

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.

Vol. III.—No. 27.]

JULY 8, 1883.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]

THE BISHOP OF TRURO AGAIN.

THE Bishop has been at it again. "It," our readers will understand, is talking first-century nonsense in a nineteenth-century age. This time the nonsense was not about the Devil. It was about a cathedral. A cathedral is to be built in Truro, and even a cathedral must be paid for. The pious master-builder is as yet not evolved who would build the sacred edifice for nothing, though we might expect an exemplary Christian, a very exemplary Christian, to be willing to run up a cathedral gratis, on the score that he would thus be running up a score in heaven.

As the cathedral has to be paid for, it has to be begged for, and the Bishop of Truro was the beggar. His text was, "For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the lord, make his paths straight." Quoth the Bishop, "the keynote to the service of the Church that day was 'Prepare.'" Exactly. But it is "Prepare to meet," not god, but the humanity that for centuries has been wronged by that Church. It is "Prepare" to find men passing out of you, and your worn-out creeds and institutions giving place to the newer and purer thought. God has, "in his mercy, given us numberless witnesses" as to the second appearing of Christ. The Jew would tell us the same, with substitution of the word "first" for "second." Which are we to believe, the positive Christian or the equally positive Jew? Or shall we believe neither?

Two of the numberless witnesses are comic ones. They are the holy communion and the cathedral that is to be. This is a good example of the logic of the fatal creed. Because a number of people choose to go through the ceremony of breaking bread and drinking wine; because a number of people are foolish enough to spend their money on building a church instead of on establishing science classes, therefore Christ is likely to return to earth. In the language of Euclid—"which is absurd."

The audience were then urged to "pray for the cathedral." We shall have prayer-meetings on behalf of the organ next, and anxious inquiries after the welfare of the soul of the graveyard.

We are next treated to novel views of the character of Christ and of the profession of architect. Christ's heart broke not because of the failure of such poor, indefinite plans as the Galilean had, not because in the moment of trial he was found weak and wanting, but because "he saw people trampling under foot all love for his father" (putative). An architect had been chosen, not on the ground of ability, oh, dear no! But because the good gentleman was filled with the spirit of god. And he had come down to Truro and spent a Sunday there with a mind much more full, probably, of plans than of the spirit of god, and had devised "a building, not to bring glory to himself," oh dear no! nor money, but in order to "manifest the glory of the invisible god."

According to the Bishop, the choir of the cathedral are to have a hard time of it. The cathedral is to be a place "where a white-robed choir will always be singing." After

this, to read in the same sentence, that in the same cathedral men will "find rest and peace" is very amusing. "The rest" will be that of the eternally-singing choir, and "the peace" that of their auditors.

In the shadow of the cathedral we are told is growing up a school of theology. How impressive is the phrase "in the shadow of the cathedral." In the darkness made by this church and its thousand fellows, men are groping after the useless straws of theology, and women and children, alas! are pining away in that terrible shadow. The whole land is in the gloom made by the churches and the black-robed priests that haunt them. Yet it is slowly passing out into the light of knowledge from the shadow of the church.

The Bishop looks forward to the day when "many clergy will be found linked with the cathedral." So do we. Nothing would give us greater pleasure than to see all the clergy, as a profession, chained to their churches and unable to wander abroad doing damage upon earth.

Our Bishop is, as we have seen, not without his vein of comicality. We may see this again in his declaration that he could say of the cathedral "Thou shalt go before the face of the lord to prepare his ways." A cathedral hopping in front of the almighty with a view to preparing a path for the unworthy is a humorous conception.

Following upon this stroke of genius is a story that may rank with the "Prepare to meet thy god" of our last issue. At his parish in London—the Bishop's, not the oyster's—a prayer-meeting was on. There were only twenty people at first, which is satisfactory. They prayed not for souls, but for money. And, of course, next day a gentleman comes to the church and instantly writes a cheque for £2,000. Apparently writing materials are kept ready in the pews of the Bishop of Truro's London church. A delicious touch is in the statement that this benevolent being was "very seldom seen at the church." It is the old story of some rich man caring nothing for religion, but in a state of fear as to his own coward soul. He pays his money and hopes for the heaven that is not to be bought by good deeds, but by payment to the priests of god with their cathedrals.

And when after his begging, as shameful as shameful, this wealthy prelate ends his discourse with the reminder that Christ "gave up everything on the cross for us," we tell him that he speaks that which is not true. Christ gave up nothing whatever for us. Christ was god and knew all the time exactly what was to happen. He was, if he were god, only playing at giving up, only simulating sacrifice. The whole thing was an imposture. If he were man, the death has elements of nobility. If he were god, there is nothing but ignominy in it. If Christ were man, I will go even with the Bishop of Truro to Calvary and weep with him there. I will give tears and heartache to the dying man. But if it be god that is hanging there I turn my back upon Calvary, and will have none of it. Christ has given nothing for man if Christ is god. He has given a pure and simple life, sweet enough, but not strong enough for the world's redemption if he is man. And if he has thus sacrificed self let his follower the Bishop of Truro imitate him. Let us see him giving up his thousands yearly, his luxury, his position, the well-

speaking by men of him, and be as Christ was, no rich beggar for costly buildings, but a sojourner amongst, and friend of, the poor.

EDWARD B. AVELING.

CHRIST AND FREETHOUGHT.

Christ and Freethought: an address to Secularists. By C. W. STUBBS, M.A. Published for the Guild of St. Matthew by Frederick Verinder, *hon. sec.*, 15 Goldsmith Square, Stoke Newington, London.

FREETHINKERS are so used to clerical vituperation and to having their heresy credited with being the outcome and occasion of all wickedness, that they are almost taken aback when they find themselves appealed to as rational human beings, and when they are even credited with sincerity and patted on the back for good intentions.

