is nothing in our history more disgraceful than this yielding to mob law, or that the Government, contrary to the wishes and rules of the House, should bow their heads and prefer Bradlaugh to God.

The charge of mob law is simply a wild raving; as to its being contrary to the wishes and rules of the House, this will be better known after the Bill is passed or rejected.

And talking such rubbish as preferring Bradlaugh to God is much more likely to make sensible people laugh than cry;

indeed, the honorable members themselves could not refrain from laughter at Mr. Warton's denunciation.

It is quite a case of common sense and reform *versus* idiocy, bigotry, and fanaticism. Mr. Warton takes the latter view; verily one would think he had been tipped by Jahveh to anathemise Bradlaugh. One consolation there is that all the howlings of the Fourth Party will not keep the Government from passing such a much-needed reform as an Affirmation Bill.

Mr. Onslow, Mr. Beresford Hope, and Lord H. Lennox, also took the side of the Lord. It would be interesting to know how much they are to get for the job.

What a splendid Cabinet these gentlemen would make, together with Lord R. Churchill and Sir Henry Tyler. Old Jahveh would be fairly rammed down the throats of every citizen. I presume they would refer to Moses for legislation, to David and Solomon for ideal royalty, to Hosea, Isaiah, and Ezekiel for sermons and speeches, and to Jesus for logic.

Not all the fanaticism of these individuals will stop the nation in its advance towards rationalism, and they very likely will find themselves outside of the House after the next elections. At any rate I think Jahveh could have found better champions than these.

MOMUS.

ANOTHER PROSECUTION.

MR. HENRY CATELL, of 84 Fleet Street, who, as we stated last week, was summoned by the City Solicitor, Sir Thomas Nelson, for selling the Christmas Number of the *Freethinker*, has been committed by the Lord Mayor for trial at the next sessions at the Old Bailey, which open on the 26th inst. Mr. Cattell is not the only newsagent who has sold this obnoxious publication, as the authorities are very well aware, but he is singled out because he is known to be a Freethinker. Mr. Arthur Moss has issued a circular inviting subscriptions for Mr. Cattell's defence, and all sums received will be acknowledged in these columns. We have started the list ourselves with two guineas, and we have no doubt that Mr. Cattell's expenses will soon be defrayed. Mr. Moss's address is 87 Catlin Street, Rotherhithe New Road, Bermondsey, London, S.E.

ACID DROPS.

THE rains descended and the floods came for several days after the promulgation of the Archbishop of York's special service for fine weather. Sceptics, however, must not hastily conclude that such prayers are inefficacious. It all depends upon the time which it takes for prayers to reach headquarters. Given the velocity at which a prayer will travel, the distance to the audience-chamber, the number of unopposed petitions which await attendance, and the amount and influence of opposing prayers, and Archbishop Thomson as a good mathematician will doubtless be able to tell you how many days or years it will take before an answer can be expected.

A PIOUS contemporary informs us we must not grumble at a heavy rainfall, even when it occasions great destruction to property, for on the whole a rainy season is a good thing, statistics proving that more people die in dry weather. This is very convincing, but why then in the name of Elijah, should our sky pilots petition the heavenly turncock to screw up his tap?

At the meeting of the London Diocesan Conference a committee was appointed "to consider the prevalence of Secularism, Agnosticism, and other forms of unbelief, and to report on the best way of dealing with them." It is to be hoped the City Solicitor will be consulted as to the efficacy of enforcing the laws against blasphemy and heresy. If, indeed, the old plan of dealing with unbelief by sending it to prison is not the best way, we are afraid it will tax more than the average parson intellect to cope with it.

The Bishop of Bedford, who moved the appointment of this committee evidently agrees with us. He declared that "the old controversy with Rome was child's play compared with that going on now. It was a matter of life and death." Truly it is to bishops, and they would fain make it so for unbelievers. But there is no doubt as to the issue of the contest. The young Hercules of Science crushed the theological snakes around its cradle, and now goes forth to do battle with all the hydras and chimeras that infest the world.

