

PROSECUTED FOR BLASPHEMY.

THE FREETHINKER.

EDITED BY G. W. FOOTE.

Sentenced to Twelve Months' Imprisonment for Blasphemous Libel.

Interim Editor, EDWARD B. AVELING, D.Sc., Fellow of University College, London.

William James Ramsey, as Proprietor, sentenced to Nine Months' Imprisonment; and Henry Arthur Kemp, as Printer and Publisher, sentenced to Three Months' Imprisonment.

Vol. III.—No. 20.]

MAY 20, 1883.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]

IN SEARCH OF SIGNATURES.

THE memorials on behalf of our imprisoned friends have been flowing in from all parts of the country and from all sorts and conditions of men. The Honorable Adolphus Liddell, or whoever represents him at the Home Office, has acknowledged the receipt of many score of memorials, bearing many thousands of signatures. We have in one of our pigeon-holes a large number of copies of the official forms.

"SIR,—I am directed by the Secretary of State for the Home Department, to acknowledge the receipt of your Memorial in behalf of G. W. Foote, W. J. Ramsey, and H. Kemp.—I am Sir, your obedient servant,
A. F. O. LIDDELL."

We await with great anxiety the result of these persistent efforts on the part of so many people. Whilst the quantity of names sent in has been very large, their quality is, also, interesting. Of course, all Freethinkers have signed. The avowed atheists, so irksome to the Tory party, apparently on account of their exhibiting an honesty that is to them at once a wonder and a reproach, have signed to a man and woman. But an immense number of Christians have helped. The Guild of St. Matthew, with its brave secretary, Mr. Frederic Verinder, has done splendid work. The members of that Guild have experienced far more pain by reason of our attacks upon Christianity than was felt by even the Corporation of the City of London. The pretended horror of that leading old man in the forensic theatre, Sir Hardinge Giffard, is but a poor burlesque of the real feelings with which such men as those Churchmen must regard our intentional caricatures of persons and events that are to us ridiculous, but to them sacred. Yet these religious men are so honest, and have so clear a sight for principles that they see through all the non-essential things, objectionable to them as they are, to the one central fact, that freedom is assailed. The thanks of all honest men are their due.

The "respectable" portion of the public will be in especial fluttered by the remarkable memorial that we were able, in conjunction with a well-known philosophical writer, to forward to Sir William Harcourt in the course of last week. The germ of this notable list of names took origin from a like petition on behalf of Prince Krapotkine, that bore the signatures of sixty English-speaking men, almost all of whom were distinguished in literature, art, science or politics. Wherever the address could be obtained of one who had signed the Krapotkine petition, the individual was by letter asked to give his signature to the memorial on behalf of the men imprisoned for blasphemy. It was hoped that "The righteous spirit that bids you intervene when injustice is done in a foreign land, will, I doubt not, urge you to appeal against the infliction in your own country of a punishment out of harmony with this age, and antagonistic to all intellectual freedom."

Of the people to whom we wrote, many, alas! did not reply at all, and a few refused. Professor Geikie, for example, writes:—

"I regret that I cannot comply with your request I don't think we have anything to fear in this country for freedom of discussion. One may hold any view he likes,

and preach it as much and as often as he may—no one will touch him. But, surely, it is possible to do so without needlessly violating all decency, and shocking one's neighbors?"

Professor Geikie, like so many others, misses the whole point of the principle involved, and accepts, without having seen our paper, the biased judgment of interested enemies. Professor Geikie now knows, that in the opinion of Lord Coleridge, who did see the *Freethinker*, there was no violation of decency whatever. Professor Blackie writes:—

"I am sorry that I have not time to enter into the details of these blasphemy cases; and, therefore, cannot sign the memorial you were so kind as to send me. Of course, the statutes against Blasphemy ought to be repealed; but there are ways of speaking and promoting blasphemy which go under the category of insult to the public feeling, and call for some castigation."

Characteristic Joseph Cowen writes a characteristic note:—

"It would be of no use signing a memorial to the Home Secretary. It will not in any way help Mr. Foote's case. You should get signatures from more orthodox supporters of the ministry than I am, if the memorial is to be of any value. I entirely sympathise, however, with the subject, and I think Mr. Foote and his associates have been most hardly dealt with."

Mr. Cowen forgets that the great value of his name is in its influence upon public opinion. Mr. W. E. Slade, editor of the *Magazine of Art*, writes:—

"I am not interested in the question you do me the honor to bring before me, and I cannot sign the petition which accompanies your letter."

Is it not a disheartening thought that a man of presumed education, culture, and refined feelings, can write thus in respect to the imprisonment of three of his fellow men? This is the superfine affectation that only too frequently disgraces and dishonors art. Finally, as far as disagreeables are concerned, Mr. G. J. Holyoake writes as follows:—

"I understood that Prince Kropotkine was willing to abandon the theory of blowing up the President who liberated him, else I should not have signed the petition. Neither, myself, when I was in prison, nor any of my colleagues in like condition, suffered anyone to petition for "mercy" or remission of sentence. Such a prayer implies a renunciation of doing the same thing again; at least not immediately. If they mean this I will sign the petition. If they do not, the man would seem a fool who would ask the Home Secretary to enable them to give him the same trouble again. Although they were indicted for "blasphemy," they were convicted of outrage which is the ruin of the Freethought cause, and I am not enthusiastic about its being ruined. For the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws I will sign any reasonable petition, as I belong to a society for repealing them."

It is for man very difficult to understand how any one can stop to discuss niceties of language and haggle over terms that are conventionalities when the question of men's freedom is involved. Later, and of course without any further solicitation, Mr. Holyoake sent another note containing these words: "A petition not for 'mercy' but for abatement of sentence on the ground of its excessiveness

might be drawn on behalf of public sentiment which I would gladly sign—not compromising Foote and Co.”

