

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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AUGUST 5, 1883.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.

OUR VIRTUOUS HOME SECRETARY.

At last a question has been asked in the House of Commons as to the imprisonment of our men. That such a question was not asked before was due to the fact that those best qualified to judge were of opinion that Sir William Harcourt intended to give some such infamous and untruthful answer that he gave on July 25. It was thought desirable to exhaust every other means of obtaining fair and equitable treatment of G. W. Foote and W. J. Ramsey before an opportunity was given to the Home Secretary to disgorge some of the venom with which he is habitually swollen over two defenceless men, unjustly imprisoned.

But as all other means of exacting an utterance from Sir William Harcourt had failed, the time had come for the House to do itself honor by offering to the Home Secretary the opportunity of acting in like fashion, or of acting dishonorably. True to his traditions, Sir William Harcourt chose the latter of the two alternatives, and a career already marred by ill-temper, by tergiversation, by truckling to wealth and position, and by cowardice, achieved its greatest infamy (as yet) through the medium of a deliberate lie.

The member who asked the question on behalf of our prisoners was Mr. P. A. Taylor. He asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department—

"Whether he had received memorials from many thousands of persons, including clergymen of the Church of England, Nonconformist ministers, and persons of high literary and scientific position, asking for a mitigation of the sentences of George William Foote and William James Ramsey, now imprisoned in Holloway Gaol on a charge of blasphemy. Whether they have already suffered five months' imprisonment, involving until lately confinement in their respective cells for 23 hours out of every 24, and now involving 22 hours of such solitary confinement out of each 24; and whether he will advise the remission of the remainder of their sentences."

To this temperately worded inquiry Sir William Harcourt returned one of those answers at once intemperate and declamatory with which we are unpleasantly familiar, with a familiarity that has certainly bred contempt.

"Sir W. HARCOURT: The question of my hon. friend is founded upon misconception of the duties and rights of the Secretary of State in reference to sentences of the law, which I have often endeavored to remove, but apparently with entire want of success. It is perfectly true that I have received many memorials on this subject, most of them founded on misconception of the law on which the sentence rested. This is not a matter I can take into consideration, either upon my own opinion or upon that of 'clergymen of the Church of England, Nonconformist ministers, and persons of high literary and scientific position.' I am bound to assume that until Parliament alters the law that law is right, and that those who administer the law administer it rightly. If I took any other course, outside my opinion—if I had one upon this subject—I should be interfering with the making and with the administration of the law, and transferring it from Parliament to the Executive and to a Minister of the Crown. I am quite sure my hon. friend would not like that course. It has been said, 'Oh, but you can deal with sentences.' (Hear, hear.) Sentences must be dealt with not upon the assump-

tion that the law was wrong, but upon special circumstances applicable to the particular case which would justify a Minister in recommending to the Crown a remission of sentence. What are the circumstances? Nobody—I do not care whether legal persons or belonging to the classes mentioned in this question—who has not seen the publication can judge of the matter. I have seen it, and I have no hesitation in saying that it is in the most strict sense of the word an obscene libel. It is a scandalous outrage upon public decency. (Opposition cheers.) That being so, the law has declared that it is punishable by law. I have no authority to declare that the law shall not be obeyed; nor do I think that within less than half the period of the punishment awarded by the Court, if I were to advise the Crown to remit the sentence, I should be discharging the responsibility which rests upon me with a sound or sober judgment. (Opposition cheers, and murmurs below the gangway.)"

With the first part of this disgraceful reply I have little to do. A smile in passing, at the idea of the present Home Secretary making reference to the "duties" of an office that he has filled with an incapacity as conspicuous as his ill-breeding—a note that upon the great question of the Blasphemy Laws he has apparently no opinion, one way or the other; and hence is admirably fitted to deal with the nice and complex matters involved in the recent trial and the present appeals—these are all I can allow myself.

But when I come to the latter part of his remarks and read the two words "obscene libel," I have but one remark open to me. Sir William Harcourt lies. I deny that in the incriminated number of the *Freethinker* there is a trace of obscenity. An obscene mind can read some of its own filthiness in the purest writings, as we see in the case of the present Home Secretary. He is like an emasculated playgoer who, brought up on the sickly fare of Palais Royal farces, listens to a Shaksperian play with long ears itching for the possibility of a *double entendre*. Sir William Harcourt has probably forgotten his Greek, as this ranks among the literæ *humaniores*, que emolliunt mores nec sinunt esse feros, but I remind him of an aphorism, *παντα μὲν καθαροὺς καθαροίς*. For the translation of which I would refer him to Titus i., 15, did I not know that his pure, unsullied soul would revolt at a reference to a book so abounding in obscene libels as the Bible.