THESE are a few headings from a paper by no means given to sensationalism. Cruelty to Pigeons.—In memory of Elizabeth Wheeler, aged twenty-eight, who was done to death by English Justice for the crimes of homelessness, sickness and destitution—Determined Suicide at Brixton—Shocking Suicide on the North London Railway—Found Dead on a

Doorstep—Tired of Life—Dynamite in Politics—The Irish "Invincibles"—Assassination of a Farmer—The Murder of Constable Cox—Shocking Outrage by "Moonlighters"—Serious Strike—A Baronet's Divorce Suit—Another Prosecution for Blasphemy—Such is Christian England.

WELL might Swinburne address the figure on the crucifix in these scathing words—

"The nineteenth wave of the ages rolls,
Now deathward since thy death and birth,
Hast thou fed full men's starved out souls?
Hast thou brought freedom upon earth?
Or are there less oppressions done,
In this wild world under the sun?"

THE Queen's Speech, while making no mention of the Affirmation Bill, doubtless out of deference to the wishes of a certain old lady, mentions that measures will be promptly submitted for the codification of Criminal Law. Such measures will be woefully incomplete if they do not make a complete sweep of all laws no longer in unison with the spirit of the times, and which if, like the blasphemy laws, not yet considered obsolete by City magistrates, ought long since to have become so.

IN 1696, Thomas Aitkenhead was banged in Edinburgh for calling the Bible Ezra's fables. In 1883 the orthodox Joe Cook admits in Boston that, "The so-called higher criticism has, perhaps, proved that Ezra participated in the codification of the priest's code in the Mosaic legislation." But, of course, Joseph would not allow that this meant that documents were circulated in the name of Moses that were the invention of a thousands years' later.

THE Rev. Hugh Macmillan, writing on the Marriage at Cana, declares that the wine drunk must have been intoxicating, for besides its saying the guests were "well drunk," the marriage taking place just before Passover, the wine must have been of the previous vintage and kept six or seven months. He, moreover, asserts that specimens of the wines of Palestine have frequently been analysed by experts, and they are never found to contain less than 10 to 20 per cent. of alcohol. This is an acid drop for our Gospel Temperance friends.

THE Rev. Charles Edward Taunton, vicar of St. John the Baptists', Harlow, has been committed for trial at the Essex Assizes, under the Burials' Act, on the charge of wilfully obstructing the funeral of Hannah Graves, a member of the Baptist persuasion.

GEORGE WILLIAM MITCHELL, a prominent member of the Salvation Army at Macclesfield, has been sent to prison for two months with hard labor for stealing lead.

THE *Echo* states that contrary to the general opinion that Irishmen who join the secret societies are lax in religious matters, Town Councillor Carey, the Invincible informer whose revelations of the assassinations he witnessed are the nine days' talk, was a very devout Roman Catholic. He attended mass daily at Westland Row Chapel, and was a leading member of a religious confraternity attached to that place.

THIS is the way a writer in the *Entr'acte* speaks of our heavenly home: "I hope I may not be charged with profanity, but it occurs to me that if there is that amount of trumpet-blowing going on in the 'land of the hereafter' that orthodox religionists aver, Wagner will be a great acquisition to the heavenly throng. His brass passages are quite revelations."

POPE says that "an honest man's the noblest work of God." A Methodist preacher in Washington adds that God Almighty hasn't had a job in that city for fifty years. We presume, then, that the Devil made Colonel Ingersoll.

A CORRESPONDENT sends us the following account of a modern miracle:—"There appeared in this week's *War Cry* a paragraph, in which it stated one D. Fisher, Sheffield, over forty years of age, was cured through prayer and anointing at Christmas, after suffering from paralysis since two years old, etc. Being in Sheffield on Friday last another gentleman and myself called to see what truth there was in the statement. His version is very different, and only shows how the credulous are gulled and the want of veracity on the part of the author. His version is:—"I was paralysed when two years old. When a lad I was much better, and gradually improved till fourteen, when I was able to use a stick in place of crutches. I have been better on and off since then. I have not taken anything intoxicating for five or six months. I did previously. About Christmas I was anointed, and prayer offered up. I now feel better, but am not restored. I feel sure I shall be (?). I never authorised the paragraph to be placed in the *War Cry*, and the state-

ments, except so far as the prayer and anointing is concerned, is not true. I am thirty-eight years old, not over forty."

