

PROSECUTED FOR BLASPHEMY.

THE FREETHINKER.

EDITED BY G. W. FOOTE.

Sentenced to Twelve Months' Imprisonment for Blasphemy.

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.

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JUNE 3, 1883.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.

HOW CHRISTIANS TREAT FREETHINKERS.

It was, I think, about 7.30 p.m. on March 5th, when we left the Old Bailey under sentence of imprisonment because we had made fun of, or sold caricatures of, the Christian's god. It was a sort of relief to get out of Mr. Justice North's presence. I would sooner be among the criminals whom I've been living with for three months, than in the presence of that bitter, narrow-minded, ungenerous man. We went back to Newgate underground, and had a proper tea, thanks to our good friends. We were cautioned when they put us in our cells not to go to bed, as we might have to go to Holloway the same night; and as no one came to tell us anything more, we might have sat up all night if the bell ringing had not suggested we had better go to bed. I slept pretty well that night, what with the excitement of the trial and verdict and sentence. But that was about the only night I have had a decent sleep for three months. It's too dark, too black dark, to sleep easily in a prison cell. The darkness might be cut with a knife. At a quarter to six I rose, lit my gas, swept out my cell, being ordered to do so, and eat the remainder of my provided food. At 9.30 we were taken off in the van. Only we three were in it: we had the whole of Black Maria to ourselves, except for the policeman. Black Maria isn't a pleasant carriage. Her compartments are very small, and you are pinched in between the partition in front that separates you from the next man and the like partition behind, while the van wall is on one side of you and the door of your moving cell the other. A very big man could not get in. Perhaps they have a special van for corpulent prisoners. Even I could not stand upright in the place. It was dreadfully noisy rattling over the stones, and the noise never ceased until, I suppose, we turned into the "drive" leading up to the gaol. Then the van stopped, and a clanking and unbarring noise came. Then the van went on three or four yards and stopped again. Some more unlocking and then on again and a final stop. This I found afterwards was all due to the fact that there is a double series of gates to enter the prison, and just room between them for the long van with its horses. The gaoler locks the gate behind before he unlocks the one in front. We got out and went into a very clean, snow-white clean, corridor. We had to give up all our property and sign a statement as to its extent in a book. Then we were ordered into a ward upstairs and into separate cells. I found afterwards that this was ward F, the reception ward. My first meal in Holloway came next: a brown loaf and a quarter of a tin-pot-full of soup. Here we were, as far as I could judge without a watch, except that of the warders, for two or three hours. Then we were ordered down into the same corridor and into warm baths. I like a good bath, believing that cleanliness is much better than godliness, but a bath under compulsion is very irritating. A net was given each of us to put his clothes in, and my clothes disappeared until the day of my release. Then we were provided with a suit *gratis*: yellowish brown, coarse stuff trousers, waistcoat, jacket, coarse check shirt, cap. My suit was about four sizes too large for me, and I had to tuck up my trousers

and sleeves many inches. A facetious warder, instead of getting me another something near a fit, suggested I should eat heartily and try to fill it out that way. My number was C 2.60. We were then taken into another room off the same corridor and examined by Dr. Gordon, who was very kindly. He noted me as suffering from chronic bronchitis, and ordered me to have a mattress on my plank bed; also better diet than ordinary, *i.e.* more of it, though the quality remains the same. From him we went back to our cells in the reception ward again. There we were that day and night. About six I went to bed and to sleep. I was awakened by a bell ringing and jumped up and dressed. I was hardly dressed when, pop! out went my gas and I was in the thick darkness again; I had mistaken the bell to go to bed for the bell to get up, I had confused day and night. There was no doubt of its being night now—not a shadow of a doubt. There was a total blackness.

Next morning we all three went to chapel and sat on a form several feet apart, in a high pew, with about twenty boys of all sorts, in for short sentences, and only one warder for the lot of us. The parson in the pulpit, high up above us, might have taken for his text, "What is one among so many?" The parson is a dark-haired man with side-whiskers and a loud, gruff voice, which he used in an authoritative manner. The dogmatic ways of his profession were made more dogmatic than ever by the kind of audience he had. There was no need for him to try and conciliate us. He couldn't get any money, or dinners, or slippers out of us. The service was the morning, two hymns and sometimes a reading from the demoralising Bible. It is due to the parson to say that he was very careful and never read us any of the incentives to crime with which the Bible abounds.

At 11 we were ordered downstairs, having, literally, to take up our beds (and our breads) and walk. Down into the same corridor, and then into the centre of the prison, where we were told off to the cells we were to occupy for good—if I can use such the word for such a place. From the centre of the prison, which is reached by a flight of stone stairs from the door opposite the entrance gate, a passage leads straight along called C. Right and left go two passages A, A. Radiating off from C are B and B. In each of these are three rows of cells one above another. With one we were already level. The other two were respectively above and below us, and in each row of each passage were thirty-one cells. Staircases connect the lower, middle, and upper rows at their middles. I was in the second cell to the right in C; Ramsey in the second on the left in left B; Foote in the first cell on the left in left A. A sort of glass box in the middle commands all the corridors and generally two out of the three principal officers are in it, at once. A warder walks up and down in each corridor all day long—not the same warder, of course.

I was double-locked into my cell. The cell is much as that which Mr. Foote described in his prison notes in Newgate. My window of corrugated glass had fourteen panes. I counted them many a hundred times. The plank-bed, about thirty inches wide, is raised three inches from the floor on three cross pieces of wood, and has a cross piece

fixed on for the head to rest (!) on. In the daytime the plank was placed in one corner of the cell and my mattress upon it.

HENRY A. KEMP.

(To be concluded.)

MEMORIAL.

