

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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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]

THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEVIL.

JUSTICE NORTH began it. The Bishop of Truro has continued it, and the Devil is now fairly entitled with the clown in the pantomime to shout "Here we are again." Everybody who thought at all, had considered Satan as one dead and buried. Even those who had once believed in him, always spoke of him in the hushed, decorous tones that we use in mentioning one recently deceased. But Justice North on the bench, and the Bishop of Truro in the pulpit have spoken and Hey, presto! Diabolus redivivus and stalking in the midst of us again.

With the classic utterances of Justice North we have already dealt. The Bishop claims attention to-day. He preached a sermon in Truro pro-cathedral recently, on a personal Satan. It is strange that he did not take his text from god's word, "For this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found." If god could speak, he might fitly make this remark of his son the Devil, when a Bishop of the English Church revives that defunct personage.

The usual theological conundrums are propounded in the sermon, and no answers are given. Thus, many persons "have been preserved, through god's mercy, from the folly of denying a creator," but have denied the existence of the Devil. "Through god's mercy" is a favorite phrase of the Bishop. He fails to see that if good has resulted from god's mercy, evil has resulted from his cruelty. It must be both or neither, my Lord Bishop. We cannot permit these half and half measures. The preacher is correct, however, when he says that many persons have been preserved (through their own common sense) from denying the existence of a creator. All Atheists, for example, have thus been preserved, and they have also saved themselves from the folly of asserting such an existence.

The belief in god is in accord with the "instincts of our nature." So are murder and lust. But an educated civilisation is gradually eliminating these crimes as it is eliminating the grotesque god-creed.

The Bishop repudiates all the modern theories as to a principle rather than a person of evil. "There is something more than all this; there is a being who, as a roaring lion, lives, goes about." We are irresistibly reminded of Bottom the weaver in the "Midsummer's Night's Dream."

BOTTOM: "Let me play the lion, too. I will roar that I will do any man's heart good to hear me: I will roar that I will make the duke say, 'Let him roar again, let him roar again.'"

"But I will aggravate my voice so, that I will roar you as gently as any sucking dove: I will roar you an't were any nightingale."

Then follows a deliciously funny account of the "goings on" of the naughty Devil, preceded by the remark, "It is quite true, thank god for it, that the power of the Devil is limited." If we thank god for the limitation, we must surely thank him for the original power thus limited and must, in a word, be grateful to god for the Devil. This latter worthy, according to the Bishop, "entered into Paradise and wrestled with our first parents and threw them."

One regrets that Gustave Doré, in his imaginative style, did not deal with this free-fight in the Garden of Eden. He would have made much of Adam, trying to give Satan the first back-heel and being thrown by the inside click, while Eve did her level, if little best, by harassing the Devil in the rear and hanging on to his tail. But the Devil of the Bishop of Truro goes further than wrestling. "He burst out like a lion sure of his prey and devoured" Adam and Eve. Clearly he not only went further, but fared better. Is not this, however, something of a wrestling, we mean wrestling, of the Scripture? Genesis has nothing about this early lunch of Satan. One point, if the Bishop is accurate, is for ever cleared up. That is, as to the origin of prayer. This is clearly diabolic, for he tells us that the Devil was "sure of his prey."

Next, the Devil has a wrestle in the second round with Christ, wringing "from him great sweat like drops of blood," and worsts him, for Calvary follows. The Bishop explains this defeat as a victory. Finally, he turns his attention to what, with an eye to their future fate, may be called the smaller fry and goes for sinners generally.

According to our Bishop, one Devil "in his time plays many parts." We know he was a serpent—then he is a lion and anon a fowl. "Our lord tells us that outside the church-door Satan, with his invisible army, has already come down, like fowls of the earth, to pluck away the seed." The audience would have infallibly run out of the church to see this strange assemblage of birds, but for the omniscient Bishop's assurance that the army was invisible. On the whole, this zoological account of Satan is an argument in favor of Evolution, if the order of development were not open to suspicion. A serpent (Reptilia) might develop into a lion (Mammalia); but could it revert to a fowl (Aves)? Bottom again to the rescue: "There is no more fearful wild fowl than your lion."—"Midsummer's Night's Dream."

Later on, Satan is sowing tares (as if he were a seamstress), a process that seems incompatible with the habits of a serpent, a lion, or a fowl.

Then the Bishop comes to practical matters. With him, as with Bunsby, the moral of this lies in the application of it. He believes in the mental, as well as the bodily evolution of Satan:—

"He is wise; he has gained much experience in the thousands of years in which he has struggled with human souls; he has gathered up a great store of Satanic learning, from all the manifold stratagems he has planned for the souls now waiting in darkness for the judgment of the great day."

Hence, the Bishop asks with true clerical impertinence, "What is your temptation?" and with impertinence that can only be called episcopal, suggests "the love of money." This comes rather fitly from the holder of an office worth £15,000 a year. Truly—and Tru-ro-ly—says his grace, "the most deadly of all temptations is the one we do not suspect." On the other hand, he might urge that he is very literally following his own advice, "to keep one's-self in cheque."

God has given us the power of yielding as well as of resisting temptation. As the same god has also with great forethought provided the temptation it is certain that we

have to be grateful to him for small mercy. Nor do we derive any consolation from the statement that god is loving when we see him murdering his well-beloved son, like a deific and more mature Abraham, or from the dictum that "whom the lord loveth he chasteneth." This last idea always seems to place god upon the level of a black-country dog-fancier and man upon that of the dog fancied.

Finally our Bishop is equally well acquainted with the doings of god and of the Devil. The soul of some brother clergyman who had, unfortunately, died suddenly on the preceding Sunday, "had gone to god," probably with a protest against his work being interfered with. And even a "whisper" of Satan is overheard by the Bishop of Truro, whose ears appear to be longer than those of other men.