SOME very cheering letters on prison discipline have appeared in the *Echo*. One correspondent signing himself "Veritas," and who ought therefore to be a truthful person, says that a friend of his who was sent to prison for an offence of which he was perfectly innocent, has returned home shattered in health, although he was a strong healthy man before. This is the sort of thing which Christians deliberately propose to inflict on those who criticise their creed.

DURING my night journey from Plymouth to London, the train ploughed its way through a mile of water which reached up to the footboard. A gentleman sitting opposite me, said that one farmer he knew had not seen his farm for over six months, and another had gone over his in a boat trying to find it with a long pole. It certainly seems that the celestial dynasty is getting water on the brain. Things are so bad that the Bishop of Salisbury advises his clergy to ask God Almighty to stop the rain or drain the land; but there is no hope of an answer, for poor old Jahveh has long been stone deaf.—G. W. F.

THERE is an oily humbug in the borough of Hackney who issues a weekly budget of piety and advertisements for what cash he can raise. His budget is "distributed gratis," probably because nobody would pay for it. One of his pious gushes is headed "Gambetta: Born Mud; Died Marble." The stupid scribe should carry his ineptitude to a better market. He might earn something on the *Evening News* or the *Rock*.

How tender these vilifying Christians are of their own skins. One of them wrote to the *Western Morning News* complaining of the brutal character of the title of one of Mr. Foote's lectures, "Buddha before Christ." The meek fellow was actually insulted by the statement of a chronological fact.

I CANNOT believe there's a hell,
That the merciful God made to frizz one;
But I'd like just to send for a spell
To some place as hot, the whole blessed lot,
Of the humbugs who tell us there is one.—J. H.

THE Essex county magistrates remind us of the French lady who said that God would think twice before damning a person of quality. On Saturday, the 17th inst., they were obliged to fine the Rev. Henry Clarke Hewson at Colchester for being drunk, driving furiously, committing an assault, and taking out his pocket knife to make incision in a neighbor's skin. A common man, and especially a poor man, would have been sent to gaol after a long sermon; but as Henry Clarke Hewson is a clergyman, the worthy magistrates only fined him, and they did even that with "the greatest pain and regret."

MAJOR TUCKER and eighteen salvation lunatics have been arrested for persisting against the law in marching in procession with bands of music and banners through the streets of Bombay. Singularly enough General Booth desires Earl Granville to inform foreign governments that the Salvation Army "is a movement which ought to command the respect and sympathy of every reasonable man." The canny Earl doesn't quite see it.

FATHER HYACINTHE has been trading on Gambetta ever since his death. He has lately paid a visit to the great orator's father, whom he finds a "profoundly religious" man. The mother also was a sincere Catholic, and on the occasion of her death Gambetta said something that induced somebody to think that he might have some belief in some future existence. On the strength of this astonishing information, Father Hyacinthe "is now completely satisfied that M. Léon Gambetta was a religious man, but was afraid to lose his political position by making an open confession." In his great haste to prove that Gambetta was religious, Father Hyacinthe would prove him to have been a hypocrite. His worst enemies never accused him of that crime, and on the whole it is high time that this French preacher desisted from his slanderous patronage of the great statesman. Somehow you always find a priest playing the part of a carrion crow over dead Freethinkers.

OUR gracious and beloved Queen was not able to open Parliament, but at Windsor last Monday she attended a soldier's funeral. Her Majesty is inordinately fond of the red-coats.

EVERYBODY is complaining of street ruffianism in London. The police are giving the metropolis up to these marauders; they are too busy watching people who sell the *Freethinker* to have any time for such prosaic work as keeping order and seeing that old gentlemen are not kicked to death by roughs.