Many of the distinguished men to whom we had written gave ready response, and in more than one case expressed their indignation at the revival of religious persecution in England. Then the thinker to whom reference has been made came to our aid, and in less than a fortnight some two hundred signatures were obtained. The list included the following names: Rev. J. Llewellyn Davies, Rev. Dr. Abbott, Rev. A. Ainger, Rev. Stopford A. Brooke, Rev. Dr. A. M. Fairbairn (President of the Congregational Union), Rev. R. Glover (President of the Baptist Union), Rev. J. G. Rogers, Rev. J. Aldis, Rev. Charles Beard, Rev. Dr. Crosskey, P. A. Taylor, M.P., Hon. E. Lyulph Stanley, M.P., Charles Maclaren, M.P.; editors of the *Daily News*, *Spectator*, *Academy*, *Manchester Examiner*, and *Liverpool Daily Post*; Herbert Spencer, Leslie Stephen, J. Cotter Morison, Francis Galton, Prof. Huxley, Prof. Tyndall, Prof. Knight, Prof. E. S. Beesly, Prof. H. S. Foxwell, Prof. R. Adamson, Prof. G. Croom Robertson, Prof. E. Ray Lankester, Prof. Drummond, W. Aldis Wright, D. Macallister, C. Crompton, Q.C., E. Bond, T. Rhys Davids, T. Smith Osler, the Mayor of Birmingham, George Dixon, Dr. J. Hughlings Jackson, Dr. H. Maudsley, Jonathan Hutchinson, John Pettie, George Du Maurier, John Collier, George Bullen, Admiral Maxse, Lieut-Col. Osborn, James Sully, Frederic Harrison, Henry Sidgwick.

Such a representative list has not been issued in regard to any great public question for years. We cannot but hope that such an expression of educated opinion from men so diverse in thought, and yet all so distinguished as thinkers, must have the effect that all lovers of justice desire.

EDWARD B. AVELING, D.Sc.

MEMORIAL.

“To the Right Hon. the Secretary of State for the Home Department.

“The Humble Memorial of the undersigned.
Sheweth

“That George William Foote, William James Ramsey, and Henry Kemp were on Monday, March 5th, found guilty of blasphemy at common law and sentenced to imprisonment, respectively, G. W. Foote, 12 months; W. J. Ramsey, 9 months; and H. Kemp, 3 months.

“Your memorialists respectfully submit that such an enforcement of laws against Blasphemy is out of accord with the spirit of the age, and humbly pray the mercy of the Crown in remission of the sentences imposed.”

Friends will do good work by copying this out and obtaining as many signatures as possible to each copy. The Memorial and the signatures should be sent to the Home Secretary as speedily as possible. It is particularly requested that no other form may be used than the one given above.

RESOLUTIONS.

The following resolution was proposed at a general meeting of the members of the United Radical Club, Hackney, on Sunday, April 29th, 1883, and carried unanimously:—“That this meeting is of opinion that the recent sentences passed by Justice North, on Messrs. Foote, Ramsey, and Kemp, for blasphemous libel, are both unjust and tyrannical, and we are further of opinion that the renewal of the Blasphemy Laws is to be deplored, inasmuch as we regard them as a menace to freedom of speech, and of the press, and out of harmony with the spirit of the times. We therefore urge upon the Government the imperative necessity of their immediate repeal.

The following Resolution was passed at the Tower Hamlets Institute: “This council in consideration of the fact that two juries have been unable to express an opinion upon the reputed blasphemous nature of the *Freethinker*, earnestly requests the Home Secretary will take steps to remit the unexpired sentences upon Messrs. Foote, Ramsey, and Kemp.

A LETTER FROM THE SYDNEY SECULAR SOCIETY

DEAR SIR AND BROTHER,—I am instructed by the unanimous vote of the members of the above-named Association of Freethinkers to convey to you a resolution passed at a general meeting, convened on receipt of a cablegram conveying the intelligence that you had been sentenced to imprisonment and hard labor for what conventionalism calls blasphemy, but

which we are prone to believe was the utterance, in your well-known trenchant fashion, of some unpleasant truth.

Living, as we do, at the antipodes of the country in which it is still possible that “Heroes and Martyrs” may be garnered in dungeons and subjected to indignities little less hard to bear than those your pen has pictured in sad days we thought gone by, it may be a consolation to you to know that you are held in such estimation here that we all feel the burden will be borne with heroic fortitude, and that you will come out from bondage with renewed vigor and determination to pursue the same bold course your *own* daring and ardent spirit has indicated to you through life. Nevertheless, a pleasant word from the Sunny South may cheer you in your solitude, and make you, whom we know to be brave and strong, still braver and still stronger, and it is in this light we send you a message conveying our sympathy with you and sorrow at your having fallen a victim to the intolerance and bigotry of this dark age.

The resolution passed at the meeting was as follows:—“That the corresponding secretary be instructed to convey to Mr. Foote, through Mr. Charles Bradlaugh, M.P. for Northampton, the deep sympathy and commiseration of the society and their indignation at the author of “Heroes and Martyrs of Freethought” being added to the long list of those who have suffered through a manly and emphatic utterance of the truth.”—I am, dear Sir, yours fraternally and faithfully,

C. JONES, Cor. Sec.

THE DIVINE BURLESQUE.

THE world has had from Dante the “Divine Comedy;” why should it not have from me the “Divine Burlesque”? For what is all this notion of the Bible deity but a burlesque—a travesty, the humor of which is in the fact that serious and sober-minded people affect to witness it with the same gravity as they would the acts of a tragedy? But it is a burlesque, and nothing more. Let me give a scene from it:—

SCENE 1.—*Up Above. God the Father discovered, surrounded by angels, saints, elders, and beasts.*

CHORUS.