Sir William Harcourt prefers in this crisis to side with Mr. Justice North rather than with Lord Chief Justice Coleridge. But even Justice North was more honest than the Home Secretary. He remembered and reminded the jury of that which Sir William Harcourt wilfully ignores: that the trial was for blasphemous libel, not for obscenity. His words were, "I just remind you of this, that in the indictment it is not an obscene libel. The fact that you may think some of them are obscene is not any ground for thinking persons guilty unless they are blasphemous." Even supposing that the paper was obscene it was not indicted on that ground. But Lord Coleridge distinctly stated that the charge of indecency (unlike the Home Secretary) could not lie against Mr. Foote. Again we are forced to quote his words that we have quoted so frequently:—

"He may be blasphemous, but he certainly is not licentious, in the ordinary sense of the word; and you do not find him

pandering to the bad passions of mankind. That is a thing in his favor, and is entitled to be said."

The "Liberal" Home Secretary is therefore doubly (and terribly) wrong.

The last words of his reply are noticeable. A "sound and sober judgment." It is "full of sound and fury, signifying nothing" but brutal misrepresentation and the full term of torture to our friends. And its sobriety may be estimated by the arithmetical accuracy that it has for a companion. "Less than half the period of the punishment awarded by the court"—five months out of nine ["New Arithmetic," by Sir William Harcourt]. The Opposition cheered, as they always cheer inaccuracies and repressive measures, and doubtless the speaker was happy in their approval.

Freethinkers and, I hope, Radical politicians who are not with us on speculative matters, will never forget the malignity and the untruthfulness of Sir William Harcourt. Especially it behoves every elector of Derby, who feels interest in this matter, to demand of his representative by letter and at any public meeting that he may attend, an explanation of his atrocious conduct. Electors throughout the kingdom will bear it in mind. A general election will come soon, and the amiable Home Secretary may be playing his accustomed rôle of the nomadic candidate, wandering, like Satan, to and fro in the land, seeking what constituency he may devour. Then let every elector remember the falsehood that Sir William Harcourt has told, the cruelty he has shown. Even now I urge upon the voters of Derby to give him no peace; but by letter upon letter upon letter to demand of him some account of his unjust stewardship.

In this we must act speedily. For there can be no doubt that Sir William Harcourt aspires to the House of Lords. Like the cuttle-fish he will make good his retreat from our attack by hiding himself in the midst of objectionable and unpleasant surroundings. It is possible, however, that his elevation to the peers may be delayed longer than he would wish. Their lordships would probably object to so huge an influx of bad manners into their house. And even the foolishness among that assembly, so poverty-stricken as to intellect, will know that to admit the present Home Secretary to their ranks would be an act of political suicide.

EDWARD B. AVELING.

JUMPING COMMENTS UPON THE BIBLE.

No matter, for my present purpose, who wrote the Bible, nor how old it may be. My jumping, skipping comments relate only to the contents of the book, and will be just what the title indicates, for I shall jump from one text to another, instead of wasting time in noticing the intervening passages.

In the beginning god created the heaven and the earth.—Genesis i., 1. Beginning of what? Time? Time never had a beginning. Of the world? It could not have been made in its beginning, for it existed exactly the same moment it began to be. Then what does it mean? The beginning of god's work? If so, he must have been a lazy fellow to idle away in doing nothing at all the immeasurable time or eternity which preceded the moment he began to work. And what made him begin just then, I wonder? Had he been all his life before making up his mind whether to create or not? I think it is a pity that it should have taken him so long and not a little longer. Surely a god who could do without a plaything during his early life might have done without one for ever. The world seems to be his shuttlecock, created for this own amusement; and his sport involves the misery and death of his creatures. It is no credit to a god to have made a world like this.

The heaven! That is a purely fictitious place. The firmament or heaven is only an optical illusion, the mere boundary of vision, larger or smaller in proportion to the power of the eyes of the world. Modern astronomy shows beyond the possibility of doubt that the heaven, or heavens, do not exist, and never did. So the Bible opens with a blunder which shows that the writer, instead of being inspired by a being who knew everything, drew his inspiration from his own narrow experience, and egregiously blundered in the first sentence he wrote.