SPECIAL NOTICE.

MR. FOOTE lectures three times to-day (Sunday, Feb. 25th) in the Camden Hall, Camden Street, Liverpool:—Morning at 11, "The Black Army;" afternoon at 3, "Gambetta: Republican and Freethinker;" evening at 7, "A Blasphemous Creed."

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

March 4th, Manchester; 11th, Edinburgh; 18th and 25th, Hall of Science, London.

April 1st, Milton Hall, London; 3rd, Walworth; 8th, Claremont Hall, London; 22nd, Leeds; 29th, Oldham.

May 6th and 13th, Claremont Hall, London.

CORRESPONDENTS.

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

RECEIVED WITH THANKS.—H. Rayner, J. C. W., J. S., W. T. L., Cato, K. S.

R. HOLLOWAY writes that he has taken six copies of this journal weekly and circulated them among his acquaintances. He finds that many are glad to get the *Freethinker* who are afraid to order it through a newsagent.

G. SMITH.—We have no room at present for the discussion. Try again when the prosecutions are over.

G. LEE.—Our statements about the Christian Evidence Society were based on its own balance-sheet. No doubt the underlings are poorly paid.

JANE M.—The picture you kindly sent us is mild to some old Bible illustrations. Christians used to think nothing of such things. Only a few days ago we saw an old copy of Bishop Bull on the Nicene Creed, and the very first headpiece was Susanna and the Elders.

W. DECABLE.—Thanks for the pamphlets and your good wishes.

G. V. BALL.—Of course the jury may be packed, but it is not of much use to challenge any of them without knowledge. You and all other earnest Freethinkers may rely on our perseverance and determination.

B. HOLLAND.—The extract will be useful. Thanks.

J. SANDERS.—Collecting sheets sent. We are pleased to hear your good opinion of *Progress*, and that the *Freethinker* is as "necessary as your bread."

F. W. A.—Of course there are many ways of dodging the enemy and we may have to resort to some of them. Anyhow we won't submit to the bigots.

B. BOUSALL.—It certainly is a good joke.

MR. FOOTE begs the correspondents who ask for private answers, to remember that he has already more than one man's work to do.

J. SANDERSON.—Thanks. We hope to satisfy the Jarrow friends before the end.

J. SALT.—Your notice reached us on Wednesday morning, twenty-four hours too late.

J. ALLEN writes that the *Freethinker* makes a capital valentine, and that he has bought several copies to cheer up the hearts of his pious friends with.

W. E. PETHERICK.—We shall be happy to publish the acknowledgments if you send them up to date by Tuesday morning, and send your address with them.

T. K.—We will inquire about it.

ANONYMOUS letters cannot be attended to. Correspondents must send name and address, "not necessarily for publication, but as a guarantee of good faith."

J. C. ROOTHAM.—The extract you send has been often reprinted. We however thank you all the same.

A DEEP SYMPATHISER IN FREETHOUGHT, Brentford.—We thank you for your efforts on our behalf and send you a subscription list. We have no doubt that the readers of the *Freethinker* in your place as elsewhere are vastly superior in character to its maligners.

R. BROWN.—The Anglo Israelites are not worth the attention of a sensible man. We expect the two tribes will be lost before the other ten are found.

T. R. HINDE.—Thanks. The bigots shall not put down the *Freethinker* if we can help it, and they will certainly be defeated in the end if the Freethinkers of England stand by us.

C. B. NASH.—You can procure the Apocryphal Gospels from our office; price 2s. 6d., postage 6d.

JOSEPH THOMPSON.—We are always pleased to hear from working men like yourself. You may not be scholars, thanks to the criminal stupidity of governments that waste money on war which should be spent on education, but you are worth infinitely more than lazy, bigoted and impudent drones.

THOS. WOOLWELL.—Scraps are often crowded out, yet may appear in due course. Thanks for the cuttings.

JOSEPH SHORT.—Thanks for your good wishes. We send subscription sheets.