OMNES: Happy saints, all free from care,
Live we in the open air;
Nought to do but take our ease,
Loaf around where'er we please;
Let the merry trumpet sound
As we watch the world go round.

(*Saints join hands and dance round as they sing.*)

GOD THE FATHER:

The world, you truly say, it still turns round;
But much I fear 'twill wickedly be found.
The folks down there are getting worse and worse;
This fact I mention, of my wrath precursor.
I've sent them plagues; a very decent flood;
I've sent them prophets, fond of war and blood.
I've sent them every ill—

They've not repented;

They've had their will,

And yet they're not contented.

And now at last, my son—my sole begotten,
The child of Mary and— You've not forgotten.

ST. PETER: Do tell us all about it, God the Father.

G. THE F.: Would you then like to hear?

ALL: O, rather, rather.

Song—Air: Juryman's Chorus in “Trial by Jury.”

G. THE F.: When I was a rather young god
My morals were not very steady;
That fact though is not very odd,
For youth is to sin often ready;
Though now a respectable chap,
Of heaven the superintendent,
In those days I cared not a rap—
Of virtue I was independent.

Though now quite *au fait*

I was then rather gay,

Singing so merrily, tral-la-lay;

Tral-la-lay, tral-la-lay,

I sang so merrily, tral-la-lay.

CHORUS: Tral-la-lay, etc.

G. THE F.: Enough—no more. I think the story
Scarce proper for the ears of saints in glory.
What more to say? Both men and gods will
go it,
Only they don't care that the world should
know it.

(*Scene changes.*)

This scene has been written for the purpose of showing that the "sacred lamp" of burlesque is not as yet gone out.

H. J. BECKWITH.

THE AFFIRMATION BILL.

AND so the Tory bigots have won another victory! So much the worse for Tory bigotry. I say Tory bigotry; for there is no other bigotry involved in this continued opposition to Mr. Bradlaugh and all that is just and honorable. No Liberal voted against the Affirmation Bill; for every Liberal is willing to share his political privileges with every other citizen. That is the only test of Liberalism. The man who calls himself a Liberal, and yet refuses the full rights of citizenship to another man because of his religious opinions or the lack of them is only a bigot at best. Yet there is one very important sense in which I am delighted with the action of the bigots and the defeat of the Government. Let me not be misunderstood. I am deeply sorry for all the worry and slander to which Mr. Bradlaugh is so incessantly subjected; for the constant and outrageous insults hurled at his constituents; for the disgusting hypocrisy and other forms of immorality indulged in by the Tories; for the disgrace inflicted upon that dearest part of our Constitution, the House of Commons, for the wholesale villainies of newspapers and churches springing upon such perennial and abundant crops around the oath-question. No man regrets all this more than myself; and yet there is a sense in which I am delighted.

I am delighted that bigotry should show itself in its truest colors. For years past some of us have been ceaselessly exposing, by tongue and pen, the nature and fruits of the Christian and other religions. The *Freethinker* was started specially for that purpose. Many an half-hearted Secularist has lifted his voice in unison with the pulpits against our methods of attack, and in semi-apologies for the popular creed. To-day we stand before the world fully justified. The bigots are our best friends. They have done even worse than we ever ventured to prophesy; they have exceeded our highest hopes in that direction. For my part, next to seeing a crying nuisance removed, nothing is so gratifying as to find that nuisance rendering itself absolutely unbearable; for when that stage is reached, then the inevitable follows, and the nuisance is disposed of almost by common consent.

We are fast verging on the time when that will be the case with Christianity in this country, or, at least, with the recognition of that religion, or any other, by this State. The poor people have now before their eyes a glaring proof that their true interests cannot be secured while Christianity is permitted to rule in these realms. Three honest Freethinkers are now suffering imprisonment as felons. For what? Because they have exposed and ridiculed the brutality and absurdities of the State creed. Though, most probably, the prosecution for blasphemy game is now played out. If, however, Justice North had behaved with common decency in the first trial, the probability is that the country would have allowed that sort of iniquity to continue as long as the Tylers cared to institute proceedings against honest publications. That judge, however, so far outraged public decency that the country was roused; and now the Lord Chief Justice, as far as we can see, has rendered a blasphemy prosecution an impossibility for all future time. At least, that is my rendering of his last summing-up in connexion with the flight of the prosecutors. They are now fairly *hors de combat*; and it seems hardly probable that any Christian will be bold and stupid enough just yet to set the law again in motion to crush the *Freethinker*.

So, I expect, it will be with the Oath—by and bye; not just yet. What with undiluted bigotry, Tory pretence, the ungovernable rage of Parnellites, and the voluntary unmasking of those Tories who won seats in Parliament under false pretences, those spies in the Liberal camp, whose sole office is to assist the Tory party by betraying the Government—through this combination of enemies the Affirmation Bill has been smitten and for the moment rendered helpless, though by no means destroyed. Thus the bigots have shown once more they prefer hypocrisy to honesty. Thus again have they insisted that whoever shall enter their Christian assembly (consisting of Jews, Atheists, Catholics, Protestants, and what not) must before all things throw open contempt and insult upon Christianity by vio-

lating one of its plain commands before he can be permitted to take his seat. He must swear upon a book which absolutely forbids swearing! He must invoke a god; but which god is not decided. All those who had any respect for their religion tried to sweep away this last rag of intolerance and absurdity; but the bigots have won another victory—at the expense of their creeds.