The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep.—i., 2. More nonsense. The earth always had a form, pretty much the one it has now, too. As for the darkness on the face of the deep, we

will comment upon that when we know what deep is meant. It is all uncertain yet.

The spirit of god or of the gods—if it means anything, it is the wind. That need not have been mentioned, surely.

Let there be light—i., 3. Did god say that? In what language? To whom? Why did he say it? If he had his tinder box by him, he need not have said anything about it; for flint and steel work no better for being spoken to.

And god divided the light from the darkness—i., 4. I am sure he never did, for light and darkness never were mingled. Light is the positive state; darkness the negative. Darkness is but the absence of light. How absurd to talk of dividing light from darkness! You need inspiration to commit folly like that.

And god made the firmament!—i., 7. Why, he made that in the beginning, and here the next day he makes it again! Did the first not please him? Did he pull it down and build it up again the next day? Poor architect. Oh! I forgot, he had no one to guide him, had no experience in world-building. Were he to try now with all the advantages human science could give him, perhaps he would make a much better job of the whole affair. He could scarcely do worse.

And the earth brought forth grass—i., 12. In the next chapter (ii., 3-8) we are told that he made every plant and herb before they grew and then "planted" them—no doubt using a dibble and watering-pot, after digging the soil with a fork or spade, as a regular ordained gardener would do to-day. The reader had better believe both accounts. He is not bound to understand either—better not try. The less you know about god and his ways the better you like him.

Lights in the firmament—i., 14. There is no firmament. Therefore no lights were placed in it.

Two great lights—i., 16. The sun is a light, the moon is no more a light than the earth. It merely reflects the sunlight. The author of Genesis did not know that. To him sun and moon seem to have been about equal; in reality the sun is about 60,000,000 times larger than the moon. Besides, for about one-half of its time the moon is next to useless for lighting purposes.

He made the stars also—i., 16. A mere fleabite, the making of the stars, evidently. They are so small. No doubt god made them of the sparks struck out by his flint when lighting the sun. Why the nearest of them all is so distant that light takes three years and seven months to travel from it to the earth; while others seen in the telescope are so far away that light spends many thousands of years upon the journey. And some of them must be at least hundreds of times larger than the sun! Had the author of Genesis understood astronomy, he would not have written this nonsense about the creation.

And god made the beasts of the earth . . . and everything that creepeth upon the earth—i., 25. He might have found better employment than making serpents and snakes, hyænas, wolves, tigers, etc. And what was he thinking about when he made parasites, such as trichina and tape worms? But Darwinism shows that the vegetables and animals, good or bad, were not manufactured in this sudden manner; but were gradually evolved or developed from older forms of life—a subject too large to enter upon here.

So god created man in his own image . . . male and female created he them—i., 27. In the Hebrew it is "gods" not god—the *Elohim*—that made man. They were evidently male and female themselves, as all respectable deities were. And Adam and Eve were made in their image; in fact, if you had seen the creators and the created together you could not tell which was which—stature and build, color, hair, and everything were just alike. The only difficulty one meets with is this: how could Adam and Eve be the parents of such diversified tribes and families of men as now people the earth? Black and white, of various shades; short and tall; fat and lean; round heads and long heads; Caucasians and Negroes; and all the endless variety existing to-day. Which of all these descendants are most like the first pair? I should say that most likely the lowest, ugliest and most degraded couple to be found are just the very image of the first pair, and they were exactly like their creators. Tut! tut! I don't wish you to worship such a pair of deities. Everyone to his taste. But if you can worship the creator of a world like this, you need not pretend to be squeamish.

JOS. SYMES.

(To be continued.)

CHRISTIAN FACES.

CHRISTIANITY, like medicine, takes different effects upon different individuals. Owing to the diversity of human nature and character, religious emotion can never manifest itself in the same way with all. Religious emotion in some produces great intellectual exertion and excitement. We cannot deny the exertion and excitement; but the intellectual product is generally exceedingly small. When emotion excites the brain nothing is easier than for the owner to babble fast and loud, lungs permitting. In some it produces depression of spirits and intellectual languor as they contemplate the free-and-easy going care-for-nothing world jogging along the high road to destruction.