W. COX sends a parcel containing a set of the *Freethinker* for twelve months, to be sold for the benefit of the Defence Fund. Who bids?

E. WILSON.—We have sent the libel on to Mr. Bradlaugh, but it is probably beneath his notice. We thank you all the same.

W. BRELY.—Thanks. We are delighted at being cheered on by old Freethinkers, who lose no courage as they advance in years.

W. LUND.—Received. We note the numbers.

MR. GOEDLOED, 29 Foley Street, Gt. Titchfield Street, W., sells the *Freethinker* and other Secular publications.

D. MCGREGOR.—It certainly is a surprising thing for one retail newsagent to sell 240 copies of a Freethought journal. Thanks for your good wishes for *Progress*. It does promise to be a permanent success.

G. MIDDLETON.—We share your hope that the Blasphemy Laws will be wiped out of the statute-book as the result of this struggle.

A. GIBBINS.—We do not know. It is out of print now.

H. PERKINS.—If your newsagent will not supply you remove your custom elsewhere, or order direct from Stonecutter Street.

B. LAMB.—The cheapest reliable book on Buddhism is the manual by T. Rhys Davids, published at 2s. 6d.

J. HARVEY.—The lines,

"Freedom never
Dreams that God will damn for ever
All who think those things untrue
Of which priests make such ado."

are from the 58th stanza of "The Masque of Anarchy," by Shelley.

X.—Darwin's "Origin of Species" is published in one volume at 7s. 6d.

FREETHINKERS near Barnsley desirous of forming a Society are invited to communicate with X., care of Newsagent, Ardsley, near Barnsley.

SPECIAL.

THE prosecution of Mr. Cattell has frightened the newsagents, and we have received notice from several wholesale houses that they can no longer supply it. Unless counteracted this will seriously damage our circulation. We ask all our friends to assist us in checking this worst form of intimidation. Any news vendor who cannot get supplied through his wholesale agent can have a parcel sent to him direct, or to any London address for enclosure. It would be well if some Freethought news vendor in every large town where there is any difficulty in procuring this journal, would constitute himself agent for the district. He could have down a weekly parcel, and supply all the other retail sellers at the usual rate. Any individual Freethinker who is unable to obtain this journal in the ordinary way, can have it sent by post for a penny-farthing a week. We shall be glad to receive any further suggestions on this subject.

SUGAR PLUMS.

Knowledge has a capital paper from the pen of Richard A. Proctor, on "The Abuse of Evolution," by that charlatan Talmage. After giving evidence of "his knowledge, his familiarity with modern theories of biological evolution, his taste, his humor, and his regard for truth," Mr. Proctor says "Mr. Talmage also gives evidence of the fervid eloquence with which he can preach (at £100 a night, with threats of lawsuit if the sum he reduced to £50). But we dare not quote what he says in this way; all classes of our readers would be offended with his coarse and blatant nonsense."

NEARLY three centuries ago there was at least earnestness in the arguments urged by priests, monks, and friars against the fearful doctrine that the earth goes round the sun. Unwise though their conduct, and unjudging their intolerance, they believed what they taught, and in this day belief was natural enough. It is encouraging to find that in our day the advance of science is only opposed by the untaught and the foolish, only abused by the ranter and Jack-Pudding.

REGINALD STUART POOLE, the Egyptologist, writing to the *Academy*, says: "Your critic doubts the five millenniums of Egyptian art before Christ. Mariette and his followers put the first works in building certainly, and in sculpture probably, far back in the fifth thousand B.C."

EVEN the Jews are becoming rationalistic. In a recent article the *Jewish World* pooch-poochs the idea of a restoration of the Jews to Palestine, which, it points out, is impracticable, because the Jews no longer form one people, but are separated from each other in ideas, language, and habits. It alleges that such a restoration is opposed to the real Jewish mission, that of propagating a sensible view of life and its duties, and the yearning for it was only the outcome of the delirious hopes of ages of persecution.