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

"The Humble Memorial of the undersigned
Sheweth

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

DECISION OF THE HOME SECRETARY. OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

SIR WILLIAM HARCOURT never does the right thing when he has a chance of going wrong. Nothing would have been easier for him than to remit the remainder of the cruel sentences passed on Mr. Foote and his colleagues on the *Freethinker*. Those sentences would not have been passed by any other judge on the bench but Mr. Justice North, and Lord Coleridge has virtually condemned them. The Home Secretary might have very cheaply done something to retrieve his credit with the public by acceding to the petition addressed to him, but he has refused to do so. He must be petitioned again.—*Weekly Dispatch*.

FRIENDS of religion have cause to regret the decision at which Sir William Harcourt has arrived in the cases of Foote, Ramsey, and Kemp. It will be remembered that some weeks ago a memorial was presented to the Home Secretary, signed by many well-known and representative men, praying for the remission of the remainder of the sentences passed on these men by Mr. Justice North, but the Home Secretary has declined to interfere. It is now pretty certain that if Foote and Ramsey had been tried by Lord Coleridge, they would either have been acquitted or have received but a nominal punishment; it is doubtful whether if they had been tried by any other judge than Mr. Justice North, they would have been convicted or punished; it is admitted by all, that in his summing-up Mr. Justice North forgot the judge in the advocate; it is clear that an excessive sentence, due to religious bigotry, must lead many who detest the doctrines of the condemned men, to sympathise with them as victims of so-called Christian intolerance. Nor does the mischief end here. Working men—that is, the mass of the people of this country—will have it once more brought home to them that there is one law for the rich and another for the poor. In his defence before Lord Coleridge, Foote cited numerous passages from the works of Spencer, Huxley, Arnold, Morley, and many other eminent writers, to show that they had indulged in equally offensive language when speaking of Christianity, and Lord Coleridge admitted that some of the passages cited were open to that remark. It follows, then, that Foote and Ramsey are in gaol, and treated not as first-class misdemeanants, but as ordinary criminals, for doing that which has been done in the light of day by other men who laugh, and may well laugh, at the notion of being put upon their trial for their writings. Will not the people ask how it is that the treatment in the two cases is so different, and will not the answer be—not perhaps a true answer, yet not altogether an untrue one—that if Foote and Ramsey had published their opinions in half-guinea books, and moved in "good society," they, too, would have been safe from prosecution?—*Echo*.

It is deeply to be regretted that the Home Secretary has not seen his way to a remission of the sentence passed on the men who are in prison for the Christmas Number of the *Freethinker*. Almost without exception the press throughout the country has admitted that the sentence of a year's imprisonment for such an offence was simply monstrous. There is not a lawyer who does not know that Mr. Justice North is the only judge on the bench who could have inflicted so disproportionate and vindictive a penalty, and that if the

prisoners had been tried before Lord Coleridge, Mr. Justice Stephen, or anybody else, they would have escaped with a month, or whatever might have seemed to sensible men a probable deterrent against the repetition of an offence, which the parties incriminated hardly knew to be legally an offence at all. It would be an insult to the judicial character of the Home Secretary's mind, to suspect that the Affirmation Bill may have had something to do with his decision, and that he may not have entirely shut out from consideration, the risk of tarring the Government in the case of Mr. Foote, with the same brush that has already produced some disagreeable effects in the case of Mr. Bradlaugh. But there can be no doubt that this suspicion will exist and will find voice. However that may be, the fact remains that Mr. Foote is suffering a scandalously excessive punishment, and that the Home Office must now share the general condemnation that has hitherto been confined to the judge.—*Pall Mall Gazette*.

THE PRISONERS.

HENRY KEMP is now a free man, but sorely broken down in health. His prison experiences appear in another column. From them men may learn how Christians treat Freethinkers to-day.

William Ramsey and George Foote are still in prison. On Friday, May 25th, the day of Kemp's release, his two companions were allowed to have from friends the one visit that is permitted until another three months have elapsed. The interviews took place with gratings between the free and the imprisoned persons. Our friends were at a distance of some two yards from us. A warden was secreted close by to over-hear the conversation. The one letter allowed to each prisoner until three more months are gone has been written. We shall publish George William Foote's next week, and give at the same time details of the interviews. For the present we call attention to the enormous difference that obtains between the punishment of our friends, and of others who have suffered for committing the uncommittable crime called blasphemy. We contrast their punishment with that of Mr. Holyoake, with some faint hope that he may yet see his way to reinstating himself in the position of one who looks beyond minor details to the great principle at stake.

MR. HOLYOAKE.

Was sentenced for six months.

Wrote and sent out of prison during that time nearly 2000 letters, an average of nearly 4000 a year.

Could have any food for which his friends paid.

Could see his friends every day.

Saw his friends in private and in a comfortable room.

OUR FRIENDS.

Were sentenced for nine and twelve months.

Can only send out three in twelve months.

Have prison fare.

Owe it only to the accident of a second trial that they have had any communication with the outer world, and now such communication can only be once in three months.

See theirs with a warden present and with intervening gratings.

JEHOVAH: THE BIBLE GOD.—WHO IS HE?

(Concluded from page 163.)

2.—JEALOUSY—"I the lord thy god am a jealous god."

CAN an almighty god be jealous? If so, of whom? There is not one amongst the peerless archangels of light flitting around his glorious throne who can approach him in power and might. The denizens of the earth are even lower—"man that quintessence of dust" excites not his envy. Other gods? There's the rub. He who created heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is—he whom the Christians worship as the one only god (though at the same time they recognise partners in the firm) seems to have been terribly afraid of other gods. Probably, mindful of past forgetfulness on the part of his chosen people, he conjectured a time would come when they would go "a-whoring after other gods," (and he would become neglected and forgotten), and only be brought to their allegiance

by being visited with pestilence, plague, and famine. What a devilish god! What a favored people! Quite a "happy family."

3.—MERCY AND JUSTICE.