The gentlemen of the Guild of St. Matthew belong to so amiable a school of Christians, that we feel we ought to apologise when we take the liberty to doubt if they are or ought to be Christians at all. The Christianity put forward by these very broad Churchmen is by no means the fiery, untamed article which was suckled by the Fathers and conquered Europe under the Popes. It is so tamed down by criticism and diluted with private judgment that its sponsors would never know it. All the brimstone has been taken out and nothing remains but a concoction of treacle. It has an excess of sweetness with a deficiency of light. With half-hearted temerity they have abolished the personification of evil while retaining the personification of good. They have neither infallible church nor infallible book to appeal to, and all they have to threaten the unbeliever with is the natural consequences of his unbelief. What the natural consequence is Mr. Stubbs shall tell us, for his conception well illustrates the nebulous character of Broad Church theology. God, he informs us, is not a judge after the type of Mr. Justice North—

“If you mean by ‘punished,’ that the sincere disbeliever will be punished for his disbelief, in the sense that he will be consigned by an angry god to eternal torture in a material hell, then my answer is simple: No; I do not believe it. On the contrary, of such a creed I would hardly hesitate to say, with the hero of Mr. Tennyson’s poem:

‘The god of love and of hate, together they cannot be thought;
If there be such a god, may the great god curse him and bring
him to nought.’

Certainly, I believe, as unhesitatingly as any Secularist can do, in the sinlessness of intelligent sincerity.

“On the other hand, if by ‘punished’ you mean that the sincere disbeliever must suffer the natural consequences of his disbelief, then, again, my answer is simple: Yes, most certainly I think so. But what is the natural consequence of disbelief? That must depend on the nature of the thing concerning which belief is demanded. If the thing is a good thing, disbelief in it must entail loss of that good thing, and continued disbelief, continued loss *ad infinitum*.”

Does Mr. Stubbs really mean that the existence of an almighty loving father and of immortality are facts, and yet that our disbelief will entail our loss of them? We would rather credit him with meaning simply that the failure to recognise truth and goodness anywhere is a real and lasting loss. But it does not follow that those are without admiration, hope, and love who bestow those qualities upon other objects than the Christian. The gist of Mr. Stubbs’ address lies in his contention that the highest ideal of manhood is to be found in the character and utterances of Jesus. We are ready to admit that there are many of the sayings ascribed to Jesus of a most elevated and humanitarian character, and, even when we refuse to subscribe to their letter, we may find much that is admirable in their spirit. Considered not as a god, but as a man, not as a thaumaturgist, but as a teacher, and taken in relation to the time and place in which he is said to have appeared, many of his doctrines contrast favorably not only with the orthodox Phariseism, to which he was a freethinker, but with the practice of his followers since. Further than this we cannot go. If Jesus is put forward as a man, and this is all Mr. Stubbs does, though he apparently believes him to have been more, we need not dwell on the absurdity of representing any Oriental of the past as an ideal of perfection for all time, and this, too, when but a minute portion of his life is chronicled, and he is never seen in the most important of human relationships as a citizen, a husband, and a

father; while the accounts of him as a son are anything but worthy of imitation by sons of men. We doubt, moreover, the ability of any critic to draw from the varied gospels, which Mr. Stubbs allows to have been subject to “errors and interpolations,” any complete and consistent character of Jesus. Surmise we may have, but not certainty. A gentleman of culture and kindly feeling, such as Mr. Stubbs evidently is, will present us with a picture almost too fair for belief. But a Torquemada will go to the same sources and get texts which suit the purposes of the Inquisition. Most people bring out of their Bibles exactly what they put into them. Mr. Stubbs tells a good story of a fellow-curate of his who found two old women trying to settle some point of conduct by quoting texts of scripture—

“‘Why,’ he said, by way of diverting them from a point of dispute which threatened to become more than academic, ‘When do you suppose the Bible was written?’ ‘Ah, sir, I don’t know,’ replied one; ‘I suppose it came in with them there Acts of Parliament.’ ‘Nay!’ triumphantly retorted the other, ‘you ought to be ashamed of yourself. To think you didn’t know as how the Bible was writ long afore the world was made!’ Now, seriously, is it not altogether idle and unprofitable to enter into controversy of this kind unless we are prepared to accept such a conception of the Biblical records as shall stand the test of historical criticism? For my own part, at any rate, I have no intention of accepting controversy on any other terms. For example, to speak of the Bible as of one book is, to my mind, an absurdity worthy only of controversialists of the mental calibre of my old woman at Sheffield.”

But who is it, pray, that puts forward the Bible as one book? Certainly not the Freethinker, whose contention is just this, that the so-called word of god bears evidence of having been written by fallible men at different dates, and must therefore be judged like any other collection, each portion on its own merits. It is the Christian, and not the Freethinker, who puts the book of Esther on a level with that of Job, and gives the same weight to the nightmare of the Apocalypse as to the Sermon on the Mount.

There is another uncritical element in the position Mr. Stubbs assigns to Jesus. No student of history can make the great break in continuity which the ascription to any one teacher of all the most elevated modern views implies. On the contrary, he finds that all that is best in Christianity was led up to by Platonism, Stoicism, and Buddhism. Mr. Stubbs says:—

“I am prepared to maintain that in Jesus Christ we have, not only the originator of the most far-reaching social revolution, but also the truest champion of Freethought and Liberator of the human spirit from the cramping shackles of spiritual despotism and arbitrary authority whom the world has yet seen.”