After the epitome of this extraordinary revivalist discourse, comes, with something of an anti-climax, the statement that "the Mayor and Corporation, together with the city magistrates and the various officers of the Corporation, attended in state." History does not record whether the state was one of suppressed mirth or of somnolence.

EDWARD B. AVELING, D.Sc.

THE FORTNIGHTLY REVIEW ON BLASPHEMY AND THE COMMON LAW.

THE legal position of Freethinkers, even of the highly cultured sceptics who contribute to the half-a-crown monthlies, is as yet so unsatisfactory that some utterance was to be expected from the *Fortnightly Review*, wherein have appeared some of the strongest attacks which have been made in our time upon the prevailing superstition. Immediately before the first *Freethinker* trial, Sir James Fitzjames Stevens issued his "History of the Criminal Law," probably the most important contribution to legal literature since "Blackstone's Commentaries," and therein (chap. xxv. of Offences against Religion, vol. ii., pp. 475-6), after reviewing its history, he lays down the law in regard to blasphemy in a way which thoroughly bears out Mr. Foote's contention that its impartial application would mean the imprisonment of every high-class bookseller. Sir J. F. Stephen's words are of such high authority that I shall venture to quote them at length:—

"To say that the crime lies in the manner and not in the matter appears to me to be an attempt to evade and explain away a law which has no doubt ceased to be in harmony with the temper of the times. It is unquestionably true that in the course of the last thirty, but especially in the course of the last twenty years, open avowals of the disbelief of the truth of both natural and revealed religion have become so common that they have ceased to attract attention. To mention only the writings of foreigners, Strauss' "Leben Jesu," Renan's "Vie de Jésus," and the works of Auguste Comte, are read everywhere, and the opinions which they maintain are avowedly held and publicly maintained by large numbers of persons whose good faith and decency of language it would be absurd to dispute. If the cases to which I have referred are good law, every one of these works is a blasphemous libel, and every bookseller who sells a copy of any one of them, every master of a lending library who lets out one to hire, nay, every owner of any such book who lends it to a friend, is guilty of publishing a blasphemous libel, and is liable to fine and imprisonment. These are certainly strong reasons why the law should be altered. They might, if any one should try to put the law into force, be strong grounds for mitigation of punishment, but they are no reasons at all for saying that the law is not that which a long and uniform course of decisions has declared it to be."

Mr. John Macdonell, in the current number of the *Fortnightly*, likewise takes a review of the cases, but says he fails to find this uniformity. Mr. Macdonell's failure appears to arise from the variance in the dicta of the judges. The fact remains that although some judges have laid stress on the manner and others on the matter, all past prosecutions for blasphemy resulted in convictions. In Woolston's case Lord Raymond "would not suffer it to be debated whether to write against Christianity in general was not an offence of temporal cognisance;" and in the cases of Williams and of Carlile and his shopmen, this was supported again and again by Justices Kenyon, Abbot and Best. These justices were guided not only by the decisions of their predecessors but by the clear ruling of the unrepealed statute 9 and 10 William III., chap. 32, by which it is an offence for any person brought up as a Christian to deny the truth of Christianity, however respectfully. That no prosecution

has ever taken place under that statute has, I suspect, arisen from the difficult onus of proving the prosecuted party to have been brought up in the Christian faith rather than from its acceptance as a dead letter. Mr. Macdonell points out that in this, as in other matters, the history of the common law is associated with the general history of thought and speculation. Blasphemy he traces through the three stages of being an ecclesiastical offence punished by church tribunals, becoming a secular offence, the State protecting orthodox Christianity, and, finally, the mere prohibition of ridicule and contumely. It seems to me that Mr. Macdonell's stages are not nearly so well made out as the general principle laid down by Sir J. F. Stephen. A shrinking from the odium of persecution has made judges lay stress on the use of offensive words where such formed part of the indictment, but not until the recent ruling of Lord Chief Justice Coleridge, or, at any rate, of his father in the Pooley case, was this made the gravamen of the offence. In one of the most recent decisions, that of *Cowan v. Milburn*, 1867, Lord Kelly and Baron Bramwell laid it down that every attack on Christianity must as such be illegal; and in the celebrated Gathercole case Baron Alderson declared it no offence to cast ridicule or contempt on Judaism, Buddhism, or Mahomedanism, but only on Christianity, because Christianity is the established religion of the country. I do not see how these decisions can be made to square with Mr. Macdonell's three stages.

The truth is that in regard to such an impossible offence as blasphemy the dictum of any judge is sure to be colored by his personal culture and prejudices. The bench does not occupy a lofty position serene above the controversies of the time, neither is it usually abreast of them. Given a judge who has been bred in bigotry and those who stand before him charged with "blasphemy" will be browbeaten as noxious criminals before they open their mouths; given a judge who to legal learning adds intellectual culture, and the same persons are treated as gentlemen; and if he sees a possibility of their punishment, that punishment is represented as for their own protection. Without challenging the great advance indicated by Lord Coleridge's judgment that even the fundamentals of religion may be attacked so long as the attack is not malicious, indecent, or insulting, I can but think the weight of law was originally intended to extirpate heresy. Mr. Macdonell himself tells us how it was applied against the Unitarians. In Waddington's case, which was decided in 1822, Justice Best was careful to say that the repeal of the statutory disabilities against Unitarians left the common law intact; and not until the judges gave their answers to the questions put to them by the House of Lords in *Lady Hewley's* case in 1842, was it clear that Unitarianism was no longer illegal. The object of the law was to put down unbelief, and since its framers believed unbelief to be deadly sin they were logically correct. There is no way in which the sincere belief of any religionist can be attacked, without wounding his feelings; for his feelings are bound up in his religion, and in proportion to his faith is he likely to look on such an attack as malicious and insulting. The missionary insults the idolater's reverence for his idols, the Protestant would take away the consolation the Catholic gets from worshipping his saints. Ridicule, as Mr. Foote pointed out in a masterly way, is but a form of reasoning, the *reductio ad absurdum*. It is the sharpest knife in the case of the controversialist, and his justification of its use is the deftness with which he can amputate diseased members. The logical outcome of Lord Coleridge's charge would be a sweeping away of the law of blasphemous libel and this, although he is equally careful not to say so, is the case with Mr. Macdonell. He declares the conclusion he arrives at is that dogma must be left to take care of itself, but he would punish persistent obtrusion of opinion on religious subjects amounting to annoyance, and outrage calculated to lead to a breach of the peace. To such a law very little exception could be taken, but it would fall under the head of "common nuisances" and not under that of "blasphemy," and its penalties would be less likely to fall on Freethinkers than on Salvationists, who persistently ask if you have found Jesus, and who with their noise and excitement endanger the mental and physical health of the community.