The delightful state of uncertainty regarding the deity invoked in the oath will, possibly, become apparent even to the younger and least hardened bigots ere long. As matters stand, a Jew may swear by any of the authorised gods of the Old Testament, and they are many; for example, the Elohim (the numbers not ascertained), El Shadai, Elioun, Adrin or Adonis, Yahveh, Zazel (to whom the scape-goat was sacrificed). The Christian may invoke one god or four, viz., the father of god, the mother of god, the son, and the holy ghost. The miser may invoke his gold; while the glutton and debauchee may invoke the gods they most devoutly worship. The only god (or goddess) left to the Atheist is an ethereal one, an ideal—nobler and greater than all other deities, viz., Truth or Honor—a deity they hate in that honorable assembly!

The truth of all this was bound at some time to dawn upon the popular understanding; and the action of the bigots is the best calculated imaginable to open the eyes of the nation. Once more it becomes painfully evident that Tories and traitors never so devoutly unite as when they can obstruct progress or perpetuate some filthy remnant of barbarism. I am glad, therefore, that the enemies of all good have once more succeeded in exhibiting themselves in their true character. Now the nation understands them and will know well what to do. I wish Mr. Gladstone would appeal to the country. He will have to before this business is settled. The sooner now the better.

JOSEPH SYMES.

SKELETON SERMON.—VIII.

"Eber, Peleg, Reu."—1 Chron. i., 25.

Danger of wresting scripture to one's destruction. . . . This beautiful verse must be read with context—"Shelah, Eber, Peleg, Reu, Serug."

I.—A word to the aged. . . . Imagine Shelah, a truly grand old man, in the year of his death, aged 433. . . . God has blessed him with a son to prop his declining years—Eber, aged 403 (See Genesis ix., 14). . . . But alas! where are the others? . . . Eber's promising lad, Peleg, has been dead 130 years, Peleg's son, Reu, for exactly a century, and young Serug, though 126 years younger than his great great grandfather has predeceased him by 77 years, being prematurely cut off at the age of 230.

II.—A word to the young. . . . You are not too young to die. . . . You too may be cut off and leave behind your sorrowing great great grandparents.—Amen.

EXHIBITS AT THE FISHERIES EXHIBITION.

1. SAVED soles.
2. The too small fishes on which the 5000 fed.
3. The scales in which Belshazzar was weighed and found wanting.
4. The hard row of the apostles, when they toiled all night and caught nothing.
5. The whitening with which the Pharisees whitened their sepulchres, and the characters of Sir Henry Tyler and Mr. Newdegate.
6. The many 'erring.
7. The cruise of oil (whaler's men).
8. Jonah's whale (by special permission of the zoologists).
9. Jonah's wail is expected. It has been heard of.
10. White-bait-devilled (Potiphar's wife).
11. Sam-on (an intoxicated prophet): more reely than he ought to be.
12. Another way: sermons in stones.
13. E-ly-shah.
14. Eely jar (on the mantle-helf).
15. The 'eel that was bruised by the serpent's head.
16. The perch of Zaccheas.
17. Mr. Sturgeon, for the feast of tabernacles.
18. Smelt (by Lazarus).

QUESTION to a little boy in the infant class of a Sunday-school: "Have you learned anything during the week?" "Oh yes. Never to trump your partner's trick."

ACID DROPS.

MR. JOHN MAYNE was arrested the other day, for systematically issuing and floating shares which had really no existence. Mr. Mayne has always been prominently connected with religious work.

"THE House of Lords rose on Thursday, May 3rd, it being Ascension Day." Who was the handicapper we wonder, who gave the democratic lecturer of Galilee 2000 years start?

WE understand that the statement, as to the District Railway Company contemplating the construction of a line beneath St. Paul's Cathedral, involving the erection of a "blow-hole" near the high altar, is not authentic.

THE *Belfast News Letter*, a Noachian journal of ultra-Tory propensities, refers, in its issue of last Friday week, to the defeat of the Affirmation Bill as a "victory of the morality of Great Britain over immorality." What consummate impertinence! Does this orange pennyworth mean to suggest that the 292 members who voted against the Bill represented the morality, and the 289 who voted in favor of it the immorality of Great Britain? We had thought that even North of Ireland bigotry was incapable of such a deduction. Perhaps the bigotry of the North of England has demoralised it.

MR. BOOTH says he is growing permanently grey because of the wickedness of other people. A decent person would grow grey on his own account. But Mr. Booth, who looks upon himself as a sort of god almighty in coat and trousers, evidently wants to emulate Christ in making a vicarious sacrifice.

A BAPTIST minister at Forest Hill, we are informed, has been faithful enough to his creed of Christianity to preach a sermon on Potiphar's wife. Half the astounded congregation left the church in horror and a hurry.

THE *Inquirer* has the following:—"We are sometimes told that the hideous doctrine of eternal torment is dying out, at least in its more repulsive aspects. The Rev. Dr. Momerie, Professor of Logic and Metaphysics in King's College, London, and one of the select preachers before the University of Cambridge, gives unimpeachable testimony that we are apt to overrate the progress of liberal sentiments in other churches. In his recent work on "The Basis of Religion" he says that only a year or two ago he heard a clergyman deliver himself from the pulpit as follows: 'My brethren, you may imagine that when you look down from heaven, and see your acquaintances and friends and relatives in hell your happiness will be somewhat marred. But no! You will then be so purified and perfected that as you gaze on that sea of suffering it will only increase your joy.' For our part, we should prefer hell itself to a heaven where such hellish joy would be possible. Dr. Momerie does not add that the whole congregation rose and left the church in silent indignant protest. No; there are some congregations which will tolerate any preaching but that of common sense and Christian charity."

A COMMITTEE of the Established, Free, and United Presbyteries of Aberdeen, have decided to petition the Lord Advocate to have a clause inserted in the Police Bill, prohibiting swimming and other habits which they say lead to Sabbath desecration. Some Christians have as great dislike for water now as they have for fire hereafter.