This is surely going too far. Slavery has lasted down to our time, supported by texts of the Bible and advocated by divines of all denominations. Long before Jesus, Guatama had taught his doctrines to castes and outcasts alike. “My law,” said he, “is like the sky, a law of grace for all,” and that not by birth or outward actions could an unrighteous man become a Brahman. In placing the doctrine of the brotherhood of man on the fatherhood of god, Paul appeals to the authority of a heathen poet. Originality can be ascribed to no single doctrine found in the New Testament; but upon its pages have been erected the cramping shackles of a spiritual despotism and arbitrary authority the most binding and burdensome the world has yet seen. It is well to remind those of this who by an undue exaltation of Jesus, to whose merits the world is not likely to become oblivious, pass over unrecognised all the other great teachers and contributors to the world’s civilisation. It is by this exclusive insistence of the claims of one man that we are reminded that even such enlightened clergymen as Mr. Stubbs are, after all, supporters of a State Church supported by a law which imprisons those who venture to put into plain words for the multitude the heresy which preachers manage to smuggle out of their pulpits in disguise.

J. M. WHEELER.

THE Midland Counties Baptist Association by the voice of one Mr. Jenkin’s Brown, eulogises the present Government as the wisest, noblest, and most godly England had ever seen. We suppose Sir William Harcourt represents the wisdom, Mr. Fawcett the nobility, and Mr. Chamberlain the godliness of the Government. Seriously, wisdom and nobility of character are excellent qualifications for good work. But godliness is a terrible drawback.

SUBSTITUTES FOR RELIGION.

[Concluded from p. 206.]

SUBSTITUTES for Christianity have been found plentiful enough as the ages have rolled on. Every advance in civilisation reduces religion to narrower limits. Religion is only another name for barbarism, and civilisation in its progress destroys barbarism, just as the rising and expanding day annihilates the night. Humanity grows; religion decays. Men find in every succeeding generation, unless national life be stagnant, that they can do with less religion than their fathers, and that it is to their advantage to spend more time in purely secular pursuits than was spent by people of the past. This change is due to no sect, to no special resolution or definite intent amongst men generally; it is the result of new ideas, new pursuits, expanded knowledge, and more perfect intercourse between nations. Every secular advance necessitates a readjustment of religion; and every readjustment diminishes its importance and extent.

So far has this process gone, that the nations of Christendom are no longer Christian except in name. Irreligion, in the best sense of that word, abounds; and the Church is not one whit less secular than the world, except in profession. Its hypocrisy is much greater, for it still tries to hide its purely worldly character under the garb of piety—a texture more thin and transparent than the famous Egyptian garment.

Now it is manifest to all who know the state of things that worldly people have openly found plenty of substitutes for religion; and the churches are not behind them in that respect. To pass over all evil and scandalous pursuits, such as honest men of all sorts unite to condemn, I ask what occupations, thoughts, lines of reasoning, intellectual pabulum, intellectual work and recreation, do even the professedly pious follow and acquire in the present day? Do they renounce the world with its pomps and vanities? Yes, in their baptism and by proxy, but never in person. The most pious people of to-day are just the characters that former ages regarded as Sadducees, Deists, Freethinkers, and Atheists—words of the most terrible reproach when used by fiery zealots and persons quivering in every fibre with religious emotion. He who would have passed for a luke-warm Christian in Wesley's day would now be regarded as a prodigy of fervent zeal, or else as a fanatic.

Well, then, substitutes for religion have been found, good and bad; but more of the former than the latter. And what are the results? Good. The world is not so fanatical; its grosser superstitions have been toned down or destroyed, and only the milder remnants of Christianity now survive. More brotherly kindness and charity prevail than ever before. Men who formerly hated each other in obedience to their creeds, now ignore their creeds and forget their feuds. In the meantime, education and knowledge are spreading, and temporal comforts and luxuries are becoming the property of even the poor.

If it be necessary after all that has been said, to state in detail what substitutes we have for religion, the following list may be taken and expanded by the reader himself. In the room of religious falsehood (for every line of theology is an absolute falsehood) I would substitute truth of all kinds; for the worship and service of a god, the independence and mutual assistance of mankind; for prayer, thought, strategy, and industry; for trust in the unknown, trust in that which has been tried and tested and found true and useful; for the backward look rivetted upon a golden age for ever past and a redemption wrought by a poor bewildered and helpless fanatic, I would substitute a gaze into the future, fixed upon a golden age yet to come, not the gift of capricious and incapable gods, but the fruit of human toil and invention; for hope of any impossible heaven (the bribe of coward faith), I would substitute the rational hope of all the good that time can bestow upon the noble and the good; and for the fear of hell or the dread of meeting an angry taskmaster, I would substitute the fear of shame, the personal condemnation that results, in an honorable nature, from a wrong once done, and a firm resolve to avoid the like for the future; for the false system of rewards and punishments, I would train every child in morals as carefully as in arithmetic; instead of teaching it as a solemn duty to believe what no one ever yet understood, or of which any one could give any rational and honest account, I would teach the young never to believe anything without full investigation, and give them to understand that belief can never become a duty.

Perfect happiness can never be attained and preserved, probably; approximations are all that rational men can expect. It is doubtful if religion ever gave a legitimate and rational pleasure, least of all the Christian religion. What pleasure can arise from the sight of a man writhing on a cross? The day for the worship of agony is gone; a healthier, manlier epoch is begun. What pleasure can arise from the contemplation of the world under the curse of an almighty fiend, or from the reflexion that your neighbors are all going to perdition? The sweets of a healthy, well-trained intellect, not overwrought to the lasting detriment of the physical health; the satisfaction that independence gives; the buoyant hope (or its raw material) which rises from nobility of heart and purity of intention; the luxury of doing good and of battling with error the worst foe of man; the exquisite pleasures that beauty and the fine arts can awaken—these and others that might be named form a cluster of sweets, a body of satisfaction, rational and full—as complete as reason can ever hope for or a well-trained heart can ever desire. On the other hand, all religious pleasures and hopes are of the same nature as insanity; and the wildest dreams of the lunatic will be fulfilled as soon as those in which the ordinary Christian is encouraged to indulge. JOSEPH SYMES.