J. M. WHEELER.

SALVATIONIST A: "God's in our army: hold's a post there."
Salvationist B: "Get out! 'e ain't." Salvationist A: "Yes 'e is. He's made yer."

VOCABULARY OF SCRIPTURAL SCRAPS.

[Concluded from p. 175.]

Doubt.—The Christian god possesses some strange and some stringent notions of morality. May be, some noble fellow had been reading the vile crimes of David, and could not believe that an infinitely good god moved in such society. He could not be convinced that David was really a man after god's own heart. He had a better opinion of deity. But "he who disbelieveth must be damned," and for this impious impertinence he was consigned to an eternity of torment.

Eucharist.—In the barbaric past, god paid man frequent visits. When man became civilised god's visits become less frequent. He can only be seen now on very rare occasions. The only place to see the infinite ruler of the universe is a Christian church on the occasion of the Eucharist.

Faith.—Faith, *i.e.* gullibility, is a very useful commodity in matters of theology. The clergy tell us that "human reason" is not a safe guide. This is the more convincing as the statement is itself due to that very human reason which is condemned by it.

Fool.—A word now gone out of polite society. The Old Testament writers were fond of it. According to Christ it was as good as a single ticket to hell.

God.—Some nations have gods exclusively their own. Others are so exceedingly mean as to only afford second-hand ones. The Christians only possess a secondhand god, stolen from the Jews. Every receiver is as bad as the original thief.

Honesty.—It is a consolation to be able to believe that some preachers are honest. They have taught the false creed so often as to actually believe it themselves.

Hell.—To the Christian a terror, to the Atheist a laughing-stock, to god a disgrace. The Christian Church once published a treatise (*De Statu Mortuorum*), purposely written in Latin, on account of too much light being hurtful to weak eyes; this treatise not only justified, but strongly recommended the clergy to seriously preach and maintain the morality of eternal torment whether or not they believed the doctrine themselves.

Infidel.—An obstinate man who will not be convinced that one god is three gods and no less, yet all three gods put together only make one god, and no more.

Jonah.—A sea-gull, swallowed by a whale. It is difficult to determine which suffered more during the performance, but the whale evidently didn't come out best man. Jonah did, although he was an outcast. But the poor fish was left to wail over the horrible evils of indigestion without a leg to stand upon.

Jews.—A race of people who were told by their god to murder the man who would reform their religion. They took him at his Word. God afterwards disguised himself and the Jews actually hanged *him* for trying to reform their religion. Then god punished the Jews for having been deceived by him, the omnipotent.

Knowledge.—The most damnable of heresis. Adam, by tasting the tree of knowledge, was of course a Freethinker. Had god given Adam a little theological instruction, he would have saved that apple.

Liberty (of the Press).—The desire of the nations, the dread of the Church.

Miracles.—When miracles were exceedingly numerous, unbelievers were exceedingly few. But now that unbelievers are many, sticks no longer twist into snakes; iron refuses to swim; women have left off turning into salt; dead people don't come to life; the sun and moon no longer find it convenient to have a day's rest; a rainbow is not considered the best restorative for a bad memory; a few loaves and fishes refuse to satisfy the appetites of hungry multitudes, who, if they are half-starved, are certainly not dainty enough to leave more than they had before they started.

North (Justice).—A "cardinal point" of law which sets forth that all persons transferring their god-given talents to the service of a serpent which formerly crawled upon its belly, and therefore hadn't a foot(e) to stand on, shall be refuted by the strictly religious argument of a year's imprisonment.

Omnipotence.—The power to create a devil to outwit and a man to defy (not defy) the omnipotent.

Prayer.—Prayers for rain are continually offered up, although the barometer is consulted with the greatest degree of confidence; prayers for the protection of life and pro-

perty, although the churches are protected by the infidel Franklin's lightning conductors; prayers for health and activity, although the most credulous pious person would exhaust his entire income before depending on a prescription from providence; prayers for "daily bread" that is ordered from the baker beforehand.

Persecution.—The argument of Christianity.

Quarrels.—None quarrel like religious people. They each pronounce and denounce each other's creed as a delusion. "Out of evil cometh good," and out of these religious rows comes the best testimony to the worthlessness of religion.

Reason.—Man's highest possession. It must be lost ere he becomes godly.

Sabbath.—A day of rest instituted by an infinitely powerful god, extremely weary after having done a week's work.

Theology.—Theology is like a box of pills. You must swallow it without chewing, or you certainly won't get it down at all.

Trials.—Calamities which befall a person opposed to our religion are "judgments." Calamities which befall one of our flock are "trials."

Unity.—It is said that god himself is a Unitarian, existing in an everlasting minority of one. The adherents of the various sects of Christendom consequently endeavor to imitate him, and, like the Kilkeny cats, ferociously fighting to demonstrate which is the real god, leave at last nothing but tales.

Vice.—The unpardonable vice is to deny the sincerity of those gentlemen who extract large incomes from the people while they preach poverty.