It is interesting from a physiological and physiognomical point of view to note the changes which conversion to Christianity brings about in the countenances of its converts. I have known some happy-go-lucky, rough-and-ready, honest and cheerful faces undergo a wonderful change through its workings. These individuals' fears and unthinking minds have been worked upon by vultures of superstition, till they have at last succeeded in inducing themselves to thoroughly believe what wicked never-dowells they have been all their lives; when, as a matter of fact, they may have been the merriest, jolliest, most honest fellows breathing. So much for faith. Then after a time we begin to see its outward effects in the lineaments of the face. The happy open face which used to look at the whole world fearlessly, as much as to say, "I love the world and its beauties and pleasures; I love this life with its sweets and bitters—aye, even some of its harmless frivolities, I love this life." His face becomes pale and sallow. The brave, open look is gone; the face is weak and irresolute. No manly look of courage—courage to give blow for blow if needs be in the battle of life. Determination is dead. No fearless glance from the eyes which would brighten as loud manly laughter rang unchecked from the lips. The laughter is restrained and unnatural. It is a sin to laugh. It calls men's minds away from god. But let us be thankful these converts are but few.

Some it causes to be arrogant, and to look with sublime conceit and pity upon the erring multitudes who are surging on to hell-fire and damnation, passage prepaid by the devil. With this class of individual, nothing can save the unbeliever from eternal brimstone laid on thickly. Directly he knows you are an unbeliever you are for ever out of the pale of his friendship. You can only meet as enemies. His face tells you so. You can hope for no compromise there. In that harsh, stern face, is written rancor and hatred towards the heretic. There you see in the curled lip of disdain the persecuting spirit that would like to bite, but dare not. It can only snarl. In this face there is something which seems to proclaim the owner to be an infidel-hater, "say one word against Jesus Christ and I'll s-c-r-a-t-c-h you" kind of individual.

Then there is the face of the pious, sleek and smoothed-tongued, tract-distributing hypocrite of the Stiggins class. It requires a rather clever observer of human nature to make a sure delineation of this gentleman's physiognomy. He is not to be caught napping. He has learnt to know his business well, for his trade is to prey upon human gullibility. No, there is a world of craft behind that greeny-yellow visage. Then there is a class of faces by far the most prevalent. This is the face of those who regard this world as a world of probation. With them, life with all its pleasures, its beauties, its poetry, its sunshine, and its laughter has no kind of pleasure. They can only take the dark view of things. Their Christianity has made them pessimists. They can only see what is bad in human nature, they are blind to the good. To them, unless the whole world adopt their own peculiar religion, it is lost. Lost, damned, damned. To ensure for themselves a place in heaven, they are ever ready to perform the most menial office in the service of Christ. If it is with only the possible prospect of a situation as celestial scullery-maid or heavenly boot-black in constant attendance at the throne of grace, they are ready to accept it. At the prospect of becoming a celestial lap-dog, to be allowed to fawn and to lick the feet of a conceited egotistic, praise-loving, blood-besotted Jehovah, these Christians go into paroxysms of delight.

They are for ever lost to the din, the warfare, the spirit-stirring voice of the battle of life. It is this battle which

is moulding the manhood of the world, and hardening the thews and sinews of the soldiers of progress as they hurry along the road leading to the better future. They renounce the sweets of this life; they contribute not to the hard-won battle. They hamper the march which they have not the hardihood to oppose. These Christians, with their "oh how I love Jesus" cast of countenances are too timid, too weak to face the rough fight in which blows are given and taken manfully. So they listlessly creep to their caves of superstition, and peep out of the openings vacantly contemplating the shadowy world behind the skies.

H. GORDON SWIFT.

BIBLE ARITHMETIC.

[Concluded from p. 238.]

MIRACLES are not so common in the Old Testament that we can afford to pass over them lightly. In 2 Chron. xxii., 2, Ahaziah is said to have been 42 years old when he began to reign. As this sounded strange after what we had been reading a little before, we returned to xxi., 20, and there found that Ahaziah's father was 40 years old at his death, immediately after which his son at 42 comes to the throne. Now here is an astonishing fact well worthy the consideration of the Registrar General. We have had a man at 35 begetting his own grandchildren; and now we have a man at 42 being born two years before his father. We must state the ages at which these peculiarities present themselves, because we cannot find it at all reasonable to think they could happen at any other.