At the Bradford Borough Police Court, last week, William Saxon, who has been for twenty years in the employment of the Midland Railway Company as foreman, was committed for two months for stealing £20 worth of books from the Free Library. The books had been taken out with ordinary borrowers' tickets, and the robberies extended over many months. The prisoner has taken an active part in temperance and religious work, and up to the time of his apprehension had acted as a local preacher.

A CORRESPONDENT writing to the *Daily News*, and signing himself "M. P.," refers to a scene which took place immediately after the division on the Affirmation Bill. This scene, he explains, arose from the coarse and blasphemous language addressed to a Liberal by one of the opponents of the Bill; while another of its opponents "was so intoxicated that he could hardly stagger through the lobby when recording his vote against it."

THE *Pioneer*, an Indian paper, might be edited by Lord Randolph Churchill. It is so scurrilous and so ignorant of English feeling. It says: "Three men have been convicted at the Old Bailey for the publication of a blasphemous article in the Christmas Number of a paper called the *Freethinker*, in which scriptural scenes were caricatured. There was some difference of opinion in the first trial, in consequence of one of the members of the jury being an infidel, but on Monday last the three accused were found guilty, and the editor was

sentenced to imprisonment for a year, the other two for three months and nine months respectively; and a newsagent who had sold the paper was liberated on his own recognisance. This incident will tend to check the enthusiasm of the Bradlaugh party, who have of late derived so much encouragement from the notice that has been directed to them through Mr. Bradlaugh's expulsion from Parliament, and the indiscreet, if not illegal, conduct of the House of Commons in expelling that member. Some of the Liberal papers are endeavoring to get up an agitation in favor of repealing the law under which the *Freethinker* was prosecuted, but this proposal finds little encouragement. The libel was of a most vulgar and obscene character, and if the law had justified the whipping of the defendants at the cart's tail it might have been very aptly put in force." The *Pioneer* would be perfectly accurate, had it not stated that one of the members of the jury was an infidel, that our enthusiasm is checked, that the Liberal papers are getting up an agitation against the Blasphemy Laws, and that the libel was obscene. Its genial and thoroughly Christian character may be gathered from the last sentence. Why not burn us at once, oh *Pioneer*? Your name is a lie.

MR. WILLIAM CARTER may be a very good coroner, but he is a very foolish person. "It was shocking to see a man in such a state." What was the state, think you? State of drink? No. State of matrimony? No. State of Utah? No. State of Atheism? That's so. Now, what does Mr. Carter know of Atheism? He is only a believer in a theism that is rapidly becoming obsolete. He might remember, had he any decency, that his function is to sit on corpses not on jurors. Some papers think that the caddish coroner is offering thus a premium to Atheism, as people will plead that form of belief as excuse for not spending an hour or two in the company of a corpse. If the corpse were associated with Mr. Carter, things would indeed be unpleasant.

MRS. ANNA KINGSFORD, M.D., is a very careless person. In a letter to the *Herald of Health*, she speaks with an incoherence excellently adapted to the paper in which she is writing, of "vivisection and carnivorous tastes" as "encouraged in the atheistic city of Paris." If Mrs. Kingsford could think, she would remember that god is the worst of vivisectioners, and the most carnivorous of deities. For a taste!—Exodus ix., 1-3 and 6: "Then the lord said unto Moses, go in unto Pharaoh, and tell him, thus saith the lord god of the Hebrews, let my people go that they may serve me. For if thou refuse to let them go and wilt hold them still, behold the hand of the lord is upon thy cattle which is in the field, upon the horses, upon the asses, upon the camels, upon the oxen, and upon the sheep; there shall be a very grievous murrain. And the lord did that thing on the morrow, and all the cattle of Egypt died, but of the cattle of the children of Israel died not one." Leviticus vii., 2-5: "In the place where they kill the burnt offering shall they kill the trespass offering: the blood thereof shall be sprinkled round about upon the altar. And he shall offer of it all the fat thereof; the rump and the fat that covereth the inwards, and the two kidneys, and the fat that is on them which is by the flanks, and the caul that is above the liver with the kidneys he shall take away, and the priest shall burn them upon the altar for an offering made by fire unto the lord: it is a trespass offering."

DR. T. NICHOLLS has an article against eating donkeys. He seems to look upon it as quite a personal matter, poor man.

REVIEW.

SOCRATES,

BUDDHA,

and

JESUS.

By

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

A THOUGHTFUL and interesting study in brief of three reformers. Not without wisdom, Mr. Moss prints his title-page as above. Jesus is immensely below the other two, and is far enough apart from them both to be rightly separated by the conjunction. The pamphlet ought to be read by all who look upon these three as human beings of a remarkable type or types.

It is said that a New York journalist sent Mr. Beecher this laconic note:—

"Dear Mr. Beecher,—You made an ass of yourself yesterday.—Yours truly."

To which the redoubtable Beecher replied:—

"Dear sir,—The lord saved you the trouble of making an ass of yourself by making you an ass at the beginning, and 'his work still stands sure.'"—H. W. BEECHER.

SPECIAL NOTICES.

A Full Report of the Two Trials of Messrs. G. W. Foote, W. J. Ramsey, and H. A. Kemp, for Blasphemous Libel in the Christmas Number of the "Freethinker," is Now Ready in Seven Parts, price Twopence each; neat wrappers. Part VII. also contains Prison Notes by G. W. Foote. The whole in one volume, price One Shilling.

A Verbatim Report of the Latest Trial for Blasphemy (that of Messrs. Foote and Ramsey), before the Lord Chief Justice, Now Ready in one pamphlet, price Sixpence. It contains the evidence, the speeches of the two defendants, and the summing-up of Lord Coleridge.