MEMORIAL.

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

“The Humble Memorial of the undersigned Showeth

“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.

ACID DROPS.

A NUMBER of believers in the Anglo-Israel mania have started a project of enterprise in the east which shall have the double merit of fulfilling prophecy and being a good commercial speculation. It is no less than a scheme to cut a canal from Mount Carmel to the Jordan, flooding the Dead Sea and channelling to the east of Sinal, to join the Red Sea by the Gulf of Akabah, thus making a new route to India, and demonstrating the truth of Ezekiel's vaticinations. Who says you cannot worship god and Mammon!

MOST of us have heard of the sailor who, upon being chidden for unvaracity by his maternal parent when he told her of flying fish in the Pacific, proceeded to inform her how, upon weighing anchor in the Red Sea, the wheel of a chariot was drawn up; whereupon the old lady exclaimed, “Now I know that's true because it confirms the blessed Bible.” But who would have thought that we should hear of an expedition for fishing up the arms, armor, and precious stones engulfed with the Egyptians. The Marseilles correspondent of the *Evening Standard*, however, gravely reports that “there has been organised at Paris, under the direction of the learned Abbé Moigno, the founder of the *Cosmo*, a society having for its object the dragging of the bottom of the Red Sea and the Bitter Lakes to find the chariots and treasures of the army of Pharaoh, supposed to be at the bottom of these waters covered by saline deposits. A sum of 750,000f. has been subscribed for the expenses.” Surely Heine was right in saying “the fool-crop is perennial.” We suspect that the learned Abbé Moigno wanted someone to pay the expenses of his trip to Egypt when he started the *Cosmo*.

Health for June 29th has an article on Faith-Healing. It notes that the marvellous cures reported each week in the *Christian Herald* as occurring at Bethshan Hospital, are entirely unsupported by any evidence whatever within the reach of the readers of that paper. It asks: “Why should the Rev. Mr. Baxter, or any one who may be connected with this modern home of miracles (if such it be), hesitate to lay

before readers of the cases of cure the necessary reliable and incontestable evidence?" If Dr. Riches, the writer of the article, knew that Mr. Baxter is the author of "Louis Napoleon, the Destined Monarch of the World," and many other appeals to the gullibility of the pious public, he would not be surprised at his failure to give proper evidence of the miracles of faith-healing.

At Charleston, Howard Underwood, a negro, has been executed for brutally murdering a negress named Belle Lucas. The condemned man has been a leading deacon for years, and when he was brought to the scaffold was, at his own request provided with a suit of white, we presume as symbolical of his spotless character. On the scaffold he addressed the assembled multitude in a firm, low voice as follows:—"My friends, both white and colored: I am standing upon the verge of eternity. In a few moments my lifeless body will be at rest within the coffin. Yet I am happy! The Devil has no hold upon me. I pity you all, but I ask no pity from you because I don't need it. I'm going to glory. I've fought the good fight. I've kept the faith, and now I'm going to wear a golden crown, a pair of golden slippers, and a long white robe. Love one another and meet me in heaven. I have nothing more to say." The assurance with which this convicted murderer selects his future wardrobe is positively beatific. O dem golden slippers!

A CORRESPONDENT can vouch for the truth of the following:—In Wexford there resides a retired major who, owing to the fact of his having served for many years in India, is familiarly styled the "Rajah." His skill as a dietetic expert is well known, and, being a churchwarden, his theological oesophagus is ostensibly capable of engulfing seventy times seven Jonahs instead of one. In the course of a polemical discussion with the aforesaid, I found it necessary to animadvert rather strongly upon the rascally conduct of Old Testament St. Jacob in deceiving his aged, blind father; whereupon the zealous epicurean soldier exclaimed, "And didn't it serve the old beggar right when he was such a brute as to think of eating venison the day it was killed?"

MR. MORGAN, "as a Christian man," had expressed abhorrence of bloodshed. How he must abhor god.

THE *Daily News*, in an article on Clémenceau, says, "He is a Freethinker; what Frenchman of his school in politics is not?" Frenchmen are less slaves of religion and all its follies than Englishmen. An advanced politician abroad is consistent and is therefore atheistic. In England we see the spectacle, ridiculous if it were not sad, of men trying to hold advanced positions in political and social thought and yet clinging to the most antique ideas in speculative opinion. Outside England we could not see a Radical Christian. He is, even here, as great an anomaly as the Conservative working-man.

THE annual Evangelical Conference chose as the subject of addresses this year "Union with Christ." The inmates of workhouses in this Christian land were not invited.

ONE has only to read the *Church Times* or *Church Review* to see how far towards Rome many of the English clergy are ready to go. Here is a specimen from a recently published volume of hymns entitled "The Risen Life," and intended for the Church of England by the author, R. C. Jackson. It is from a hymn for the nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary—

"Hail daughter blest of Zion!
Hail Virgin full of grace;
Hail designated Mother
Of all the Human Race."

Where the B. V. M. is so designated and how as virgin she could be mother of all the human race we are not told. Like the mystery of the trinity, it is one of those things no fellow can understand.

THE Pope has again complained to President Grévy of the attacks made upon the Church and religion in France. It is small wonder that the Catholic clergy pine for the good old times when it is shown that previous to the first Revolution France paid to them in tithes, feudal first fruits, and extra tithes, eleven millions of pounds annually. And they paid no State contributions themselves.