Warfare.—A virtuous method of converting one's neighbors, or "conveying" their property by the sword in the name of the religion and law which condemns an individual cut-throat to the gibbet.

Zeal.—That true and god-like spirit of enthusiasm which consists in killing or putting into prison all those evil-disposed persons who cannot or will not conform to the blessed beliefs of the Christian creed.

H. SEYMOUR.

MAN'S DUTY TOWARDS GOD.

PRIESTS and religion-mongers of all creeds are eloquent on the subject of man's duty towards god. We deny that such a duty exists. We are told that god has laid down certain commands, which all who are desirous of partaking of heavenly bliss, and escaping eternal torment hereafter, must obey implicitly and unhesitatingly. Such commands as are not at variance with our own notions of morality and common sense we obey without asking who laid down the law, and without first calculating whether we are to be rewarded for our compliance or punished for non-compliance with them. Those which we cannot understand we surely cannot obey with any sincerity, since fear would be our sole motive, and that alone surely would not procure us passports for heaven.

Such laws as are in accordance with justice we obey, not as part of our duty towards god, but towards our fellow-men.

We love humanity, but cannot love a being of whom we know nothing, and in whose name such incalculable miseries have been inflicted on the human race.

We are told that the mere fact of our existence implies a duty towards god. But, by allowing us to exist, god, knowing our propensity to err, has wilfully allowed us to run the risk of eternal damnation. He knows beforehand that we should not believe in him, yet he has allowed us to exist, and infidelity to develop and take root, until it pervades our whole system. No Theist can deny this, and by this we deny any responsibility on our part towards god. We are to be damned for unbelief, and our sentence was read thousands of years ago, yet we are to love and revere the being who first created us with sin, and then punishes the very transgressions of which he himself was the original author!

God has, say the "true" believers, endowed us with the faculty of reasoning. This very faculty is the origin of our unbelief, and through this faculty—the direct gift of god—we are to be damned eternally!

This is eminently illogical, and though we are assured that god is superior to logic and consistency, that does not alter the fact that, if we are to be damned for infidelity, then

god, by giving us reason, which caused the unbelief, knowing full well at the time to what ends that reason would lead us, has constituted himself our moral and bodily assassin, and any idea of duty towards such a being we reject with indignity and contumely.

SANS BARBE.

THE SEVENTH DAY.

WHAT a grand and ennobling conception of the "great architect of the universe" is embodied in the book of Genesis! If anyone feels inclined to risk the damnation of his immortal soul by doubting this he has only to read the second verse of the second chapter of that sublime and inimitable production and his doubts will vanish like mist before the summer sun. "And on the seventh day god ended the work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made." Imagine a god of infinite energy and capacity requiring rest after the manner of a tired workman! "Oh, but," says the Christian, "these words by no means imply that god suffered bodily fatigue as a result of his six days' labor, they are simply to be understood as signifying the completion of his work." In six days the lord made heaven and earth and on the seventh day he *rested* and was *refreshed*. If these words do not teach that god's energies were exhausted, either wholly or in part, and that in order that these might be recouped he indulged in the luxury of a day's rest and was refreshed thereby, then language has no meaning.

Only a small modicum of Christians (and these the most ignorant and illiterate) now believe that this universe, with its diverse and manifold phenomena, was produced in six days. Such persons, utterly ignorant of the science of geology, see no reason to doubt that the days mentioned in the first of Genesis were ordinary days, each of twenty-four hours duration. The more intelligent and better educated among them, however, well knowing that such an hypothesis is utterly absurd when looked at in the light of geological science, seek to overcome the difficulty by affirming that these days mean vast indefinite periods of time. A moment's consideration, however, will suffice to show that such a contention is utterly unwarranted and unwarrantable. If the six days mean vast periods, then it clearly follows that the same must be true of the seventh. Now these periods would have to be stretched to millions of years in order to meet the requirements of geology. Suppose the seventh day to embrace, say one million years, or if that is too long, a thousand years, Jehovah then must have rested, or intended to rest, for that period of time. Strange spectacle! Poor god! The creation of the universe so taxed his infinite energies that he has been resting since! Truly, in one sense, he sleeps; he sleeps the sleep from which there is no awakening. Yes, the hideous being, who in days of yore was wont to brag and boast about making his arrows drunk with the blood of widows and orphans, is now as dead as Jupiter or Bacchus, or any of the other ancient mythological gods. The force of early prejudice must be strong indeed if Christians can still retain their belief in the Bible when confronted by such a ludicrous absurdity as its statement that an omnipotent god required rest and refreshment like a human being. If there were no other difficulty in the Bible than the one upon which I have commented, it alone would afford a sufficient justification for the rejection of the doctrine of its divine inspiration.

BLOOMFIELD STEVENS.

ACID DROPS.

ARTHUR SYER poisons his baby-brother, as he wishes the child to go to heaven. Another fruit of Christianity!

LORD SHAFTESBURY wants to know if the failure of the National Refuges for Homeless and Destitute Children is consistent with the great wealth of London. A far more pertinent, and less impertinent, question than that of his lordship would be, "Is the existence of homeless and destitute children consistent with the great goodness of god?"

FOR the benefit of our readers who are credulous and too generous to dishonest men we print the following formal and

categorical statements in respect to Frederick Rowland Young, editor of the *Shield of Faith*. He is not a D.D. No university has conferred upon him any honorary degree. The university whence this person said his degree emanated does not exist.

INTO what strange folly men are led by pretending to believe in religion! The Attorney-General, as to whose ability no question can exist, in the course of the trial of the men accused of preparing dynamite, speaking of the risk run in the transference of the nitro-glycerine from Birmingham to London, actually used these words: "And that no accident occurred could only be ascribed to the protection which a higher power extended to those persons who were near." If a higher power could thus interfere with the transactions of men and chemicals, why, in the name of all gods and devils, did he not interfere earlier, and prevent the making of the explosives altogether. In any other connexion save that into which this debasing and demoralising religious idea enters, the absurdity of Sir Henry James's position would be at once seen, and by no one more readily than himself. But religion not only lowers the moral character. It dulls the mental perception and the power of reasoning of her Majesty's Attorney-General.