DR. AVELING'S LECTURES.

Dr. Edward B. Aveling (interim editor of the *Freethinker*) will lecture in the Assembly Rooms, Grosvenor Street, All Saints, Manchester, on Sunday, May 20th, at 11, 3, and 6.30.

CORRESPONDENTS.

ALL business communications to be addressed to the Manager, 28 Stonecutter Street, Farringdon Street, E.C. Literary communications to the Editor of the *Freethinker*, 13 Newman Street, Oxford Street, London, W.

THE *Freethinker* will be forwarded, directly 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.—N. W. Baker, D. Robinson, W. H. Webster, A. C. Cuffe Adams, W. D., William James, John Watts, B. Bolt.

J. PALFREY.—Very good, but too long.

A SECRET DISCIPLE.—We try to do as you suggest, but we are glad to have help. You are a secret that we wish to keep.

J. ANDERSON reports sending in memorial with 529 signatures.

J. BROTHERTON has Nos. 9, 13, 14, 15, 18, 19, 20, 21, Vol. I.; 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 21, 22, 23, 24, Vol. II. of the *Freethinker* to dispose of. Half the proceeds to go to the Prisoners' Aid Fund." Who bids?

ANAB.—Thanks for jokes; all really good ones are welcome.

PETER HAMMOND.—Mr. Foote's "Bible Romances" would no doubt suit you. See advertisement.

M. A.—We are glad to hear that *Progress* is a favorite of yours.

HENRY ALLEN.—Many thanks for your good wishes.

W. D.—We publish a list of the agents of the *Freethinker* every week. Mr. Dunn, Dover Road.

H. SEYMOUR.—Can you send the whole of the MS. Make it short and pithy.

SUGAR PLUMS.

THE National Association for the Repeal of the Blasphemy Laws will hold a meeting on Thursday, May 17th, at 3 p.m., in the large room of the Occidental Hotel (opposite Exeter Hall), Strand, to complete the organisation of this Association. Your attendance is earnestly requested.

MR. C. C. CATTELL is publishing by subscription a series of lectures under the title, "A Search for the First Man, and What I Found on the Way." Freethinkers who remember Mr. Cattell's services to the cause—for the last thirty years his lectures in Birmingham and contributions to the press have been given without payment—may like to contribute. The price of the volume is one shilling.

THE *Christian Socialist*, a new monthly journal for thoughtful men, will be ready the end of May; price one penny.

MR. SAMUEL MORLEY resigns his seat for Bristol. Bristol was, in the palmy days of the prize-ring, famous for its boxers, who knew how to use their mawleys. The western town still shows it knows what to do with its Morleys. It gets rid of them.

How far more liberal and thoughtful are many of the provincial papers than most of the metropolitan. The only daily paper we have seen that has spoken out clearly on Mr. Samuel Morley's disgraceful conduct and his humiliating resignation of his seat at Bristol is the *Western Daily Mercury*.

MESSRS. BAGSTER'S BIBLE.

THESE gentlemen are not ashamed to earn a livelihood by selling the book that is at the present time doing more harm than any other in the world. Of course, much of the Bible is very excellent reading. But much of it is equally of course, most pernicious reading. And its chief harmfulness is more in the fact that men, women, and children are its mental slaves, and give up their most noble prerogative, reason, when they encounter it, than even in its indecencies and incentives to crime.

A circular from Messrs. Bagster has reached us. We grieve to see that an associate of the Royal Academy, Mr. Birch, lends the aid of his art to help Messrs. Bagster in their strange trade of Bible-selling. Not that the aid is very artistic. A person like a Noah's ark man or woman (you can never distinguish the sexes in that scriptural toy) and wearing an extinguisher, leads with a rigid, vertically straight arm a fossil child stamped on its epigastrium with what appears to be a mustard-plaster, while several gentlemen in cricket-caps are kneeling right and left, and stretching out hands rather larger than their heads.

The advertisements read very comically. "Limp, kid-lined Bibles, perfectly supple." "Limp," is an excellent adjective for the book of the invertebrate creed. "Kid-lined" shows that it is intended for children; or, perhaps, a grim satire lurks in the words. Enough little ones have been slain by the terrible book to furnish lining for all the Bibles Messrs. Bagster will ever sell, and the fancy is really not out of harmony with the barbaric nature of much that is in the book. "Perfectly supple" is a good recommendation in these days of Evolution and the attempts at reconciliation between the Bible and Science.

"The narrow Psalms" reminds us that the whole book is lacking in breadth and "the disputed text in St. John" prompts the inquiry "which?"

BLASPHEMY AND WITCHCRAFT.

GEORGE WILLIAM FOOTE, in his historical defence before the Lord Chief Justice of England, on Tuesday, April 24th, 1883, drew a parallel between the offences of blasphemy and witchcraft. Both are imaginary offences. Punishment for both is the outcome of superstition. The attack is made, in each case, on the poor and inoffensive. Unwilling judges have to administer the law in respect to each offence. The thought of the present, and the unanimous voice of after time, condemns and will condemn alike prosecutions for witchcraft and prosecutions for blasphemy. A list of the executions for witchcraft between 1560 and 1716 follows:—

WITCHCRAFT CASES.

1 Cambridge, 1560	2 Bury, 1655
1 Abingdon, 1575	1 Somersetshire ... }
17 or 18 Essex, 1576	1 Norfolk, others Corn- } 1658
Worbois, Essex case, 1593	wall ... }
Lancaster, 1597	2 Lancaster, 1659
Lancashire Witches 17, 1634	1 Taunton, 1663
About 50 executed in Norfolk	2 Bury (Sir M. Hales), 1664
and Eastern Counties, 1645	1 Ely (condemned but } 1679
2 Salisbury, 1653	reprieved) ... }
1 Ipswich, 1653	2 Exeter (hanged), 1682

Jane Wenham (Hertford 1712) not executed on account of some controversy on the case before Judge Powel.