THE wise resolution of the Government to bring in an Affirmation Bill was doubtless accelerated by the disposition shown by Mr. Bradlaugh and the country to wait no longer for a settlement of a question involving the rights of constituencies. The demonstration in Trafalgar Square, whatever estimate may be taken of its numbers (and the conflicting accounts of the various papers were most amusing), was a magnificent and, considering the great pressure, a most orderly assembly.

ANY disorder which took place outside the House of Parliament was due to the officiousness of some of the mounted policemen. One inspector wantonly rode over and crippled a poor fellow unable to get out of his way. Another sapient gentleman in blue sternly denied the Duke of Norfolk admittance to Palace Yard, and, upon being informed that he was obstructing a peer, told his grace that he looked more like "a Bradlaughite."

THE *Pall Mall Gazette* calls the *Spectator* to account for describing the men who met in Trafalgar Square on the 15th as "roughs." It says that, "the immense majority of those present were workmen, and they could not have behaved more respectably if they had been bishops in convocation assembled."

THE Government seems likely to carry the Affirmation Bill, and we do not believe the Lords will throw it out. This is a signal triumph after all, and the Freethought party, which has been the backbone of the agitation for Mr. Bradlaugh's rights, should recognise its strength in the country, and continue to use it.

LAST Monday morning Mr. Foote moved in person at the Court of Queen's Bench, before Justices Manistey and Matthews, for a writ of certiorari to remove the indictment in the second prosecution of the *Freethinker*, from the Old Bailey to the supreme court. Their Lordships granted a rule *nisi*.

THE third (March) number of *Progress* is now ready, and we believe that it will be found more interesting than either of its predecessors. Mr. Wheeler contributes a full account of Past Prosecutions for Blasphemy, which is especially important just now. Dr. Aveling continues his series on Darwin's Generalisations, and Mr. Symes writes in his most vigorous style. Mr. Foote opens with a political article, "After Mr. Gladstone?" Not the least welcome feature of this number is the first portrait and biography of the French Radical leader, M. Clémenceau, that have appeared in England.

THERE are not many Christians, notwithstanding that they possess the only true religion and all the virtues, whose death causes such sorrow as did the death of Sir Salar Jung. The Calcutta correspondent of the *Times* states that on the occasion of his funeral "the wailing cries of the poor who had often experienced the deceased Minister's charity, are described as having been heartrending, and even the Arabs and Rohillas who swarm in Hyderabad, are said to have flung themselves on the ground, frantic with grief, crying, 'Why were we not taken, and he left?'" Yet the generous ruler and his loving subjects are all outside the pale of salvation. David is in heaven, and they will roast in hell. Christianity is a noble creed when you understand it properly.

WE shall publish next week in pamphlet form Shelley's splendid letter to Lord Ellenborough on the committal of Daniel Isaac Eaton in 1812, for publishing Paine's "Age of Reason." The title will be "Shelley on Blasphemy," and the price twopence.

QUERIES ABOUT GOD.

WHO, what, where, and how, is God. The answer is, nobody knows. The archbishops and bishops and all the clergy are thus veritable Agnostics; with this distinction, that they pretend to know concerning the unknowable what other and more honest Agnostics confess they do not know. For this pretence, so piously and profitably made, they draw heavy salaries, whilst the Freethinker pays the penalty of his honesty by getting nothing but vilification and persecution. Such is the reward which virtue reaps in this degenerate priest-ridden land! If, however, knowledge of God is scarce, belief concerning him is very abundant. But belief and knowledge very little resemble each other. Knowledge is fact, but belief mere conjecture. And the idea of God's existence, after all the strivings of superstitious men to include it amongst the facts of knowledge, still obstinately refuses to descend from its native region of myth, mystery,

and dark conjecture. We need not wonder then, if to-day, after thousands of years of priestly supremacy, the world is less inclined than ever to bow the knee before the long-revered but now repudiated idol of Deity. Man has deserted God because God has deserted man. Great was man's faith once, unlimited his adoration of God, but the Deity was ungratefully deaf to all entreaty, caring nothing and doing nothing for the relief of man's wants, and the answering of his superstitious prayers. A God that hides himself in the clouds must not be surprised if man ceases to regard him as a real existence but only as a phantom and a myth.