"THE Church of England Christian Association. Unsatisfactory condition of affairs. Collapse of the Society." Unfortunately these delightful periods are only true in regard to Hastings, not England. It is good news that such an association has broken down, but if only the news came of the whole Christian association in this land, how hopeful would be the future of England. Happily "unsatisfactory condition of affairs" is true of the Church in our country generally. But its collapse is not yet. Let us hope that the failure of the Hastings Church Association may be a good omen as well as a good to men.

A CORRESPONDENT writes:—"I had occasion to attend the Committee of the House of Commons on Tramway Bills one day last week, and was greatly edified by the manner in which the devotions of that august and pious body are managed. In the middle of an examination of a witness the door was violently flung open and an official shouted, in a stentorian voice, 'Prayers.' The chairman, Lord Emsly, whispered to a colleague and smiled; the other members smiled and looked foolish; the general public tittered, and of course, nobody obeyed the summons. The business went on again as soon as we had recovered from the shock of surprise caused by the interruption. Soon afterwards it was my privilege, not being a Quaker or Moravian, to kiss the blessed (and unhappy) book as a preliminary to giving evidence, and I could not help thinking what a lively and intellectual occupation is that of the youth who administers the 'so help you god.' I wonder how many hundreds a year he has for doing it. But what a disgusting farce the whole business is! If the Legislature really cared for the sanctity of their religion, their oath, or their deity, they would hasten to make a clean sweep of chaplain, prayers, oath, appeals to god in Queen's speeches, and all the rest of the demoralising humbug."

ONE of the most ghastly returns of modern times is that issued last week, which shows that fifty-eight deaths occurred in 1882 in the metropolitan district upon which coroner's juries returned a verdict of death from *starvation*. Fifty-eight of our fellow creatures deprived of existence for want of the common necessities of life. And this occurs in the richest city in the world; in the city that boasts of its millionaires, of its Westminsters and Bedfords; in the city that spends £26,000 sterling in entertaining a Royal Prince for a single day; in the city that boasts of its Christian churches, its city missions, and charity organisations; in the city where at every turn munificence, wealth, and splendor are faced by squalor, misery, and want. And is that terrible record exhausted by those fifty-eight deaths? Alas!—No. Those who know anything of the poor are alive to the fact that thousands are brought to a premature grave through privation and want. In fact we may say of our worst paid laborers that theirs is one long bitter struggle for the necessities of life. It may be truly said in thousands of cases in this great metropolis theirs is a living death. And yet the sleek well-fed priest will continually din into their ears to be thankful (to whom, and for what?), to do their duty in that state of life into which it has pleased god to call them. Most damnable of doctrines and one of the most effective and heaviest fetters ever forged for humanity. And these poor struggling toilers, dragging out a miserable existence, yet adding to the wealth of the few, are called by the Churchills and Tylers, residuum, scum, etc. My earnest hope is when these suffering millions know their power they will be sufficiently educated to demand reforms of such a nature as will brighten their lives, and not be actuated by wild feelings of revenge. But surely the above terrible return will act as a warning to those who have wealth, power, and position, that men who build up the fortunes of others will not always be content with a life of starvation to conclude with a pauper's grave.

SPECIAL NOTICES.

Next Week we shall publish a Portrait of G. W. Foote, with a short notice of his work. Order early; a large sale expected.

A Mass Meeting will be held in St. James's Hall, Piccadilly, on Wednesday, July 11th, to protest against the imprisonment of Messrs. Foote and Ramsey.

DR. AVELING'S LECTURE.

Dr. Edward B. Aveling (interim editor of the *Freethinker*) will lecture in the Milton Hall, Hawley Crescent, Kentish Town, on Sunday, June 24th, at 7.30; subject—"Pedigree of Man."

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.—Edgar T. Benton, E. W., A. F., Excelsior.

T. E.—You can obtain tickets for some of the seats at the St. James's Hall meeting at the office of this paper. A few are on sale at 2s. 6d. each, for friends who wish to avoid the crush that is sure to take place.

A. Z.—There is a possibility of Mr. Frederick Harrison speaking at the meeting on behalf of our friends in prison.

ELECTOR.—You may be sure that wherever Sir William Harcourt attempts to stand for at any future election, he will find the whole of the powerful Freethought party arrayed against him. We shall not forget his treatment of our men.

F. P.—We thought the first Eve-angel was Adam.

A FRIEND IN NEED.—Thank you for resolve to double your subscriptions to the *Freethinker* and *Progress* on hearing that someone was deserting us in this time of trouble.

BLASPHEMER.—You will do wisely to be early at St. James Hall on July 11th. We expect a crowd.

M. HONORE gives, for the benefit of the Prisoners' Aid Fund, fifty copies of the Song, "Little Bird," for soprano or tenor, in F and G; also fifty copies of the Cock-Crow Polka; each copy selling at one shilling at 28 Stonecuttr Street.

A. W. suggests that we allow the space of one column each week to anyone who can supply a readable report of a theological lecture.

CHECKWEIGHAM is requested to forward his address to the editor, as the papers he has for disposal are being inquired after.

S. WILKINSON.—Thanks for good wishes.

AGENTS wanted in town and country to sell this paper and other Freethought literature.

SUGAR PLUMS.

We hear with great delight that our Glasgow friends have Science Classes that have been a distinct success.