Mary Hicks and daughter, Elizabeth, 11 years of age, 1716, at Huntingdon.

2 Hanged, March 17th, 1705, at Northampton; 5 hanged, July 22nd, 1716.

[*Stephen's* "History of the Criminal Law of England."]

ESTABLISHED RELIGION.—If the question be, whether Christianity, or any religion, ought to be established by law? Certainly so! For what is false ought not, and what is true needs not; it only requires liberty and it will establish itself. Are we to take truth from authority? then those are always right who have the power, and those that have it not will be heretics. But neither is authority nor tradition the ground of truth; for those who make either their guides, are divided about it; by the former, what is truth at Rome, is not truth at Lambeth, nor at Constantinople. By the latter, what Calvinists account truth, is not truth with Arminians, and yet scripture favors both, and a hundred different sects beside.—*Peter Annet, Free Enquirer*, No. 7, 1761; p. 52.

THE DIVINITY OF BLUNDERS.

[A Suppressed Poem.]

AFTER ROBERT BURNS.

To gull the mob and keep them under,
The ancients told their tales o' wonder,—
A pious fraud, a holy blunder,
A rainbow sign—
An earthquake or a blast o' thunder,
Were held divine.

By those who've faith to swallow doses,
A wond'rous story nothing loses,
The dext'rous feats ascribed to Moses
Are proof as plain
O' sleight-o'-hand, as Herman Boze's
Legerdemain.

Believe the stories o' tradition,
Let sense tak' place o' superstition,
The royal magic, competition,
Oh! sacred fountain!
Which can a midge, by faith's volition,
Swell to a mountain.

A god of mercy, just and good,
Held forth as in an angry mood,
Droonin' the warld, dee in a flood,
To punish Hymen;
And turnin' water into blood
Just like a demon!

He murder'd thousands in a trice,
Made Egypt swarm wi' frogs and lice;
Had he made coos, and sheep, and rice,
His hungry hordes then
Might ilka ane hae got a slice,
An' prais'd their lord then.

Wi' hocus-pocus rod in hand,
Like Mother Goose's magic wand,
They could the elements command,
As legends run—
Divide the sea—or burn the land—
Or stop the sun.

Each prodigy bombast surpasses;
Like dykes the ocean stood in masses;
They'd flying prophets, speaking asses,
Besides a saut wife;
Their am'rous ghosts o'ercome the lasses
Wha lived in that life.

Their Samson's strength lay in his hair;
Their zealous waters sterling were:
Shower of fire cam' thro' the air
Like brimstone danders;
Saints lived in fire, by virtue rare,
Like Salamanders.

The apostle Paul, by fancy's whim,
Soared up to heaven, as in a dream,
An' Satan brought him back, 'twould seem,
So says himsel':
But how could Nick to heaven climb
Wha's chain'd in hell?

This damn'd auld wily serpent Nick
Was promis'd lang a mighty kick,
But turned the chase, and play'd the trick
Wi' god's first-born;
He got him scurg'd, nailed on a stick,
An' croon'd wi' thorn.

First search the subject thro' the piece,
'Tis fraught wi' blunders such as these,
That rev'rend priests their flocks may fleece
Wi' wily conscience,
Teach human beings by degrees
To swallow nonsense.

The sovereign leaders of each faction
Join hand in hand in close compaction
To set god's kingdom up for auction,
A lumpin' bargain!
Drive silly mortals to distraction
Wi' their damu'd jargon.

Yet mortal truth shall gain the day,
Illumed by nature's glorious ray;
Anathemas shall flee away
Wi' priests an' de'ils;
Sound reason shall her sceptre sway
Hard at their heels!

A HEAVENLY MESSENGER.

SCEPTICS beware! Have you read the Scriptures, and after all their warnings can you still pursue your godless course? You answer in the affirmative? Then listen! Listen to a message or information which I have had from an authentic source.

Last Sabbath I was "alone on the mountain top," not praying, but reading *Progress*. The day was warm, though an east wind blew loud and strong, for shelter from which, and to enjoy the glorious sunshine, I lay on the turf under a wall. So deeply was I engrossed with my magazine that I did not at first perceive the approach of an animal which was grazing at a short distance. The flies were troublesome to the creature, and I wondered to see its skin move, in different parts of the body, up and down. But as it approached I saw, and was terrified to see, that the moving parts were eyelids. My fright was so great that I must have unconsciously uttered an exclamation, for all at once I was the object on which hundreds of eyes were gazing! I had just been reading matter of a heterodox nature, and there flashed through my mind things that I had read when at Sunday-school years ago, and a chapter of St. John's Revelation particularly occurred to me. I knew that the owner of the many eyes was none other than one of the beasts to be found around the throne of god in heaven. Yes, unbeliever, one of the beasts "full of eyes before and behind" stood before me!

The first shock had hardly passed when a voice "like unto the voice of many" grasshoppers or crickets smote upon my tympanum, and my terror was greater than before. The eyes were bad, but the voice was worse. Reader, would you like to be caught by such an orthodox monster when you were reading heterodox *Progress*? I did not, and the first sentences which fell from the beast's lips (a yard wide) were not intelligible enough to be recognised. The first I understood was "What are you doing?"

"Reading," I replied.

"Reading what?" roared the Beast, who spoke fairly good English.

"*Progress*," I answered.

"Bunyan's." "H'm." "Not a full edition, is it?"

"Comes out in monthly parts."