Now we come to a genuine teaser. Ezra i., 9, 10, says there were—

Chargers of gold	...	...	30
do. silver	...	...	1000
Knives	...	...	29
Basins of gold	...	...	30
do. 2nd sort	...	...	410
Other vessels	...	...	1000
		Total	2499

Verse 11 says:— Total 5400

Lord! how they grow. What a wealth of manure there must be in one verse.

We are sorry we have not the patience of Job—or his lying propensities either. Job xl., 3-5 says: "Then Job answered the lord . . . once have I spoken; but I will not answer; yea, twice; but I will proceed no further." If you turn to the 38 and 39 chapters you will find that god speaks all the time; and Job, up to the verse quoted, has said nothing; so that Job has actually not spoken once, let alone twice. After he has plainly told the lord he will not proceed further, he rattles away as though he had a nice little scandal to retail.

The peculiar properties of numbers again present themselves in 2 Sam. xxiv., 9, and 1 Chron. xxi., 5. In the first we are told 800,000 drew sword in Israel, and 500,000 in Judah. In the latter, the numbers become 1,100,000 and 470,000. Wonders will never cease.

The New Testament is also tainted with this woeful disregard to arithmetical accuracy. In the genealogies of Christ, Matt. i. gives 42 names in 2056 years, or 49 years per generation; Luke iii. gives 55 names, or 38 years per generation. The discrepancy in results is bad enough; but the number of years per generation, even in Luke, is worse. There is no reason to believe that people lived longer then than they do now.

Then we come to that interesting question about Christ's sojourn in the tomb. Matt. xii., 40, says: "The son of man shall be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth;" but in turning to Luke xxiii., 50 to 54, Mark; xv., 42 to 45, and Matt. xxvii., 57, we find that Jesus was buried on Friday evening; and referring to Matt. xxviii., 1, we are told it was some time before the end of Saturday (the Jewish Sabbath) when Mary found Jesus had arisen. How can we make Friday and Saturday, with Friday night, into three days and three nights? If any one is open to try we will put him in comfortable lodgings, in a large, plain built, scantily-furnished house in our neighborhood, where he can vent the full force of his arguments upon padded walls. Many may have only seen a spirit; but we doubt very much that the comparison holds good between

the Salvation Army and the early followers of Christ. Leeds was not a thriving place then, and therefore there were no converted, or relapsed, drunkards to be had.

After puzzling our brains over all this mass of crookedness, we are inclined to ask whether we are quite awake, or whether there has been a general "bust up" of the common sense of the nineteenth century. The Church claims that they have educated 75 per cent of the population, we should think they had.

MOSARK ZAZ.

ACID DROPS.

THE *Christian World* is agitated by the question whether it is any good to continue week-night prayer-meetings. This institution has been most popular among the Methodists, yet the Rev. J. G. Stewart (Wesleyan) says that in his experience of some of the larger places of worship with a membership of 1,200 members, only about twenty or thirty, and not even that, were to be found at the week-night prayer-meetings, and these consisting of old and young people who have nowhere else to go. What a proof of the humbug of religion. People flock to the churches on Sunday because it is fashionable to go, but they do not care to give up a week-day evening to meet god in prayer.

THE Christian papers say that gallant Captain Webb tempted providence in trying to cross the Niagara rapids. Providence in their idea seems to have been some sort of monster lying in wait to seize the brave swimmer when he entered the whirlpool. One feels inclined to sympathise with the old farmer who said, "Drat that providence. First he spoilt my turnips, and then he rotted my corn. Now dang'd if he beant and took my missus."

UNDER the auspices of such shining lights of the Christian Church as the Prince of Wales, the Duke of Cambridge, Mr. Harry Paulton, and others, a grand fete has been recently held, the object of which was to raise sufficient money to build a church in Berlin. Now it is a fact that in London alone there are thousands of our fellow-beings whose condition is one of absolute starvation. Do the promoters of that successful gathering really believe that their master Jesus Christ preferred they should build an unnecessary church rather than give food to the hungry and clothe the naked. Let Freethinkers rejoice that such a religion is not theirs.

"ENTIRE Baptist churches are being gobbled up by the Mormons in Sweden." So says the Rev. Mr. Siljorath, a Baptist missionary of that country. 674 accessories to the church of the Latter Day Saints arrived in the "Nervada" a little while ago. The success of Mormonism is a striking comment on the divinity of Christianity.