On a recent Tuesday, Mr. Frederick Verinder, Hon. Secretary of the Guild of St. Matthew, lectured at Walworth. The chair was taken by Dr. Edward B. Aveling. The fact that Mr. Verinder is the secretary of the Guild of Churchmen that has behaved so nobly in regard to the blasphemy prosecutions, and that Mr. Verinder was to deal with those prosecutions from a Christian standpoint, made the lecture of interest. Mr. Verinder's modesty and kindness made it of unusual interest. He speaks easily, not ungracefully, and several times says really "good things." The most important point in the lecture was his establishment, from the Bible, of his thesis that blasphemy only means, scripturally, the bringing of religion into disrepute by the bad living of professors of religion, and that therefore blasphemy was an impossible crime to the Atheist. Mr. Verinder ought to have many invitations to lecture from all bodies of thinkers who are not wholly and blindly wedded to one order of thought and to intolerance of every order other than theirs.

BISHOP BUTLER, in his "Analogy," says, "Reason is the only faculty we have wherewith to judge concerning everything, even revelation itself; for if it contain clear immoralities or contradictions, either of these would prove it false."

ROMAN CATHOLIC FOOD FOR CHILDREN.

THE proud boast of the Roman Church, *Semper Eadem* (always the same), is far truer than many people think. Despite the ever-progressing tide of human civilisation, the Catholic Church desperately endeavors to hold fast to its ancient moorings. A worldly cunning, and a sense of the hopelessness of the struggle, have combined to make the Roman clergy modify some of their public claims; but in their insistence upon the complete submission of the faithful individual to his priestly master, their pretensions are as arrogant and as intolerable as they were four centuries ago. To prove the truth of this allegation, we must look, not at the carefully-considered public utterances of such wily propagandists as Cardinal Manning, but at the books and manuals which the Church provides for the use and edification of "the faithful."

A little pamphlet, to which several years ago I drew attention, will illustrate my argument. I refer to that interesting and cheerful work, "The Terrible Judgment and the Bad Child," by the Rev. Father Furniss, author of "Hell Opened to Christians." The booklet is appropriately covered by a wrapper of sulphurous hue, and the happy resemblance between the author's name and the word *Furnace* helps to heighten the effect. The pamphlet is no unauthorised publication, it is issued *Permissu Superiorum*, and comes forth with all the weight of official approval.

"The Terrible Judgment" is written for *children*. The literary style is carefully adapted to their comprehension, and every effort is made to impress the mind of the juvenile reader with the dreadful truth of the statements contained in its pages. The object is to frighten the young into submission to the clergy and the Church. How cunningly the means are adapted to this end, how disastrous the effect of such vile, hideous trash must be upon the innocent, tender minds of children, I shall endeavor to show as briefly as possible.

In the first place there is an absolutely sublime impudence of lying. The young reader is gravely told of a certain St. John Climacus, whose "life was so holy that the wild beasts, the lions and tigers, had respect for him. They came and lay down at his feet. They came and ate out of his hand." The child might perhaps imagine that, even if the story were true, in all probability Jack was so skinny that the lions and tigers gained more by eating occasionally "out of his hand" than they would have done had they picked his bones. But this by the way. I simply quote it for the purpose of showing what "bouncers" the priestly author sets before his youthful readers as undisputed facts.

The whole of the early divisions are devoted to depicting the unspeakable terrors of the Day of Judgment. To this end he represents the most saintly people of by-gone days—men and women who devoted their lives to religious exercises (for *that* is held up as the ideal of a worthy career)—as dying in mortal dread of that awful day. If these holy men and women (so the rev. father moralises)—if *they* had cause for alarm, how much more shall you, and so forth.

Having thus prepared the way for his great effects, the author gives an account of the Judgment Day. Presuming it to be authentic, supposing Father Furniss to have access to sources of information not open to others, the description would have some value apart from its mere picturesqueness. On this point, of course, I am unable to give an opinion. Having pictured a death-bed scene, the rev. writer proceeds:—

"The first moment after death has passed; the silence of death has not been broken. The people are looking in silence at the dead body. The change from life to death has filled them with terror and silent wonder. It has been a moment of deep, deep silence. They have seen nothing, they have heard nothing. Yet during that one silent moment after death, when nothing was seen, nothing was heard, a most tremendous thing has happened. If all the thunders and lightnings of the skies had burst down into that room, it would be nothing. Something a thousand times more terrible has happened. But the terrible thing has happened without the people seeing or knowing anything of it. In that one, first, little, quiet moment after death—the soul has stood before the judgment-seat of Jesus Christ—sentence has been passed—the soul is in hell, or it will be in heaven for evermore!"

Then we get more facts. Father Furniss assures us that "as soon as the soul is out of the body these wonderful things happen: first, the soul gets a most wonderful and

most extraordinary knowledge. No person on earth has or could have such knowledge. A baby only a day old dies. As soon as the baby's soul is out of its body, it knows a million times more than all the people that ever were or will be on the earth." It is a great pity that some of this "wonderful knowledge" is not vouchsafed to the individual before his "soul" leaves his body. If that were so, the dastardly craft of Father Furniss and his colleagues, the trade of crushing and enslaving the intelligence of rising generations, would be for ever gone.

Space warns me to conclude. I shall return to the subject, and show further how these priestly mind-murderers rivet their fetters upon the helpless children who are unhappy enough to come under their influence.

GEO. STANDRING.

FROM THE SCUM OF THE LAND TO LORD R. CHURCHILL.

Oh offspring of the Marlbro' race!
How dare you call us to our face,
Scum of the land? Your very name
Should make you hang your head in shame.
The friends of liberty and truth,
You call them snobs and scum, forsooth!
Forgetting that these snobs are bled
To furnish you with daily bread.

Oh pensioner! how dare you, then,
Insult Northampton's working men?
All men are equal, you are told,
In sight of god (by you extolled).
The men who toil with honest sweat,
And earn each scrap of food they eat,
Are better far than men like you,
Who pensions take and nothing do.