Who is God? Will the rival religionists ever settle this perplexing question? Is he a Christian, a Jew, a Moslem, a Parsee, a Buddhist, or what? Who shall decide when doctors of divinity disagree? There is no approach to unanimity amongst God-believers as to the identity of the Deity; no, not even amongst two members of a single sect. Each age, religion, sect, congregation, and individual pictures forth a god more or less differing in type and attributes from the god imagined by other ages, religions, sects, congregations and individuals. The Greek Jupiter of two thousand years ago is now as dead as Jehovah will doubtless be before many more generations have sped away. Even the carnivorous Jehovah of Mosaic memory has long been transformed in the metaphysical mystery of the Trinity, and has had to relinquish the substantial sacrifices of mutton and beef for the cheap presents of prayer and praise. And signs are not wanting that even those barren honors will soon be taken from him, and that he will be dismissed and superannuated like Jupiter and crowds of other antiquated good-for-nothing gods. Nothing can save him from the oblivion which has converted into contemptible curiosities the dead deities of former times. The human mind, which in a barbarous age conceived him barbarous, which civilised him as it civilised, which refined him with its refinement, which pruned his crudities and cruelties, and softened and humanised him as itself grew less crude and cruel and more humane, will eventually discard every vestige of its old superstition and bury its barbarous God in the tomb of its own barbarities. From that tomb the triumphant resurrection of humanity will take place to make its ascension, never before possible, to a real heaven of terrestrial peace and goodwill.

What is God? A spirit. What is a spirit? "God" knows. And who is he? Nobody knows. The spiritual appertains to the immaterial or ghostly. But concerning the immaterial, the non-material, nothing is or can be known, for man's experience is demonstrably confined to material things, and, therefore, even if we assumed the existence of anything outside the realm of matter, we are not, and can never become, experimentally cognisant thereof. Ghosts are equally unknown and mythical; believed in by the ignorant and credulous, but pooh-poohed by every sane-minded mortal. They are as difficult to define as Spirit, with which, indeed, they are synonymous. Ghosts, holy or unholy, are the silly dreams of superstitious weaklings and are as fictitious as fairies and sphynxes. Ghosts haunt the dreams of midnight, or prowl about in the darkness when all is still as death; they shun the factory or the office where all is light and life and bustle. Prudent things are ghosts; they don't like to be found out. They resemble in this respect those ghosts *par excellence*, the gods who love the darkness of human ignorance as much as they hate the light of science and freethought.

Where is God? In heaven! Whereabouts is heaven? Above the sky! Which sky? That above us in England, or that above the Antipodes? Nobody knows! Where, and how far is it above one of these skies? Again, no one knows. Nobody knows anything about God, but, strange to say, damnation will be the penalty we shall have to pay for our ignorance. At that rate, we fear that every Christian will be damned, from the Archbishop of Canterbury to Sir Henry Tyler. God have mercy upon them, miserable sinners!

We are also told that God is infinite, and is thus everywhere and everything. If that be so, God is blessed in heaven, burnt in hell, and bothered and blarneyed on earth. Who would be a god at such a price? We would advise him for his comfort's sake, to lop off some of his superfluous infinitude, and no longer fill the universe with his immensity, which by this time must have grown too irksome even for a God. He would doubtless be more at ease if he were a little less bulky.

How is God? Here, again, the God-ites are in blissful

ignorance as ever. They *presume* he is happy, and that is all. We greatly doubt the truth of this conjecture. We cannot conceive that any decent god *could* be happy knowing his responsibility for the misery on earth and in hell of countless millions of his creatures. Any human father who could view the sufferings of his children without compassion would justly be regarded as a fiend; and how shall we condemn the brutal indifference of a God, who can be happy amidst the woes and wrongs of his earthly children? Those who assert that the Deity looks on, unmoved, at the aggregate misery of earth and hell must credit him with the heart of a tiger and the ferocity of a savage. No god of goodness *could* be happy knowing either that he caused this misery and cannot prevent it, or that it is beyond his power to dry up the fountain of human tears. Having regard to the appalling sufferings of man, we do not hesitate to affirm that unless God is deficient in that blessed quality of mercy which is truly divine, he must be supremely wretched, despite the fulsome flatteries and ceaseless psalm-singing of fawning courtiers both in heaven and on earth. Wretched at the sad results to humanity of his crimes and blundering, wretched with remorse for his past misdeeds, wretched at the cheerless thought that the mischief done cannot be undone, and that innocent man has suffered for the wrongdoings of God.