To attempt to find an act of mercy or justice recorded in favor of Jehovah would indeed be a hard task. The very creation of a race whom he knew would inherit eternal damnation savors neither of one nor the other. The creation of a hell! "When he made it did god know he would have any use for it?" Witness his treatment of the people of Israel when David, at god's command (2 Sam. xxii.), committed the terrible crime of numbering the people. That it was a crime we have god's word, but by what law of morality this deity punished the people for the sake of the king I cannot say. Unfortunately, examples are not wanting, of kings who have ruined the nations over whom they ruled by wars, extravagance, or persecution. But they were human beings, "born in sin and shapen in iniquity," and little better could be expected from them. But in the case of an almighty god who is also a god of love the whole affair is changed. Will any erudite Christian explain why this was done?

The sanguinary orders given by him concerning the disposal of the Midianites (Numbers xxxi., 17—40), and his merciful consideration in ordering the wholesale butchering of the congregation for worshipping the golden calf which Aaron set up, are both examples of his ideas of justice. It seems an unfortunate fact that Jehovah generally hit upon the wrong ones to punish. Probably Aaron knew too many cabinet secrets and might have "rounded." And of course J. couldn't well go back on his choice of a priest; it would have looked very bad in the eyes of the Israelites, that their god who knew the secrets of all hearts was compelled to admit he had been mistaken, and had got hold of a damaged article for a boss priest. Some of those impudent Freethinkers who are always meddling with his affairs, would have said he hadn't made a very smart selection. So he spared Aaron, no doubt blowing him up on the quiet; and Aaron in return for the favor granted him, "went for the heathen Hebrew."

4.—OMNISCIENCE.

Jehovah seems to have been sadly deficient in this attribute of an almighty god. As an example, when he came down from heaven to the Garden of Eden in the cool of the day, and inquired "Adam where art thou?" his omniscience seems slightly at fault. One would have thought that he who had so lately created the world would have known where, in a confined space like the Garden of Eden, to have placed his hand upon the guilty pair of turtle doves in hiding.

Or again, see how he addressed Satan in the book of Job (Job i., 7), "Whence comest thou?" Or see his contract or wager with Satan (Job v.) "the world, the flesh, and the devil;" or "the Uzzite novice and the hellish hitter." If god knew Job would come through all his temptations right, what need had he to tempt him? Could he not, in his great power, have convinced Satan in some other manner, than by putting Job and his family to so much pain and loss? Nor can I see that Job was in any way repaid because all his substance was returned to him. Present riches cannot obliterate the memory of departed sorrows. Of what consequence was it to god whether Satan believed Job to be a good man or not? God, however had more consideration for Satan's whims than for Job's righteousness. Hear what he says (Job ii., 3), "Hast thou considered my servant Job that there is none like him . . . although thou movest me to destroy him without a cause?" Does god destroy a good man without a cause? If so, of what use is the individual endeavor, since our eternal happiness or pain depends on the caprice of this inhuman monster, Jehovah.

A deity! The murderer of the patriot, the weak and the helpless; the ravisher of the maid, the tyrant who binds the slave. He is never once recorded as having lifted his arm in defence of the weak, or in support of right against might. His chosen people escaped from the Egyptians to endure a worse form of slavery and oppression under him; they were ignorant and uncivilized, and the books of the Pentateuch are but the record of a barbarous tribe, who aping the customs and religion of their neighbors and whilom masters must needs have a god of their own.

Is Jehovah of the Bible an almighty god? Is it not more reasonable to believe that Moses—skilled in the arts of

the Egyptians, a clever conjuror and necromancer—performed actions which handed down by tradition from father to son, assumed a magnitude they never possessed and were accepted as those of a god?

Is it not more reasonable to believe that Moses ruled the Israelites, than that Jehovah rules the universe? That we are the dupes of Moses, than that Moses was the dupe of Jehovah? C. J.

H E L L .

I WAS DYING. I, an Atheist, a scorner. Life was slowing ebbing from me. No visions of lurid devils, with forked and flaming tongues, leering through the smoke and sulphurous fumes of a blazing hell, haunted me, though a clergyman did stand by my side. But he, meeting my glance of scorn and pity, withdrew in shame. I was passing to eternal rest, to sleep and not to dream. Presently I drew the last breath. I became unconscious. . . . Hurrying along a subterranean passage, led by a tall and handsome guide, who spoke not, but with rapid gesture compelled me to follow, I came to a long flight of steps. I ascended. I stopped before a massive gate of pure gold, over which glittered, wrought in diamonds and rubies the word "Hell." Passing through this and onwards we came upon a door of oak—my guide knocked twice, the door swung open and we entered. Trembling with intense excitement, not with fear, I glanced around. I was standing in a magnificent and spacious hall, brilliantly illuminated by the electric light. In the centre of the room was a table surrounded by men and women of genius: Shakespeare, Milton, Dickens, Byron, Michelangelo, Voltaire, Mill, George Eliot, Harriet Martineau—all were there. Voltaire was reading the Christmas Number of the *Freethinker* aloud, to the intense amusement of the whole assembly. At the end of the hall was a splendid throne, and on it was seated "his most gracious highness, lord god of all blazes, king of hell—the devil." He was a handsome man, with lofty forehead and broad shoulders, over which was flung a crimson cape mounted in ermines. His countenance was benign and noble. Seeing me, he descended with a stately grace, moved across the hall, and taking my hand bade me "welcome," in the most musical of voices. Then, conducting me to the table, he introduced me to those around it. I fell into a reverie. Truly the tree (root, trunk, branches, and leaves) of knowledge was here—verily, this was the temple of science. I was aroused by a light touch on the shoulder. Looking up I saw the devil, who made a sign for me to follow. We crossed the hall, and passing through a doorway, entered a still larger room. It contained every scientific book, instrument, and piece of apparatus the world had ever produced. The walls were covered with diagrams of all descriptions, dealing with all the sciences. Tables were scattered over the floor. At these sat students each engaged on his favorite subject; and I saw a man passing among them, helping all when any difficulty arose. I looked him in the face and saw he was Charles Darwin. Uttering a loud cry of delight:—

"Twas the voice of my brother,
I heard him complain,
Devil take you, you're at it,
You are snoring again." I awoke.