Most noble lord, sure, you lack wit;
The biter oftentimes is bit;
Take warning then, and cease to wrong
Our great and ever-growing throng.
For we, the scum, who toil and spin,
Though vanquished now, may some day win;
The day of reckoning draws near,
Each cruel taunt, each gibe and jeer,
Will be returned. Aye! man grows true.
What mercy then from "scum" to you?

S. J. BELLCHAMBERS.

ESSAYS AFTER BACON.

II.—ON UNITY IN FREETHOUGHT.

FREETHOUGHT being one of the chief privileges of the human mind, it is a happy thing when it is contained within the true bond of unity. Quarrels and divisions are evils not unknown to the Christians, the reason of this being that the religion of the Christians consists more in rites and ceremonies, and outward appearance, than in any firm conviction of the truth of their creed. Not so is it with your Freethinker, who cares nought for creeds, rites, and ceremonies, nor for the superstitious fears of the worshippers of the god of the Jew-book called the Bible; he perceives the high necessity of unity in action, and, accordingly, discarding those examples of quarrelings and divisions over forms and ceremonies set him by the Church, uses his best endeavors to bring about some unity in action for the common benefit of his race. The Freethinker has no concern for unity of thought, for sameness of ideas, for unanimity of opinion or belief. It is your Christian who in the past strove for that; and despite burnings, and torturings, and imprisonments of Freethinkers, never did obtain it, and is now farther off from it than ever. No; unity of opinion on speculative matters can never be. But unity of action for the attainment of ends of practical utility, for the widening of knowledge, the increase of liberty—these are objects for which Freethinkers may and do unite in a powerful bond of brotherhood throughout the world. Concerning the means of procuring unity, the Freethinkers, from their very nature, could never propagate the ideas by the Christian means of force, of imprisonment, of legal penalty, and social ostracism; or by means of wars or sanguinary persecutions, force the consciences of men against their natural bent. But they do the rather seek to extend their views by the wise means of argument, reason, and example, using all the time the forbearance of a high intelligence, induced by the adherence to worthy principles, towards those of their fellow-men who persecute them by word or deed. H. J. BECKWITH.

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.

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.

Per W. H. Warr (Southampton): Thirty friends 1d. per week, £1, less 8d. letter not being registered, 19s. 4d. Per — Jones (Cardiff), 1s. 5d.; S. Kaufmann (12 weeks), 1s.; J. Ireland (weekly), 6d. Per G. Johnson: — Littleton (from April 29th to June 17th), 2s. 6d.; — Turvill, 4s.; — Hopner, 4s.; G. Barrett, 6d.; H. C. Foskett, 6d.; J. Fitzgerald, 1s. 6d.; S. Hey, 1s. Per W. Malcolm: T. Holstead, 2s. 6d.; G. Webster, 1s.; J. Naylor, 5s.; T. Hornby, 1s.; W. Malcolm, 6d.; L. Hadford, 1s.; W. Collins, 1s.; T. Pickvance, 6d.; J. W. T. Kelly, 1s.; J. Roberts, 1s.; G. Nield, 1s.; collected at Stockton, 18s.

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.

JONAH'S RESIDENCE IN THE WHALE'S BELLY ACCOUNTED FOR ON PHYSIOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES, BY DR. PEARSON.

[Extracted from the *Lancet* of Nov. 30th, 1823.]

PHYSIOLOGICAL facts are never more interesting than when they are found to confirm the great truths of our religion, and to afford a satisfactory explanation of phenomena which infidels have treated with derision, without the necessity of resorting to a miraculous agency. Dr. Pearson, of George Street, Hanover Square, in lecturing a few days ago upon the stomach, observed that this organ had no power over substances endowed with vitality; and that this circumstance accounted for the fact of the prophet Jonah having remained undigested in the stomach of the whale for the space of three days and three nights. Dr. Pearson's discovery is highly important, both in a medical and theological point of view: it furnishes a complete answer to all the objections which have been urged by sceptics, against that part of the sacred volume in which this singular adventure is related. How the prophet passed his time in the cavity of the whale's stomach, how far the confinement affected his organs of respiration, in what manner he derived his sustenance, or whether he required any sustenance at all, are all questions of minor importance. The fact of the stomach having no power over vital substances having been once established by Dr. Pearson, the corollary is obvious. The argument may be thus stated:—"When Jonah entered the whale's stomach, either he was alive or he was not alive. If he was not alive, the stomach would have had the same power over him as over any other inanimate substance, and the prophet would have been digested in the ordinary way; but he was vomited out alive on the fourth day; consequently he was alive when he entered the stomach. Now as he was alive when he entered the stomach, and as the stomach has no power over a living substance, it is evident that he must have continued to live. Hence, when the action of vomiting was excited, and he was thrown up on the fourth day, he was deposited on the dry land, probably without any other inconvenience than some trifling derangement of his canonicals." Dr. Pearson deserves the thanks of the pious, as well as the philosophical part of the community, for having explained this phenomenon in a manner which renders it as demonstrable as any of the propositions of Euclid.

LIFE AND HOPE.

"Sanctify thyself, and proclaim that nature alone is venerable, health alone lovely."

It may be that there will never be an answer to the eager questionings of man respecting immortality. Possibly there will never be a reply from nature to the life-long yearnings of her children. Yet there is a solemn hope which will outlast the vague dreamings as to futurity. This hope is in the possibility of the ultimate happiness of man. Here we are surely justified; for in the beauty, in the majesty, in the grandeur of nature do we not constantly gather news of encouragement? Be sure that nature's lesson is not in vain. In the growth of animal life we can trace her work in its gradual process of evolution from lower to higher forms. As certainly as there is progression towards perfection, so certainly are we approaching that period when the best, the noblest, the highest faculties of man shall gain supremacy over his weaker nature. There are those who say that to take away man's belief in immortality is to rob him of all that is inspiring and ennobling. Not so! The nature surrounding us is sufficiently inspiring, and while that remains man's hope can never die. Go to any point on this world of inexplicable life, in wood or by sea, and when you fail to discover that there is always a mighty lesson taught, then say that man indeed is without aspiration, then, and then only, dare to say that life indeed is hopeless!