"Ah! Bunyan was a noble fellow. His work has brought many into the fold. He is now praising Jehovah in another and better world."

Here the beast winked with all his eyes, and I took advantage of this to secure and pocket my magazine. I had hardly done so when Mr. Beast opened his eyes—all of them; and I felt anxious. However he finished his eulogy on Bunyan by confirming that author's account of the fiery mountain, encounter with his satanic majesty, passage through the valley, the last swim, and other matters. Then suddenly he asked, "Are you a Catholic? I hope you are." "H'm." "That's right. Stick to the old ship. Never heed the heretics. The cursed rebels have had their own way a long time." And he fell to denouncing in terrible language all the reformed religions, from the Salvation Army down to the Church of England. I helped call names as well as I could. This gave immense satisfaction, and drew forth more heavenly wrath from the beast against the heretics. "They won't believe half of the Bible. They've a new Adam and Eve; and they call such an account as that of Noah and his ark, or Joshua and the sun, or Samson and his bone, or Jonah and his whale—myths."

"Mighty Beast," said I, "do you often visit this world?"

"O yes; often. I've a pretty busy time of it. There are only four of us, and we can't all be away at once, as the singing in heaven wants a lot of looking after. You should hear us when we are all singing different tunes. It is a pretty long way from here to our place. It takes me, with my six wings, quite two hours hard flying to get back. Of course," he continued, "it does not take me so long to come down.

"I've just been settling with those wretches who tried to bring that Affirmation Bill into your Parliament. If we hadn't mastered those Commons, who are sometimes very stubborn, we should have managed the business in the Lords. The lords are always servants of the lord, and we can get our own way pretty well with the Tories. But the Radicals are our worst plague! Even now Bradlaugh has got the best of us, though we have four beasts in heaven and one New-legate on earth."

"Pray, dread sir, how do you get along with folks in the other worlds?"

"Other worlds! You have been reading that infamous trash, astronomy. There is no other world. Does your Bible mention any? Will you take the word of man before that of god?"

"What are those lights then by which you must have passed hither?"

"Not worlds at all. Proctor's all wrong."

"How do the inhabitants of heaven spend their time?"

"Work and sing. Why, Bunyan, who wrote that book you have, mends pots in the better world. By the way, let me see it." He looked at the cover of *Progress*, and with a frightful cry sprang into the air, and flew out of sight in a moment.

At the name of Progress, heaven leaves earth free.

W. JAMES.

THE CHRISTIAN'S PARADISE.

(Concluded from page 147.)

WE have seen to what noble heights we are to attain in our Paradise. Let us now have one little peep at our almighty benefactor.

Could we know anything more of god than we at present do? I think not. Oblivious to our former state of mortality, we should be unable to guess that it was by obeying his behests and walking in his ways that we obtained entrance into his unequalled kingdom. Our intercourse with him would be probably limited to singing hymns of praise and chanting his glory and goodness (!) after the manner described in the Book of Revelation. But cannot god, whose knowledge is alleged to be infinite, see and understand his own majestic splendor without the assistance of the contemptible satellites who once were intellectual human beings? And does not this immortalising of countless billions merely for the sake of advertising his greatness mightily resemble that vanity and self-glorification which is ridiculous in a mortal and unbearable in a god?

And what, Christians, is your boasted state of purity and perfection when analysed by common sense? The idea is well-nigh too revolting to put into words. You would be a universe of madmen! Not raving maniacs, of course, but moping, drivelling idiots; your intellectual capacities eliminated, your faculty of dissemination extinguished, your sense of sight obscured, every spark of knowledge vanished, every remnant of memory eradicated, every glimmer of reason annihilated, every idea of duty lost, save that of worshipping and adoring the pitiful and blood-stained deity who robbed you of yourselves for the sake of ministering to his own insatiable craving after flattery and distinction. You could not be men. Every human being has troubles and anxieties emanating from his innate sense of responsibility, towards himself and his fellow creatures. You would be lower than animals. The dog loves and caresses the hand that feeds it, and love is banished from your composition to be replaced by fear, the personification of which is the godly despot to whom you bend the knee. Go to Colney Hatch, to Bedlam; single out some quiet, harmless idiot. Watch his vacant, staring countenance. Such must you become. He is perfectly happy, is he not? He exists without pain, care or anxiety. And here, here is the boasted perfection you promise yourself. Think of your loving mother, your innocent sister, perhaps gone before you, as the images of this senseless grinning lunatic, and of yourself as just such another; they ignorant of what they once were to you before they departed, you hoping alas! to renew the old sweet intercourse in a happier sphere. This is perfection with a vengeance. You cast off every vice, but you are necessarily denuded of every virtue. You lose all capacity of feeling pain, but the sense of pleasure is merely comparative and must go too. Imagine a vast world swarming with what was once living, thinking humanity, each the exact representation of this wretched being; yourself a member of that worshipful community, elbowing on one side some great scientist, whilst on the other you are touching Henry Wainwright or Greenacre, all of you groping along in your wretched way without hope or aspiration, as you mechanically crouch down in meaningless self-abasement before the deity, who reduced you to your present state of moral degradation.

Enough! The theory of paradise as represented by the

Christians is perhaps the vilest abortion ever preached and upheld with fire and sword through eighteen centuries of time. The utter prostration of every power which distinguishes us, the absolute absence of individuality, the degrading fetish-worship of our moral assassin form a subject which would be altogether too disgusting ever to be contemplated except by the most morbid bigots. We are only relieved by a strong conviction of the logical impossibility of such a calamity, and our natural sense of the ludicrous, breaks the horrid spell, and causes us to indulge in a loud guffaw at the absurd anomalies to belief in which poor suffering humanity can stoop.

SANS BARBE.

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