C. HERBERT PRINE.

"Don't talk to me about there being no god," said Brown to the sceptical Jones, when they met at the corner of the street. Look at the beautiful and complex, though simple protection, which an all-wise being has devised for that most delicate organ, the eye. With the wind blowing as it does now and the dust flying about, what should we do without our eye-lids? They involuntarily drop over the eye-balls at the approach of the minutest speck of dust." Just then a regular hurricane came howling round the corner, shattering a street lamp, throwing a child into the gutter, and bringing a six-foot chimney-pot off the top of a house in front of which the two friends were standing. A crowd gathered round; a cab was called and Brown was taken off to the hospital. Jones was invited to the funeral, and while the clergyman thanked god for having "of his great mercy" bashed in Brown's skull and beggared his wife and family, Jones muttered, "Don't see any particular wisdom in taking infinite pains to prevent a grain of dirt getting into your eye, and leaving your head to be 'caved in' with a chimney-pot weighing about half-a-ton."

AN ESSAY ON ATHEISM.

(After Bacon, but by a much Rasher Man).

I HAD rather believe all the fables in the Bible, and the Talmud, and the Koran, than assert positively there is no god: and I would rather believe them all, and a thousand others besides, than say—there is a god. I merely say—I do not know if there be a god or not, therefore I may not presume to assert one thing or the other. The Scripture says: "The fool hath said in his heart there is no god;" but how much more foolish is he than the one who says: "There is a god?" There can be no doubt that a want of philosophy inclines men's minds to superstition, which they call religion; but a knowledge of philosophy and an exercise of reason brings their minds about to Atheism, which is the result of true philosophy. Atheism, indeed, is most conducive to the secular welfare and general happiness of man—as, when he rests and assures himself upon divine favor and protection, and puts his trust in providence (whatever that may be), he is like to be deceived and miserably disappointed; but when man, with a correct knowledge of the duties and responsibilities resting upon him, perceives that, to prosper in life and fulfil those duties and responsibilities, it is necessary to constitute himself his own providence, he, as a natural consequence, gathers a force of mind and strength of character which could not be otherwise induced. It has been said by Bacon: "Atheism leads a man to sense, to philosophy, to natural pity, to reputation . . . therefore Atheism never did perturb States . . . But superstition has been the confusion of many States." The philosopher quoted thus, shows the superiority of Atheism over superstition.

And does not Voltaire, though himself a Theist, testify to the virtues of those holding atheistical opinions? "It is much more agreeable to pass our lives among them," says he of the Atheists, "than among the superstitious and fanatical. . . . From the superstitious I look for nothing but bitterness and persecution, . . . but the Atheist possesses his reason, which checks his propensity to mischief, while the fanatic is under the influence of a madness which is constantly urging him on." Atheism, there can be little doubt, therefore, tends to the better development of men's intellectual faculties, and also at the same time makes of them better citizens, and wiser, more peaceful, and worthier members of society than if they were wallowing in the mud of superstition or raving under the maddening influence of religious fanaticism. H. J. BECKWITH.

THY WILL BE DONE.

WHATE'ER on earth may us befall,
Great god the father of us all,
Our cry shall be, both great and small—
Thy will be done.

Though wrong may triumph over right,
And strength's victorious in the fight,
These words we'll sing from morn till night—
Thy will be done.

Though priests and parsons on us prey,
And fools and bigots hold the sway,
We still will shout, let come what may—
Thy will be done.

Although with troubles we're oppressed,
With want and hunger sore distressed;
Thou knowest what for us is best—
Thy will be done.

When wand'ers in the desert drear
Cry out for help, thou art not near;
Their cries and prayers thou dost not hear—
Thy will be done.

When shipwrecked sailors good and brave,
For succor, help, and mercy crave,
Thou stretchest out no hand to save—
Thy will be done.

When widows, orphans, weep and sigh,
Oppressed with want and misery,
Thou hearest not their bitter cry—
Thy will be done.

S. J. BELLCHAMBERS.

ACID DROPS.

THERE is no truth in the report that Sir William Harcourt turned pale the other night in the House, when some member spoke of an *expression* of public opinion. The Home Secretary certainly thought he heard the words "an *explosion* of public opinion," but he sat firm, if anxious.

HE is so nervous that he is rumored to have made application to the Premier that he may have a deputy to receive all reports. The mere name of them produces a perspiration in addition to that due to obesity.

OUR friend C. Hunter (of Burnley) is waging a brave warfare with a clergyman, the Rev. Mr. Littlehailes. The Rev. Littlehailes has been, after the customary clerical fashion, shrieking and persecuting. But Hunter is firm and uses the parson's attack as an advertisement of his shop for Free-thought literature. 50 Sandy Gate, Burnley, is Hunter's address. Friends should send him an order to encourage the slanderous parson, who wants to make Freethinker's lives like his own name, "little-hells," and fitly enough in *Burnley*.

"BREWIN GRANT desires the congregation to join in thanksgiving to almighty god for the defeat of atheism in the House of Commons by so decisive a vote inspired by the Christian instinct of this great empire, as well as for the part which he has been enabled to take in securing this important triumph." A new version of the organ-player and the organ-blower story. Mr. Grant is, however, more of a trumpet—than of an organ-blower. The part he took was that of telling untruths about Free-thought in general and Mr. Bradlaugh in particular. We suppose god ought to be thanked for all lies and liars.

ACCORDING to the *Christian Herald*, a soldier who was converted was asked, "How did you feel in the midst of the fight?" His answer was: "When we were entering the fight and during all the engagement I heard a voice saying, 'Fear not, I am with you; and that made me strong, for I recognised the voice as that of Christ.'" So the Christ who is supposed to be the son of god, "whose name is love," encouraged the soldier whilst slaying fugitive Egyptians. Amidst the carnage and massacre of patriots "Behold the man" who nineteen centuries ago said, "Blessed are the merciful; blessed are the peace-makers," so changed by the dogmas of to-day that he is found urging men on to fight against Liberty for the benefit of Christian bondholders.