A BAD opinion of Chicago is held by the Rev. Dr. Hatfield who preaches there. He says: "So shameful is the state of affairs that outside of the city it is regarded almost a reproach to be a citizen." Would not Moedy and Sankey do well to convert their own city before trying their hands abroad?

THE calamity at Ischia exhibits the wanton malignity of providence. This "visitation of god," to use the language of English law, murders at one fell swoop 4,000 persons, and involves countless others in misery and ruin.

SURELY such appalling disasters, together with the cyclones and the thousand and one natural accidents which human sagacity cannot foresee nor human science prevent, might give the theologian pause before asserting the infinite goodness and power of his deity.

"GENERAL" BOOTH says that if the rate of progress of the last six years is continued, in twenty years the Salvation Army will have 1,250,000 officers and 250,000,000 soldiers. This is not so alarming as it looks. The course of any fanaticism is like that of a contagious disease. Very rapid at first, until it has seized hold of all the weak constitutions, and then its rate of progress can no longer be maintained. Thus will it be with the Army. When it has gathered up the scum it will come to a full stop.

If the adherents of Buddhism had kept on increasing at the rate they did at its first start they would have overspread the world before Christianity was known; and had the early Christian apostles the same success every day which it is alleged they had on the day of Pentecost they might have converted the entire world in their lifetime, whereas not a quarter of its inhabitants are even yet Christians.

MORMONISM was far more successful than Christianity at its outset. When settled at Nauvoo in 1838, only ten years after the first promulgation of the new revelation by Joseph Smith they boasted of having above 100,000 persons in the United

States professing their faith. They have not kept up anything like the same rate of increase, though in all Christian countries they are able to make converts from a certain class of people—namely, the uneducated. It is with these alone that the Salvationists are successful.

SIMILAR figures have been given to prove that in about 300 years or so the whole of India may be expected to be Christianised. A similar fallacy underlies them. Christianity is successful in India, but it is not with the Hindus. Of these it only obtains converts among the lowest castes at famine times. Its successes are among the semi-savage hill tribes, and aborigines, such as the Shanars, Kols, and Santals. These races are not of Aryan origin or Hindu faith, but are devil-worshippers sunk in the most debasing superstitions. Christianity with its Satan, hell, and bloody sacrifice is just suited to these people, being a superstition one degree above their own. Educated Hindus reject it with contempt. Its success with the devil-worshippers only makes them less inclined to touch the infamous thing.

THE inhabitants of Sherbro country, near Sierra Leone, in May last held a witch palaver; and following the Bible precept, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live," burnt no less than thirty-four persons who confessed to witchcraft; whereupon the Christian governor of Sierra Leone sent a message expressing the abhorrence of her Majesty's government for such obedience to the dictates of Jahveh.

THE well-known Dr. Adam Clarke, in his commentary on this passage of Holy Scripture (Exodus xxii, 18), says: "If there had been no *witches*, such a law as this had never been made. The existence of the *law*, given under the direction of the spirit of god, proves the existence of the thing that *witches, wizards, those who dwell with familiar spirits, etc.*, are represented in the sacred writing as actually possessing a power to evoke the dead, to perform supernatural operations, and to discover hidden or secret things by spells, charms, incantations, etc., is evident to every unprejudiced reader of the Bible."

THE WRONGS OF NORTHAMPTON.