ANOTHER instance of clerical assumption and bigotry occurs at Wallasey, Cheshire, where a new cemetery has been opened. The local board erected one chapel only and placed it on ground intended to be unconsecrated, that it might be used both by Churchmen and Dissenters alike. The Bishop of Cheshire, however, refuses to consecrate any portion of the ground until another chapel is built for the special behoof of Churchmen. We suppose the occasion of all this fuss about consecrated ground is to save the angels trouble at the day of judgment. What a pity then that any dispute should endanger the carcasses of the goats being mingled with those of the sheep.

THANKS to the lawnsleaves, the Bill for legalising marriage with a deceased wife's sister was thrown out upon its third reading in the Upper Chamber. This reversal of their verdict upon the second reading of a measure to which 400 members of the House of Commons are pledged, should serve to call attention to the constitution and character of the House of Peers. That so-called free people should have an hereditary chamber at all is bad enough, but that the only non-hereditary element in the House should be sky-pilots of a particular sect is one of those anomalies which slow-going John Bull will surely take it into his head to rectify some day.

THE High Church papers are much rejoiced over the rejection of the "Incest Bill." For what reason it would be very hard to say, unless they dislike any questioning of the Prayer-book. In opposing the Bill the Duke of Argyll ventured to rely on scripture. Apart from the joke of regulating modern life by the laws of wandering Israelites addicted to polygamy and concubinage, it is to be noticed that on this very question Leviticus is opposed to Deuteronomy. The latter (cap. xxv.) especially enjoins that a man shall take his brother's widow if he has died childless.

A CORRESPONDENT forwards us a copy of a letter sent by him to the Right Hon. Beresford Hope. If that gentleman reads it the letter ought to make some impression on his mind—if he has one.

"Barbore, June 24th, 1883.

"Sir,—I congratulate you on being selected to lead the opposition to legalising marriage with the sisters of deceased wives, and as you, like the bishops and clergy, rely on Moses for evidence, I suggest that you move to abolish the present divorce courts and substitute in lieu of them the law of jealousy as per Numbers v., 12—31. It will be so rational to take our suspected women to the priests and see them—the innocent and guilty—submit to their incantation or Satanic mummeries and drink holy water mingled with the dust of the floor, and wait to see whether their bellies swell and their thighs rot. "Consider it, take advice, and speak your mind" (Judges xix., 30.)

"To Beresford Hope, Esq., M.P."

THE Islington Branch of the Church of England Young Men's Society, said to consist of over 100 members, is insolvent, and has had to sell off its library and other effects. Notice of the sale by auction was sent by Mr. R. Herring to the Archbishop of Canterbury, in the hope that that well-paid prelate would do something to keep the institution afloat. His grace, however, sent word through his secretary stating that it was not a case in which he could interfere, whereupon Mr. Herring replies that "I have lived in Islington all my life, but I notice nothing more striking than the gradual loosening of the influence of the Established Church among young men." This phenomenon is by no means confined to Islington.

NO GOD WAS THERE TO HELP THEM.

THE other day in Sunderland
An innocent and happy band
Of children, full of mirth and glee,
Were hurried to eternity.
No god was there to help them.

Children of tender years were they,
And happy as the flowers in May;
But death without a warning came,
And took them from this world of shame—
No god was there to help them.

Oh! sad to think, no god of love,
In that bright world in heaven above,
Watched o'er these lambs with loving eyes
And heard their sad heartrending cries.
No god was there to help them.

Oh! tell me not the god is good,
And merciful, and just, who would
Allow those little ones to die.
If god there is, oh tell me why
He was not there to help them.

No more let ranting parsons rave
That god is always near to save
His children when they to him cry.
It is a cruel and wicked lie.
No god was there to help them.

S. J. BELLCHAMBERS.

No. 2 of the *Christian Socialist* reaches us. It contains a notice of Karl Marx and an article by Henry George. The more we read of this publication the more we see that there is room for a journal of the same kind that is not handicapped by the word "Christian."

SPECIAL NOTICE.

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.

By special permission of the Home Secretary, the result of several applications, Dr. Edward B. Aveling will be allowed to see G. W. Foote again before July 11th. Dr. Aveling hopes at the meeting on that day to give a message from the imprisoned man.

DR. AVELING'S LECTURE.

Dr. Edward B. Aveling (interim editor of the *Freethinker*) will lecture in the Hall of Science on Sunday, July 8th, at 7.30. Subject: "The Soul of Man and the Lower Animals."

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.—Silo, St. O., E. T., J. Hawkey, W. James, Edgar R. Jones, W. Utley.

WE hear from Bristol that the *Freethinker* is making its appearance in many bookseller's windows there. It is suggested that we should send contents bills. We shall be glad to do so if any one in Bristol will post them up.

FORWARDED memorial with 169 signatures from H. Fenemore.

R. BROWN.—The charge of Lord Coleridge will be found in full in our report of the trial.

H. ALLEN.—The works on Buddhism are very numerous. Send to Trübner, Ludgate Hill, for a catalogue.

H. P.—We believe Mr. Symes will be among the speakers at St. James's Hall.

FORWARDED memorial with 132 signatures from J. Brumage.

H. S. TRIMMER.—1. There is no book published, as far as we know, with that title. "The Freethinkers Text-book," Part I., by C. Bradlaugh; Part II., by Annie Besant; Freethought Publishing Company, 63 Fleet Street, may be the book referred to. 2. In the Authorised Version there is no text such as you quote.

THE Paddington Branch of the N. S. S. will meet on Sunday, July 8th, in the "Earl of Derby," Amberley Road, Harrow Road; Mr. E. Hatzfield will lecture (at 8) on "Secularism v. Religion." Freethinkers living in the district are earnestly invited to attend, as this is the opening meeting.