A. F.

JANE WELSH CARLYLE AND BLASPHEMY.

It is very interesting to see how the books of to-day, when dealing with men and women's lives are full of blasphemy and sneers, direct or indirect, at religion. That on Jane Welsh Carlyle is an instance. We quote proofs:—

"Rain! rain! rain! Oh lord! this is too ridiculous," as the Avondale farmer exclaimed, starting to his feet, when it began pouring in the midst of his prayer for a dry hay time."

"Craigie Villa, Saturday, August 23, 1856.

"T. Carlyle, Esq., the Gill.

"Your letter of yesterday, arriving at the same time with one from my aunt Ann (away in Dumfrieshire) to Grace, just as we were going to breakfast, threw us into such a little flutter of excitement that we all fell unconsciously into sin. I was reading my letter, and had taken a sip or two of tea and bitten into my soda-scone, when Grace suddenly shrieked out like "a mad" (Mazzini's expression), 'Mercy! we have forgotten the blessing.' I started on my chair and (to such a pitch of compliance with 'custom in part' have I already reached), dropped instinctively the morsel out of my mouth into my hand, till I should see what steps were to be taken for making our peace. But the case was judged past remedy, and the breakfast allowed to proceed unblest. I was regretting to Betty that my aunts should live in such a fuss of religion. 'My dear,' said she, 'they were idle—plenty to live on, and nocht to do for't; they might have ta'en to waur; so we maun just put up wi' them, an' no compleen.'"

Vol. III.—"I had a letter from my aunt Ann the other day. She tells me that the maid-servant whom Grace 'converted' some years ago is still praying earnestly for Mr. Carlyle. She has been at it a long while now, and must be tired of writing to my aunts to ask whether they had heard 'if anything had happened through her prayers.' Later.—Did I tell you that Mr. C's horse came down with him one day, and cut its knees to the bone, and had been sold for £9? It cost £50 and was cheap at that. My aunt Grace writes that 'Mrs. Fergusson is still praying diligently for Mr. C., and that perhaps it was due to her prayers that Mr. C. was not hurt on that occasion.'"

UNINSPIRED SCRIPTURE.

To suppose one's-self the subject of divine inspiration—the medium for conveying to the world an all-important message—must be an intoxicating idea. Its possessors might be expected to go mad very soon, if they were not so before. And yet we find the apostle Paul, who was inspired, and, presumably, must have been aware of it, relapsing occasionally into perfect sanity and modesty. For example, in 1 Cor. vii., 1–6, after discussing certain matters, now generally excluded from polite conversation, he confesses that he speaks "by permission," and "not of commandment." That is to say, the indelicacy was all his own, not the holy spirit's. At the end of the chapter he advises widows to avoid remarriage, and this too on his own responsibility, though he *thinks* also "that he has the spirit of god."

Everyone knows the old schoolboy catch: If a man says "I am lying," and is telling the truth, he must be a liar; but if he is lying when he says "I am lying," he must be telling the truth.

If the Bible be wholly divine we must receive it in its entirety—we must believe those texts which speak of inspiration as absent, or doubtful. In other words, our reason for believing certain passages to be uninspired, is that the whole volume *is* inspired. The sixth verse was divinely inspired to tell us that the first five are only human; but the ground of our belief in the sixth is identical with that of our belief in the others. All scripture is said to be given by inspiration of God, and it is very awkward to find one inspired text repudiating another. When thieves fall out honest men get their own.

W.

PROFANE JOKES.

THE late Dr. McLeod was crossing a loch in Scotland in a boat and in a storm. His two brothers and a boatman were with him. When the storm was at its highest and the boat at the middle of the loch the doctor, with great imbecillity, proposed a prayer. The boatman roared out bluntly, "The little one may pray, if you like; but the two big'uns must stick to their oars."

"MY brethren," said Swift, in a sermon, "there are three kinds of pride—of birth, of riches, and of talents. I shall not now speak of the latter, none of you being liable to that abominable vice."

A CLERGYMAN and one of his elderly parishoners were walking home from church one frosty day, when the old gentleman slipped, and fell flat on his back. The minister, looking at him a moment and being assured that he was not much hurt, said to him, "Friend, sinners stand on slippery places." The old gentleman looked up, as if to assure himself of the fact, and said, "I see they do; but I can't."

OUR irreverent young man wants to know if a lawn-mower is any good for cutting down the number or the salaries of the bishops.

BUSINESS directories must insert a new firm in their list, now that the Devil is being restored to life. "Messrs. Justice North, the Bishop of Truro and Co., kid-revivers to the deity."

FOLLOWING the custom of our sporting contemporaries, we give, on the authority of our special reporter, the Bishop of Truro, the results of the wrestling matches that took place in the Garden of Eden, by the brook Peniel, and on the Mount of Temptation:—

FIRST ROUND.		
<i>Stood.</i>		<i>Fell.</i>
Satan.		God.
Jacob.		Adam.
Christ (a bye).		
SECOND ROUND.		
<i>Stood.</i>		<i>Fell.</i>
Satan.		Christ.
Jacob (a bye).		

Satan and Jacob have to meet in the third round, and a very even contest is anticipated.

HEARD IN PETTICOAT LANE.—"Shee hearsh, my friends, shee hearsh my lilies; hearsh yer vally. I toilsh not neither do I shpin, yet Solomon with all his large sthock can't turn out shirts like one of theshe at the price."

"THERE remaineth therefore a rest to the people of god." Do they play billiards, then, or is the constable on the lookout for them?

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