ON Wednesday, July 25, St. James's Hall was as crowded as on Wednesday, July 11. On the later date a meeting was held to protest against the treasonable action of the House of Commons in regard to Mr. Bradlaugh, and to ask yet once again for justice to be done. Mr. Labouchere took the chair, and spoke, as he has acted throughout this business, bravely and sensibly. There seemed also in his speech, as compared with former efforts of his, even more earnestness and less of the cynicism he affects rather than has. The only other member of a House that includes some 350 "Liberals" who had the courage and the wisdom to be present was Thomas Burt. Several sent letters, but in a crisis like this we want men's presence not their autographs. Mr. Burt spoke to the first resolution, proposed by the Rev. W. Sharman and seconded by Mr. E. H. Pickersgill, B.A., chairman—or is it speaker?—of the Hackney Parliament. Mr. Sharman's trenchant style is now almost as familiar to the London audiences as to the Plymouth men. But Mr. Pickersgill was a new speaker to a St. James's Hall meeting. He more than justified his selection. He is very earnest, with a clear, telling voice, and his matter is as interesting as his manner. The second resolution, declaring the action of the House of Commons a gross insult to the electors of Northampton, congratulating them on their sturdy adherence to their representative and pledging the meeting to support Mr. Bradlaugh until right be done, was proposed by Dr. Edward Aveling, seconded by Mr. J. H. Levy, and supported by Mrs. Besant. The third resolution, to the effect that copies of these resolutions be sent to the Right Hon. the Speaker, the Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone, and Sir Stafford Northcote, had for sponsors Messrs. Nieass and Bradlaugh. The reception of the latter was, if possible, more enthusiastic than ever, and his great power over the vast mass of people was never more completely exemplified. When we see these immense meetings, the oneness of their feeling on this great question, when we reflect that kindred meetings have been held in scores of places throughout England with the like results, we are reminded of the words of Burke: "There is often found more real public wisdom in shops and manufactories than in the cabinets of princes."

THE Rev. Crooke Lambeth writes from the Vicarage, Greenwich, to the *Daily News*, in favor of a mitigation of the sentence. He says: "Laws against blasphemy defeat their own object when the punishment seems out of all proportion to the offence. A year's imprisonment—have people realised what it means, and what a sympathy with the culprit is called out by such a punishment? It seems an occasion on which the friends of true religion should speak out, and declare that vindictive sentences only help on the cause against which laws of blasphemy are directed."

SPECIAL NOTICE.

Dr. Edward B. Aveling (interim editor of the *Freethinker*) will lecture in the Milton Hall, Hawley Crescent, Kentish Town Road, on August 5, at 7.30. Subject—"The Origin of Man's Mind and Morals." At the Wellington Hall, Portsmouth, on Tuesday, August 7, at 8, "Evening of Dramatic Readings."

CORRESPONDENTS.

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

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TUTOR.—An earthly crown may be worth sixty times 1d. A heavenly crown is not worth 1-60th of a 1d.

E. O'NEILL.—Thanks. You should have obtained the signature of every one in the meeting.

C. CHAPPEL.—We are glad to see that a chapel is enrolled in the list of the friends of this paper.

T. D. T.—Shall use your verses. Glad to have some more of equal excellence occasionally.

DERBY ELECTOR.—If you ever allow Sir William Harcourt to sit for Derby again you deserve to take a back seat.

In our issue of August 19 will appear a list of agents for the *Freethinker*. All who sell the same will oblige by sending their names and addresses to Mr. Forder.

FRIENDS desirous of aiding the circulation of this paper can obtain thirteen copies of back numbers for sixpence. By the new parcel post 3 lb. can be sent for 6d.

D. J. R.—New books are some time before printed in British Museum Catalogue. "Evolution of Christianity" may, however, be found in the Accession Catalogue, part 36, under "Christianity." Its press mark is 4016. g. 5.

W. N. (Derby).—See answer to "Derby Elector." Worry your member with letters on the subject. Write to your local papers. Attack him at every public meeting if he dares to hold any.

J. BICKERTON FISHER (Christchurch, New Zealand) says: "In common with many other people in this colony, I am deeply grieved at the success of the prosecution." J. B. F. considers the sentence opposed to the spirit of Christianity. This, however, is an open question.

T. PRICE.—The "Freethought Gleanings" should exactly suit your purposes.

R. WILLIAMS.—Sir G. B. Airy, the Astronomer Royal, published in 1876, some freethought comments on the earlier Hebrew records, in which you will find what you want. See also "Genesis: its authorship and authenticity," by C. Bradlaugh, and "Questiones Mosaicæ," by O de Beauvoir Priaux.

S. WILKINSON points out a little error in the paper by Mozark Zaz. The Levitical cities enumerated in Josh. xxi, amount to forty-eight.

It is particularly requested that all orders for literature should be sent to Mr. R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter Street, London, to whom all Post-office Orders should be made payable. Considerable delay and annoyance are caused by the disregard of this rule. In remitting stamps halfpenny ones are preferred.

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

SUGAR PLUMS.

OUR selection of "Freethought Gleanings" has been specially arranged to suit the wants of controversialists. They are made entirely from standard authorities, and cover a very large portion of the ground in dispute between Freethinkers and their opponents. Every quotation can easily be verified, being accompanied with exact references to the work from which it is taken.