TICKETS can be obtained 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.

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

FREETHINKERS TO THE RESCUE.

THE Prisoners' Aid Fund needs aid. The meeting on July 11th will cost some £100. One of our imprisoned friends is lying ill. The two others are yet in prison. Their wives and families are still without the help of their labor as well as the comfort of their presence. And this may continue for months to come. To meet the troubles of those months we appeal to Freethinkers throughout the world. For the sake of George Foote and William Ramsey, help!

SUGAR PLUMS.

FROM the *Truthseeker*, New York, we take the following paragraph. It shows how strongly American Freethinkers feel the conduct of Mr. Holyoake:—"All the leading scientists and Liberals of England have signed the petition for the release of the imprisoned Freethinkers. Among the names on the scroll of honor are Professors Huxley, Tyndall, Ray Lankester, Macalister, Herbert Spencer, Leslie Stephen, and

Frederic Harrison. The leading physicians, surgeons, artists, and men of letters have also signed. Not a few clergymen have joined in the 'prayer' to the Home Secretary, one of them going so far as to thank the presenter of the 'prayer' for the opportunity to place his name on record. In bitter contrast to these is the refusal of George Jacob Holyoake, the renegade to liberty. Although once imprisoned for heresy himself, and not now professing to be a Christian, he refuses to ask for this reparation because, forsooth, he thinks the prisoners 'committed an outrage on the feelings of Christians' in caricaturing their Christ. The poor, dear Christians' feelings must be respected though they thrust the knife through the heart of every infidel in England. It is no matter that not an hour passes that the feelings of Freethinkers are not outraged by the Church and her whelps of bigotry. No one must strike back, says Mr. Holyoake. We wonder if receiving Government pay has anything to do with his changed attitude. The role of Judas Iscariot fits him well. A few pieces of silver per annum seem more to him than the lives of the martyrs or the cause of freedom. It will be well for Freethought when he follows the example of his patron saint and commits harikari or hangs himself."

THE blasphemy sentences have stirred up much indignation in our colonies. The *Liberal* of Sydney, New South Wales, reprints Mr. Bradlaugh's open letter to Justice North. The *Daily Telegraph*, Napier, New Zealand, says that in the case of Mr. Foote "a blot has fallen on the pages of English law, and people are led to reflect that the old spirit of religious intolerance, which as late as a century ago filled many a British home with mourning, is not yet dead, but still lives to show how little influence all the civilising agencies of the nineteenth century have upon the minds of such men as Sir Henry Tyler. . . . The exact position of Mr. Foote's case is this. He does not believe in the god of the Bible, and says so; and the method that is adopted to convince him that he is in error, is to send him to prison for twelve months to herd with thieves and pick-pockets, from whom we may suppose he is to receive such theological education as will fit him to live thereafter in the outside world, and to breathe the same air as his spotless fellow-man who so humanely saved him from a false belief. But, seriously speaking, it must seem clear as noonday to any thinking man, that to enact that no person shall publish opinions which may happen to be opposed to the doxy of the time, is to stamp out for ever all progress, all reform, and to leave the race to rot in the stagnant pool of a blind conservatism."

UPON hearing of the imprisonment of our friends, Mr. William Pratt, secretary of the branch of the National Secular Society at Christchurch (New Zealand), forwarded us a subscription for forty copies for a year to be distributed gratuitously "believing that helping to increase the circulation of the *Freethinker* would be the most telling reply to its persecutors." To show the bigots the futility of trying to suppress us is the best way to ensure safety from their attacks in future.

THE Rev. W. Sharman (hon. sec. of the National Association for the Repeal of the Blasphemy Laws) writes: "A number of petitions are being forwarded from various towns in Devon and Cornwall in favor of the release of Messrs. Ramsey and Foote. One from Buckfastleigh bears fifty-eight signatures. That from Exeter was signed by the Rev. T. W. Chignell. More will be sent next week. I send one to-day signed by Rev. Vance Smith, D.D."

WE are pleased to notice an announcement that among the subjects for discussion at the forthcoming Social Science Congress at Huddersfield, will be "The Repeal of the Blasphemy Laws."

THE members of the South London Branch of the N. S. S. have been ousted from their hall in Mill Street, Lambeth Walk—the owner of the property (being a sincere and charitable Christian) having inserted a clause in the landlord's new lease against letting it to Freethinkers. This branch will continue to hold its outdoor meetings on Sunday mornings at the back of Astley's Theatre, Westminster Bridge Road. Meanwhile the committee are seeking another hall for evening lectures. The next meeting of members (and Freethinkers desirous of joining this branch) will take place at Mr. Craigen's, Angel Tavern, Lambeth Walk, on Sunday, July 29th, at eight o'clock, to hear committee's report.

CONCLUDING a course of twelve lectures at the British Museum (Natural History), Cromwell Road, Dr. R. H. Traquair expressed the opinion that reasonable people, surveying the facts detailed in the course as to fossil fishes, must become convinced of Evolution. Unfortunately the learned ichthyologist added that whatever view we might take of the process of Evolution, providence was not thereby expelled; thereby undoing, to a large extent, the excellent result of his twelve hours' labor.

■ We advise any of our readers who are interested in mythology to make themselves acquainted with the articles on "The Birth and Growth of Myth," by Edward Clodd, now appearing in *Knowledge*. In the current number Mr. Clodd deals with the great devil myth. As remarked by Jacob Grimm, "the idea of a devil is foreign to all primitive religions," obviously because in all primitive thought evil and good are alike regarded as the work of deities. In the Old Testament Yahweh is spoken of as the author of both (Isaiah xlv., 7; 1 Kings xxii., 21—23; etc.) the angels whether charged with weal or woe. So in the *Iliad* (book xxiv.) :—

"Two urns by Jove's high throne have ever stood,
The source of evil one, the other good;
From thence the cup of mortal man he fills—
Blessings to these, to those distribute ills;
To most he mingles both."