DR. TALMAGE, "the cultured," recently speaking of Jahveh, said: "The king looks out and he says, 'There are twelve hundred millions of people to be clothed and fed; so many pounds of meat, so many barrels of flour, so many yards of cloth, and linen, and flannel; so many hats, so many socks—enough for all.' None but a god could clothe and feed the world." Apparently Talmage's god has the biggest catering business in creation; but in Great Britain alone there are at least three million paupers. Jahveh has clearly proved his incompetency. The time has arrived for a new system to be introduced. All the other gods should be invited to send in tenders for a most remunerative business.

IN regard to Mr. Holyoake's refusal to sign the memorial on behalf our imprisoned friends, we find (1) that Mr. Holyoake did himself petition the Home Secretary, (2) that his friends also petitioned, (3) that after his release he petitioned and advocated petitions on behalf of others imprisoned for blasphemy. All these three facts are opposed to the reasons given by Mr. Holyoake for not signing our memorial.

As a comment upon Mr. Holyoake's comment upon the tone of the *Freethinker*, we notice that the gentleman in question wrote of Miss Roalfe as "a heroine, an example for her sex." Miss Roalfe sold "A Home-Thrust at the Atrocious Trinity" and "God v. Paterson," each of which contains more outrages upon Christian feelings than are to be found in all the numbers of the *Freethinker*.

Do but take away the map-book, the chalice, the host, or the priest's garments; yea, do but spill the water, or the wine, or blow out the candles (a thing quickly done), and the whole business is marred, and no sacrifice can be offered. Take from the Lutherans or Episcopalians their Liturgy, or common Prayer-book, and no service can be said. Remove from the Calvinists, Arminians, Socinians, Independents, or Anabaptists, the pulpit, the Bible, and the hour-glass; or make such a noise that the voice of the preacher cannot be heard, or disturb him but so before he come, or strip him of his Bible or other books and he must be dumb, etc.—*Darclay's* "Apology for the True Christian Divinity" (i.e. that of the people called in scorn, Quakers.)

SPECIAL NOTICE.

In an early issue we hope to publish a Portrait of G. W. Foote, with a short notice of his work.

DR. AVELING'S LECTURES.

Dr. Edward B. Aveling (interim editor of the *Freethinker*) will lecture in the Amphitheatre, Gunwharf Road, Portsmouth, on Sunday, June 3rd. Subjects:—11, "Freedom in England;" 3, "Origin of Man;" 7, "Creed of an Atheist."

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.—W. E. Burgess, R. Briggs, W. J. S., D. Hargreaves, A. H., V. W. Hardwick, John Lampard, W. R. Lachbrook.

A FATALIST.—The tract you received is apparently as demoralising as most of them are.

E. P.—Thanks for jokes. Shall be glad of more. Not the one at St. James's Hall.

SCPTIC.—We published a list of *Freethinker* agents in the number for May 20th.

MEMORIAL] received with twenty-seven signatures from Mr. Evan Hope.

T. S. VAN DER HOUT, of 3 Chapel Street, Wheeler Street, Spitalfields, writes: "Seeing in your last issue that the Congress of the International Federation of Freethinkers will meet in Amsterdam in August next, as a native of that city I offer my service to the Freethinking party, and I am willing to give all information they may require."

J. ROGERS offers the *Freethinker* of May 28th, 1882, and March 4th, 1883, for sale; the proceeds for the Prisoners' Aid Fund.

PHILO.—Thanks for cuttings.

ADDITIONAL AGENT.—Mr. Dunn, 24 Old Kent Road.

FRIENDS will see by advertisement on last page that "Brown's Story; or, the Dying Infidel," by G. W. Foote, is now ready; price one penny. A large sale is expected.

C. B.—You can obtain the reports of all Mr. Foote's trials, bound in one volume, for 2s.

F. M.—A public meeting will be held on June 11th, at St. James's Hall.

INQUIRER.—Henry A. Kemp has gone to Hastings to recruit his health. He had a hearty reception on Sunday night at the Hall of Science.

JOSEPH.—We also miss very greatly the help to which you refer. We are quite at a loss to understand why it is withheld in this hour of need.

MEMORIAL from Sydney Foulger with thirty-four signatures; and one with fourteen signatures from Dr. Mortimer.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Pall Mall Gazette—Liverpool Daily Post—War Cry—Weekly Dispatch—Mid-Surrey Gazette—Echo—Thinker Truthseeker.

SUGAR PLUMS.

As Sir William Harcourt is deaf to the voice of public opinion as expressed in memorials, he will have to listen to it from platforms. A public meeting will be held at St. James's Hall, probably on Tuesday, July 11th, to protest against the cruel and unjust punishment to which our friends are subjected.

A GERMAN in England sends us the following letter, touching in its simplicity and the sad reflexion it awakes:—

"Dear Sir,—A stranger in your country (and language) I beg to ask you for the reason of Mr. G. W. Foote's imprisonment, which I learn from your small remark in the May issue of *Progress*. Being German, and though well acquainted with the shameful use of penalties for so-called blasphemy, I am yet quite amazed at such an abuse of law here in England, the country of freedom, as I always fancied. Alas! mere illusion. —I am, sir, your obedient,
OSCAR HERRMANN."

"Cardiff, May 24, 1883."

J. C. DOUGLASS (of Calcutta), sends a cheque for £1 for the Prisoners' Aid Fund, and says: "I consider a prosecution for blasphemy a disgrace to England, and the sentences a vindictive expression of bigotry."

THE latest reports of J. M. Wheeler are of a more satisfactory nature.

MR. T. E. WING (member of the Hull School Board) writes: "The former part of your Sugar Plum (No 1) of May 27th, is correct—my return for Hull was on the same platform as yourself: free, secular, compulsory education—of which we are justly proud. But the last sentence of the same is incorrect."