The kingdom of man is at hand. The gods have had a long innings, and now it is the turn of humanity. Long have they rode rough-shod over the prostrate form of humanity, chaining the liberties of man to their triumphant chariot. The credulous devotion of superstitious slaves made possible this huge crime, but now the day of man's complete emancipation from gods, priests and superstitions is dawning. We say most devoutly:—"Thy kingdom come, oh humanity, to break down the time-honored tyranny of theology." Then shall the glory of humanity fill the earth as the waters cover the sea, and the gods become the shrivelled mummies of man's once-dreaded tyrants.

W. H.

REVIEW.

What is Religion? a Vindication of Freethought. By C. N. Annotated by Robert Lewins, M.D., with an appendix on Hylo-Idealism, etc. London: W. Stewart and Co., 41 Farringdon Street, E.C. 1883.

For ages the world has been disputing upon the question to which an answer is sought to be given in this well-written little book, which affords a slight historical sketch of how far it has gone astray. The answer suggested is "the promotion of human happiness," and the author remarks that in our day "when art, morality, thought, politics, and education are finally separated from religion; when the living soul of ancient theosophies has departed; when the stern beauty of 'divine philosophy' has well nigh ceased to attract even youthful votaries, our only hope of salvation lies in the conscientious endeavor to draw new life from nature, and to make science itself a wellspring of ideal truth." A great part of the book is occupied with discussions upon Hylo-Idealism, which is Idealism, although opponents would call it Materialistic Monism.

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

PROFANE JOKES.

WHO first introduced salt provisions into the navy?—Noah when he took Ham into the ark.

MR. GRIMM says he appreciated the motive of his friends in the next room at the hotel, who, when he was very sick and likely to die, thought, as they had a piano, they'd cheer him up with a little music, and got together and sang, "Nearer, my God, to thee," but he says the air somehow didn't cheer him much.

BROTHER JOHNSON to colored congregation:—"All you wicked darkies will go to dat ere place where dere am weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth—and you ole niggahs in de corner dat hab got no teeth needent laugh, cos you'll hab to gum it!"

AN actor playing at the Queen's Theatre, Manchester, had ordered his landlady to provide a sole for his supper, on arriving home after the performance, he let himself in with his latch key and found the old lady had retired for the night, leaving on his plate a scrap of paper on which was written, "Mr. Barrett, your soul is in the oven." At which he drily remarked, "Good God, so soon; I didn't expect it these twenty years."

At a recent School Board examination, one of the questions in the religious department was, Who was Esau? The answer given was, "Esau was a man who wrote fables, and who sold the copyright to a publisher for a bottle of potash."

IT was a brighter scholar who, when asked to name the best books, said the Bible and Bradshaw; one tells you the way to heaven, and the other what time the train starts.

A PAIR of scissors were lost, and the little one suggested that a prayer be said, asking that they might be found. There was, however, a lurking consciousness that there ought to be a combination of prayer and work, so the youthful philosopher said, "Now, mother, I'm tired; so I'll pray while you hunt."

A BISHOP and a young curate were at sea; it was a rough night, the vessel rolling terribly; all at once there is an awful crash; the water is heard rushing in. The curate ran on deck, and soon returned to the bishop, who asked, in broken accents, what had happened. "Bishop," said the faithful curate, "in two minutes we shall be in heaven." "Good God," said the bishop, "I hope not."

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MR. J. SYMES' ENGAGEMENTS.

February 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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