It is a far way from this to the loftier conception of Euripides—"If the gods do evil then are they no gods."

MR. CLODD shows that the rival powers of the Zend religion were a transformed survival of the sun and cloud myth, and with this the Jews came in contact during their captivity in Babylon. He says: "Prior to that time their theology, as hinted above, had no devil in it. But in that belief in spirits which they held in common with all semi-civilised races, as a heritage from barbarous ancestors, there were the elements out of which such a personality might be readily evolved. Their *Satan*, or 'accuser,' as that word means, is no prince of the demons, like the Beelzebub of later times, no dragon or old serpent, as of the Apocalypse, defying Omnipotence and deceiving the whole world; but a kind of detective who, by direction of Yahweh, has his eye on suspects, and who is sent to test their fidelity. In all his missions he acts as the intelligent and loyal servant of Yahweh. But although therefore not regarded as bad in himself, the character and functions with which he was credited made easy the transition from such theories about him to theories of him as inherently evil, as the enemy of goodness, and therefore of god."

THE West Ham Central Branch of the N. S. S. has removed to the Cromwell Club, London Road, Plaistow, and has engaged the large hall of the club for lectures, etc. All Secularists in the neighborhood are earnestly requested by the committee to become members of the branch. An outdoor lecturing station during the summer evenings has been opened. All Secularists should help in making it a success.

CHILDREN'S SUMMER EXCURSION.—The committee again met in the Minor Hall on Sunday evening; Mr. F. Henderson in the chair. They are making arrangements as fast as possible. Next week we hope to be able to name the time and place. They gratefully acknowledge the following subscriptions:—Miss Howell, £1; Mrs. Axell, 2s. 6d.; Mr. Whenn, 2s. 6d.; T. Shore, sen., 2s. 6d.; W. Gill, 1s.; F. Henderson, 2s. 6d.; Misses Reynolds, 2s. 6d.; Mr. Cottreal, 1s.; Miss M. Leheup, 1s.; Mrs. Cookury, 1s.; Mr. Sunderland, 2s. (per W. Cookury); Mr. and Mrs. Robertson, 5s.; Mr. Leheup, 2s. 6d.—Subscriptions (which will be duly acknowledged) may be sent to secretary at 24 Morpeth Road, Victoria Park, E. P.O.O. made payable at Bishop's Road Post-office, Victoria Park.—J. G. Dumville, hon. sec.

THE election of Professor F. W. Newman, author of "Phases of Faith," "History of the Hebrew Monarchy," etc., to an honorary fellowship of Worcester College, Oxford, says something for the tardy recognition of his services to learning by the University, and will give satisfaction to the many admirers of that enthusiastic reformer. It may be remembered that Professor Newman was elected a fellow of Balliol, but resigned in 1830 rather than sign the Thirty-Nine Articles. The decadence of the Church of England is well manifest in the fact that it could not hold such men as the brothers Newman.

"SOUTHSEA" sends a little poem written by an old friend in Germany. The poor fellow died of heart disease, and left his Swan-song on the table where he wrote the evening before his death. He was a staunch Freethinker, died without a god and was buried without a priest.—

A SCHOOL-FELLOW'S SWAN-SONG.

(From the German.)

Still is the mountain glen,
Hush'd are the haunts of men;
No voice, no song—
Nature's sweet lullaby
Steals over field and lea,
The trees among.

And one lone distant bell,
Wafts like some childhood spell
Peace o'er each wrong—
Wait, poor heart, weep no more,
Soon will all strife be o'er,
Thou too shalt rest ere long.

WHO KNOWS MOST?

THERE is not a subject of interest to mankind upon which so much speculative opinion is hazarded as that which is commonly regarded as religious. The multitudinous character of religious belief, however, seems to afford pretty good proof of the uncertainties connected with such matters. The want of unanimity on the part of believers certainly testifies to their individuality—more or less; but, superlatively beyond this view of the case, stands the one prominent feature that uncertainty characterises each and every separate form of religious faith. Calmly considered, there is no room for dogmatism. In the absence of undeniable absolute proof of the truth of any religious dogma, assertion is representative of opinionatedness, and the latter of bigotry. Once bigotry is in command of the mind there is little chance for reason to exercise her benign influence over the expressed ideas and purposes of the bigot; hence, persecution quickly follows in the wake of what was at first mistaken religious zeal. How few there are who, having become sufficiently strong-minded to ignore the blighting influences of a theological creed, can regard with unmixed satisfaction their connexion with pious acquaintances of earlier days. The inevitable tendency of religious dogmas is to deprave the mind by depriving it of that independence and freedom which is so essential when the search for truth is in view. Once a mind is imbued with the notion that a particular creed-formula embodies all that is necessary to secure eternal happiness for those who believe it, it is not to be wondered at that zealous, honest believers in such tenets, cleave to all that favors the faith which affords them such immense satisfaction.

Nor is it very difficult to understand why such people regard those who do not accept the same faith with a certain amount of reserve, and even dislike. It is a very common circumstance, that so long as some religious faith is held, objections thereto take the form of toleration; but, let it be known that all forms of theology are alike rejected, and the treatment dealt out is of a more positive and considerably less innocent character. In some instances, when humanity is stronger than creed, pity is felt for the sceptically inclined; in others the object of inquiring curiosity is to bring persuasive influence to bear. Between the latter and downright persecution there is but a short mental stride.