A FREETHINKING Mussulman has entered the lists against M. Renan. The author of the "Vic de Jésus" had, in a lecture at the Sorbonne, striven to show that the Mussulman religion is by its very essence opposed to the development of science. Cheik Gemmal Eddine Afghan answers in a remarkable article in the *Journal des Débats*. We can only quote two or three of the many pregnant phrases in this noble plea for and defence of Freethought:—

"Every time that religion gets the upper hand philosophy goes into the shade."

"I would say no nation at its origin is capable of guiding itself by pure reason."

"As long as humanity exists the struggle will not cease between dogma and free inquiry, between religion and philosophy."

We are grateful to our Mussulman brother for his words, though we do not hold this last idea. We believe that the struggle will end at last, and the well-meaning but mis-directed energy on behalf of religion will be turned wholly to human philosophy.

On July 25th Charles Bradlaugh, M.P., will hold a public meeting in St. James's Hall, in connexion with the treasonable conduct of the House of Commons.

IS THE BIBLE FIT FOR CHILDREN?

MR. W. Y. CRAIG, M.P. for Staffordshire, in the course of an address upon education, stated that he was glad that Scripture lessons were given in schools:—

"God's will concerning them must be understood if they really meant to succeed, and that will was declared by certain moral ideas, such as benevolence, truth, justice, order, and so on."

A reply to these unhappy utterances has been issued by the Hanley Branch of the N. S. S. We print it with great pleasure, and urge upon all friends of education to call the attention of every one who is still anxious to have the Bible read in schools to that which follows:—

"It is a fact beyond dispute that the Bible is a record of absolute contradictions. The first and second chapters give different accounts of the order of creation. Is the love for truth likely to be impressed upon the mind of the young by asking them to believe statements diametrically opposed to one another? The Bible represents god as a being of infinite goodness, "whose tender mercies are over all his works" (Psalm cxlv., 9). Is it not absurd to ask a child to believe that a merciful god would drown the creatures he had created, and curse the world he was author of, on account of sins for which he alone was responsible? (Prov. xvi., 4; Amos iii., 6; Isaiah xlvi., 9, 10). Is it not a deliberate attempt to ruin the moral fibre of a child to ask him to believe that barbarous deeds are consistent with the character of infinite mercy? God hardened the heart of Pharaoh (Exodus iv., 21; Exodus vii., 3), and then he plagued and slew the Egyptians for the sins their king committed at the instigation of god himself. Was god benevolent when he strewed the earth with the corpses of fourteen thousand of his chosen people because one of their chiefs ventured to remonstrate with Moses? (Numbers xvi., 49). Was god benevolent when he smote dead fifty thousand people for peeping into a big box? (1 Samuel vi., 19). Did god's benevolence shine forth when he pierced with the arrow of death the bosoms of seventy thousand Jews because their king ventured to ascertain their number at the instigation of god himself? (2 Samuel xxiv., 15). God, as represented in the Bible, is anything but a lover of justice. He commanded his chosen people to invade another country, to cut to pieces the men, women, and children, and to keep the maidens for the use of the soldiers and priests (Deut. xx., 16, 17; Numbers xxxi., 17, 18). Was that justice? Who is the blasphemer, the man who denies the existence of such a god, or he who believes in his existence and represents him as an infinite murderer? God commanded Saul to slay man, women, infant, and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass (1 Samuel xv., 2, 3). He could not, or would not, even spare the brute beasts who had committed no crime. Is god a lover of truth assumed by Mr. Craig? He loved the lying Jacob, and hated the magnanimous Esau (Romans ix., 11, 13). David—a liar, deceiver, ingrate, adulterer, robber, and murderer—was a man after god's own heart! What sort of heart must it be? The Bible informs us that god kept lying spirits in heaven, and they

occasionally did errands for him, such as inducing a king and his people to go to battle to get butchered (2 Kings xxii, 19, 23). The Bible teaches that god sent his only son to expiate the crimes of others. Is it not an outrage upon common sense to ask a child to believe that it is consistent with justice to allow one person to die for the sins of another? It cannot be contended with any show of reason that the Bible is pure. For licentious narrative and filthy imagery the Bible occupies a unique position in literature. Is it right that a book containing the obscene stories of Lot and his daughters, Dinah, Tamar, Joseph and Potiphar's wife, Ahola and Aholibah should be put in the hands of a child? The Bible gives a most degrading view of human nature. It represents mankind as miserable sinners, worthy of god's wrath and condemnation. Such a view of human nature gives the death-blow to reform, and is discouraging to a philanthropist. The Bible teaches that the most stupendous crimes are consistent with infinite goodness. It advocates slavery (Lev. xxv., 45, 46; Exodus xxi., 6, 7, 11; Deut. xv., 18, 19). This is the most degrading institution that ever cursed the world. It has covered the world with blood and tears, and filled the hearts of millions with the pangs of inexpressible anguish. Millions have couched and trembled under the cruel lash, subjected to the fierce rays of a burning sun, and the callous priest has pointed to the word of god for a justification. Christians have contended that slavery was a divine institution. The miracles of the Bible are the consummation of infinite slavery (Genesis vii., 23). The prophecies of the Bible are unfulfilled to this day. The Bible is responsible for the death agonies of a hundred thousand innocent women. Thirty thousand women in England alone have been put to death on the charge of witchcraft. The injunction 'suffer not a witch to live' (Exodus xxii., 18) has changed man into a fiend, stifled the voice of pity, and strewed the earth with the ashes of innocence. The Bible sanctions polygamy (Num. xxxi., Deut. xxi). It gives a father authority to sell his own daughter (Exodus xxi., 7, 11). The Bible has been the cause of endless strife and enormous bloodshed. It plays into the hands of theological and political tyranny (2 Peter ii., 13, 14; Matthew v., 39; Ec. viii., 4; Exodus xxii., 20; Deut. xiii., 6). It is the advocate of ignorance and filth (1 Cor. xiv., 38; Rev. xxii., 11). It condemns the honest doubter to eternal flames (Rev. xxi., 8). It is opposed to marriage except upon the basest motives (Rom. vii., 1). Its morality is vicious (Matt. vi., 25, 34). It gives a father authority to murder his child in place of correcting him (Deut. xxi., 18, 21). The Bible treats woman as the puppet and slave of man (Peter iii., 1; Tim. i., 11, 12; Col. iii., 18; Ep. v., 22, 24; 1 Cor. xiv., 34, 35). It has filled the heart of man with horror by proclaiming that the majority of the human race are doomed to eternal pain (Luke xiii., 24). It puts belief on a higher level than good deeds. It teaches that there is no difference between a man and a beast (Ec. iii., 18, 19; Ps. xlix., 12; Ps. cxlvi., 4). The Bible has always been the enemy of progress. If the moral perceptions of a child are to be blunted, if his intellectual powers are to be cramped and perverted, if the noblest emotions and the highest aspirations of his nature are to be crushed or partially obliterated, command him to read and believe the Bible. The science of the Bible has been annihilated. Its cosmogony, geology, zoology, astronomy, biology, history, chronology, and philosophy are false as false can be. Its leading doctrines are absurd. Its god is an infinite fiend. Its savior is a visionary egotist. Its heaven is an empty dream. Its hell is a mere Will-o'-the-wisp to keep the ignorant in the orthodox fold. The Bible has been a foe to intellectual and material advance, the friend of ignorance, the bane of the philosopher, the enemy of science, and the fruitful source of fraud, cruelty, tyranny and lust. It is useful to the philosopher and the historian as the record of the gradual advance from barbarism of a primitive people struggling under the disadvantages incidental to a very low stage of civilisation. The Bible ought, however, never to be put in the hands of a child."

PRISONERS' AID FUND.

For the support of the families of the men now in gaol, for the protection of their interests, and for the aid of any others who may be in similar case; any balance to be used in the discretion of the Executive.

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C. HERBERT, *Treasurer*, 60 Goswell Road, London, E.C., to whom all remittances should be sent. Collecting sheets will be sent to any Freethinker on application to 28 Stonecutter Street.

CORRESPONDENCE.

MR. HOLYOAKE AND THE PRISONERS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

DEAR SIR,—I read in your last issue that Mr. G. J. Holyoake, formerly a Freethinker, refuses to sign the petition for the release of the blasphemy prisoners. I could not possibly understand this until it occurred to me that I read some time ago of Mr. Holyoake having been engaged for a certain sum of money, to do some little service for, or on behalf of, the Government. Can this have anything to do with Mr. Holyoake's secession from the Freethought ranks, and with his refusal to co-operate in attempting to obtain the release of Messrs. Foote, Ramsey, and Kemp? Anyhow, it is quite certain that since the engagement above referred to, Mr. Holyoake as a Freethinker as been extinguished.—Yours truly,
C. TIMMS.

BLASPHEMY BY A DEAD, AND THEREFORE SAFE POET.

With sober grace an heavenly maid walks in,
Her looks all fair; no sign of native sin
Through her whole body writ; immoderate grace
Spoke things far more than human in her face.
It casts a dusky gloom o'er all the flow'rs,
And with full beams their mingled light devours;
An angel straight broke from a shining cloud,
And prest his wings, and with much reverence bow'd;
Again he bow'd, and grave approach he made,
And thus his sacred message sweetly said:
"Hail, full of grace, thee the whole world shall call
Above all blest; thee, who shalt bless them all.
Thy virgin womb in wondrous sort shall shroud
Jesus the god (and then again he bow'd);
Conception the great spirit shall breathe on thee,
Hail thou, who must god's wife, god's mother be!"
With that, his seeming form to heav'n he reared,
Her low obeisance made, and disappeared.
To a new star three eastern sages see,
(For why should only earth a gainer be?)
They saw the phosphor's infant-light, and knew
It bravely ushered in a sun as new.
They hasted all this rising sun t' adore,
With them rich myrrh, and early spices bore;
Wise men! no fitter gift your zeal could bring,
You'll in a noisome stable find your king.
Anon a thousand devils run roaring in,
Some with a dreadful smile deformedly grin;
Some stamp their paws, some frown and tear
The gaping snakes from their black-knotted hair.
As if all grief, and all the rage of hell
Were doubled now, or that just now they fell;
But when the dreaded maid they entering saw,
All fled with trembling fear and silent awe.
In her chaste arms th' eternal infant lies,
Th' almighty voice changed into feeble cries;
Heaven contain'd virgins oft, and will do more,
Never did virgin contain heaven before.
Angels peep round to view this mystick thing,
And hallelujah round, all hallelujah sing.

ABRAHAM COWLEY.

The *Christian Commonwealth* advertises a portrait of Mr. Samuel Morley. It ought to add, "as he appeared when he eat humble-pie and resigned his seat for Bristol." *Christian Commonwealth* and Samuel Morley form a strange mixture. Samuel was a Jew, companion of Eli, not a Christian. Still there is much that is eely about the modern Samuel. But *Commonwealth* and Mr. Morley read oddly together. We always thought his was uncommon wealth.

A VOCABULARY OF SCRIPTURAL SCRAPS.

Asses.—The first four-legged theologian of repute was Balaam's ass; an obstinate animal, which god created in the image of all pious people. God once rode on an ass. But upon this important point diversity of opinion exists as to the number of asses concerned.

Atonement.—A disreputable bargain between a dishonest and brutal deity and a man lost to all sense of self-respect.

Babel.—Soon after a certain heavy shower, better known as the Noachian deluge, a race of people suffering from water on the brain, started "building castles in the air." Scared Omnipotence frustrated their plans, and foreign languages sprang into existence. The moral to this fable is—never try to get to heaven.

Baptism.—A scheme whereby the confiding parent imagines his offspring get their sins shifted off their shoulders by means of a little water sprinkled upon their pates. (More water on the brain). Medical men advocate it, as the babies catch cold and doctors have to be called in.