Is not this condition of things highly deplorable? Mankind, viewed as a huge family, have interests in common, and few there are who could not so regard them but for the blinding influence of theological creeds. Whatever good may have been accomplished by religious bodies or institutions, as such, might have been done far more expeditiously, and with infinitely less harm to humanity, without the theological element. This is a prolific subject, and one that very naturally tempts us to review the conduct of many professing Christians, whose zeal for the spread of theological dogma is far more striking than any humanitarian acts they may have performed. This is, however, not a personal question, nor is it intended to treat the subject in that light, for if all who profess to believe in Christian mysteries were really good people, it would be just as impossible to place their creed upon a footing beyond the reach of critical attack, as is now the case.

The question at the head of this short article may now be repeated. "Who knows most?" Shall we ask the infant just born, or the hoary-headed man who has reached the end of a laborious and weary life.

The infant is as much an arrival from the eternity of time past as the man dying from senile decay is a traveller to the eternity of time to come. Which of them knows more? The former ushered into being unconscious of every surrounding condition of its own existence, or the latter penetrating the obscurity of the future with a knowledge progressive by experience alone, and which necessarily grows upon him only with each gasping breath, until the last? Who can say that the consciousness, in life made manifest, still continues to exist after the conditions of the only exciting cause we know of are changed and gone? The question, "Who knows most?" in this connexion is a defiant one, a question to which an archbishop is as unable to give a satisfactory reply as a door-boy in a coal mine.

PONTYPOOL.

AN Irishman says that the sting of death is the fact that he cannot get drunk at his own funeral.

CORRESPONDENCE.

DEMORALISING ROMAN CATHOLIC LITERATURE.

TO THE INTERIM EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

DEAR SIR,—I am gratified to find that a column of the *Freethinker* has been opened in denunciation of the demoralising literature emanating from Roman Catholic quarters. Enclosed you will please find a copy of "The Sight of Hell," by Rev. J. Furniss. A more nauseating concoction of deliberate falsehoods never came under my notice, and it was with considerable pain and detestation I perused its pages. One almost groans with pity for the class—especially the young children—for whom this loathsome literature is intended; and our bitter cry is, what can be done to eliminate these false ideas so cruelly thrust upon their minds?

It is truly lamentable to find in this enlightened nineteenth century, a century marked by rapid scientific and educational progress, two brave benefactors of humanity incarcerated, classed with the veriest criminals—and for what? Crippling and keeping youthful minds in subjection? No! But for holding up the mirror of known truths to a prostrate, priest-ridden people, a people so debased and fettered by priests and their craft. Still these subtle monsters are allowed to carry on their insidious work. No law is set in motion against them, and they have the effrontery to ask that their feelings be considered and protected.

Freethinkers and all lovers of truth must answer, "No quarter! You would stifle all opinion save your own; you would stay Progress in her onward course. You, had you the power, would thrust the nation back into intellectual darkness, and would have us accept none other than priests and their dictates."

Freethinkers have a fierce battle before them. Strong are the barriers of superstition; but duty calls us to go solid in this fight for liberty. Liberty we want; liberty we'll have. We must fight valiantly, persistently; never flinching until every barrier is broken down, until every enslaved mind is free. A victory has to be won, and we must win.—Yours etc.,

A YOUNG FREETHINKER.

Manchester, July 1st, 1883.

PRISONERS' AID FUND.

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A MODERN SERMON FROM THE MOUNT.

BLESSED are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake: for they'll get hard labor and prison fare.

Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you: for you shall be kept out of Parliament, no matter who votes for you.

Ye are the light of the world, and if you're not snuffed out you'll set the world on fire.

Swear not at all, and if you don't nobody will believe in your honesty.

Whoever shall compel thee to go a mile to preach an extra sermon, don't go unless he'll promise to give thee a fiver and pay first-class expenses.

Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, but take precious good care that your name is not far off the top of the subscription list.

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, but get into a jolly, snug fat living, and let nobody see your banking account, or the collections will fall off.

Therefore I say unto you, take no thought for your life what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, because you will get the very best of dinners if you'll only take care to go pretty often to your richest parishioners.

Give not that which is holy unto the dogs; that is to say, never argue with a Secularist, for he might get the better of you.

Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, take pains to instruct them to do, and don't be afraid of bullying them. Of course, if they're poor, so much the better.

Blessed are the peacemakers, providing they don't interfere in denominational squabbles or party wars.

Blessed are the poor in spirit. And in order to make a satisfactory account of this blessing you must teach everyone that it is a grievous sin to be discontented with his lot, or wish to rise from that state of life which, etc.

Blessed are the meek: for they shall soon get out of their fisherman's coat, and have wages varying from £1,000 to £15,000 per annum. No need to fish for a living.

Ye are the salt of the earth: but don't sell much for a penny.

Agree with thine adversary quickly if he threatens to withdraw his subscription.

Love your enemies. Don't argue with them, put them in gaol.

Bless them that curse you. It looks well to give the poor your blessing.

Do good to them that hate you—providing there's a majority of them. Don't make such a mistake if you are the stronger party; it only shows a screw loose.

Pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that is, if you can find them.

PROFANE JOKES.

THE little boy who said that he had seen a donkey in the Theological Garden was not so very much out of the way after all.

Our irreverent young man, who has recently been studying physiology, says its all nonsense Saul breathing out "threatenings and slaughters"—it was only carbonic acid.

"MR. ISAACS, can you tell me vere vas the first diamond?" "No, Mr. Yawcobs; vere vas it?" "Vy, Noah's son in der ark; he was a Shem of the fust vater."

It is said that god has no equal. Why, there is one prophet in the Bible who is Ezekiel.

"ARE not two sparrows sold for a farthing" (Matt. x., 29)? "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings" (Luke xii., 6)? "Good business," says our irreverent young man. "Reduction on taking a quantity."

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