Blasphemy.—Speaking home-truths about religion.

Church.—A gigantic system for obtaining money under false pretences. Telling the world that god is "without variableness, and shadow of turning," it is continually praying him to change; proclaiming him to be incomprehensible, it undertakes to interpret him.

Calumny.—The weapon of the theologian in his combat with the Freethinker.

Clergy.—A despised and slavish section of the community, wearing an ignominious dress. Full of theology, they are, as a rule, devoid of brains. Unable to obtain an honest livelihood, they prey upon the people under the pretence of praying for them. Exclaiming against wickedness of wealth, they accumulate vast riches. They live in luxuriant mansions to imitate the man who had no place to lay his head.

H. SEYMOUR.

(To be continued.)

THE BRITISH GOSPEL BOOK ASSOCIATION

WE have enjoyed so hearty a laugh over "the Man on the top of the Ark," issued by this association, that we wish our readers to share it. The little book runs us hard in the matter of blasphemy. In Revelation xxii., 18, 19, it is written:—

"For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophesy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things god shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book." "And if any man shall take away from the words of the book at this prophesy, god shall take away his part out of the book of life and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book."

This is generally taken by Christians as referring to the Bible as a whole, as well as to the last book in it. But the Association invents a Noachian man called Irad, who climbs "nimble on the top of the ark, by one of the ladders still stained with pitch." Then the deluge comes, and apparently, though this is not made quite clear, he topples off from cold and hunger after a few general remarks about himself and god. But, as the penny dreadfuls say, we anticipate. Let us quote:—

"It wanted just ten days of the time when Noah said the Flood was to come. There he was—a stately, noble-looking, grave man—and his three sons. You could see they were his sons, though each had a well-marked face of his own, and none of them looked so grand as their old father. They were hard at work putting the last coat of pitch on the huge vessel they had been building so long—some on ladders plying big brushes, some bringing up the pitch hot from the caldron."

People come along. One of them is Irad, who, with a view to making the character of god as disreputable as of yore, is represented as a most excellent man.

"One of them was a strong comely person with no signs of levity or dissipation about him."

A delicious little piece of local or temporal coloring is given. Irad was "in the prime of some 400 years." There's attention to detail for you! His older companion is Jubal, of musical memory. Apparently the writer of the tract wants to pose as Jubal's lyre.

"This man arrested Ham on his way from the caldron to one of the ladders with a pot of warm pitch."

Conversation follows. Noah, "turning half round on his ladder," chimes in. No effect on Jubal, who takes his exit, "whistling." More realism! Irad stays, and the family

entice him. Shem speaks in large capitals, and Japhet, in smaller type, adds: "There's room enough for thee, friend Irad. Come."

Irada looks in, sees all the arrangements for the cattle. Perhaps, in consequence of this, he jibs at the offer. But he is virtuous, and withal a trifle conceited.

"I'm not like Jubal. I have always been honest, and kept out of dissipation. You know I am as religious a man as yourselves. Enoch was a near relation of mine, you remember. I never was close fisted or lavish, or a mocker of parents, like some; I never was the worse of wine in my life, like others."

All this is rather rough on Jubal and the family. The latter, by the way, only try to save Irad. We suppose there was only room for one. The animals appear in the regulation pairs, and Irad thinks he sees a Hand: the next moment

THE DOOR WAS SHUT.

Then comes the rain and the nimble climbing of Irad on to the ark. "Swollen corpses dash about his feet." A raven is waiting for his flesh. Irad with beautiful Biblical power quotes Byron! (*sic*). And

"Then the hoarse croak of the raven sounded like late, too late."

Then three and a half pages of texts and hymns with many italics and capitals, and finally the name of the printers who can be found willing to print the foul stuff. J. and R. Parlane, Paisley.

The whole thing would be irresistibly comic, but for its intense wickedness. But indignation masters our sense of humor, when we see this ghastly attempt at the perpetuation of a demoralising story; when we see this condemnation of all efforts to live a good, honest life.

PROFANE JOKES.

"You must cheer up. Remember that everything is for the best. You must not grieve. Just remember that your wife is in heaven, where there is everlasting peace," said the Rev. Joseph Miggles to the poor man who had recently lost his wife. The widower shook his head, and replied sadly: "I wish I could think so, but I can't. There may have been peace in heaven before she got there; but you know what sort of a woman she was."

OUR irreverent young man wants to know if a Socinian is necessarily bald, because he's a Unit-hairy'un.

THE cricket reports are as irreverent as the Salvation Army. We read in an account of a match at Cambridge, "that Jesus lost the toss." Visions of the three members of the Long Firm going odd man out for a bottle of lemonade rise before us and we understand how the two elder partners had "squared it," and once again let in the unsuspecting Galilean.

AT the time of the French Revolution a Catholic priest applied to the minister having the control of the prisons for a permit to visit a prisoner who had sent for him. The permit was given: "Admit the bearer, servant to a personage called god."

JAHVEH AND JUDGE BRIEN.—Moses slew an Egyptian, an enemy and oppressor of his people, and Jehovah made him his elect. Brady killed Burke, and Judge Brien hangs him for his action. Clearly Moses deserved hanging.

THE BIBLE AND SCIENCE.—Christ was a parable-er (parabola). Wasn't he?

THOMAS COOPER ON CHARLES DARWIN.—Mr. Thomas Cooper has been playing the mountebank again. Some friends forward to us notices of a more than usually wicked lecture of his delivered at Liverpool. They ask us to answer him. Proverbs xxvi., 4, "Answer not a fool according to his folly." Mr. Thomas Cooper is altogether unworthy of reply. He does not deceive any one, not even himself, by his elephantine and worn-out jests. Thoughtful men are only pained by the spectacle of a man using the last hours of his life in trying to prevent human progress and in opposing the antics of a buffoon to the reasoning of a philosopher.

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A Monthly

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Edited by

G. W. Foote.

Interim Editor, EDWARD B. AVELING, D.Sc.

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BEING A

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