EXCELLENT letters from A. R. Cluer, Mr. G. Payne, and "One of the Jury" appeared in the *Daily News*, pointing out that Messrs. Foote and Ramsey were not charged with publishing an "obscene" but a "blasphemous" libel; and the *Daily News* in a short leader declares: "It is not usual to keep Englishmen in gaol on the ground that they committed an offence of which they have not been convicted, and against which they have had no opportunity of defending themselves." G. G. G., in a letter to the same paper, mentions that Mr. Foote had anticipated the prejudice sought to be excited against him by the introduction by the counsel for the prosecution of the words "indecency" and "licentiousness." He cites Mr. Foote's words: "The word indecency has a twofold meaning. It may mean unbecoming or obscene. People will take which meaning best suits their purpose, and so we are

at this great disadvantage when none of these libels are read out, that we may be brought in guilty of a charge and sent to prison on it; and people outside may think that we are really guilty of another offence, and actually punished for that, the other being a cloak and pretence." This is the very error into which our virtuous Home Secretary has fallen.

SOME while ago an evening paper noted for the startling character of its bills, displayed in big letters the words, "A Bishop charged with Indecency." There was a great rush for the papers, but the buyers only found that some vestryman had charged a bishop with indecent haste.

THE *Westminster Review* opens with a capital paper on "Blasphemy," anent the prosecution of our paper and the imprisonment of Messrs. Foote, Ramsey, and Kemp. It points out that while everybody must admire the dignity and impartiality with which the Lord Chief Justice presided at the two latest trials for blasphemy, "in such marked contrast to the demeanor which a few weeks before had characterised one of his learned brethren recently elevated to the bench;" and while all must admit his views to be that of a judge of wise and liberal mind, it is not only uncertain that his laying down of the law will be henceforward followed; but it is certain that the weight of past decisions is in favor of the view of Mr. Justice Stephen, that blasphemy lies in the matter and not in the manner.

WE have pointed out in these columns that the views of Sir J. Stephen is borne out by a history of the cases from that of Woolston to *Cowan v. Milbourn*. In this opinion the *Westminster Reviewer* agrees, as well as with our contention that the law against blasphemy should be abolished altogether. Following the *Spectator* in pointing out that, "Mr. Arnold may compare the first person of the trinity, as he exists in the minds of some persons, to a sort of infinitely magnified and improved Lord Shaftesbury; and nobody thinks of inferring therefrom that he wrote not for the purposes of legitimate argument, but in order to insult and outrage the feelings of others. Mr. Foote, on the other hand, suffers twelve months' confinement within the four walls of a prison cell because he suggests much the same sort of thing by means of caricatures which, however good, ought by no means to be taken to prove an absence of honesty of purpose and belief considering the position of the man who made use of them." In a footnote the *Reviewer* says: "We must say, however, after reading what the Lord Chief Justice himself characterises as Mr. Foote's very striking and able speech, that the editor of the *Freethinker* is very far from being the vulgar and uneducated disputant which the *Spectator* appears to have supposed him to be. Those who wish to read the speech can do so in the report of the trial published by the Progressive Publishing Company, 28 Stonecutter Street. Price 6d."

WE commend to the notice of our readers interested in the alleged miracles at Lourdes, the faith-cures at Bethshan Hospital, and the wonders alleged by the Association for Psychical Research, the thorough analysis to which these pretensions are subjected by Dr. H. Donkin in his paper on "Miracles and Medium Craft" in the August number of the *Fortnightly Review*.

THE members of Parliament who sent letters in sympathy with the Northampton meeting on July 25 were Messrs. P. A. Taylor, Bryce, J. Howard, Illingworth, Hopwood, Craig, Broadhurst.

ANOTHER monster mass meeting will be held on Monday, at 1 p.m., in Trafalgar Square, to protest against the violation of the rights of the whole body of electors of this kingdom by the illegal exclusion from his seat of the thrice duly-elected member for Northampton.

A NEW INCARNATION.

IN the old fable, if the lion had been the sculptor, instead of the man being up and the lion down, the position would have been reversed. Similarly, we may suppose that if women had made our religion it would have been through the transgression of a man that death was brought into the world, and all our woe. We might have then had the lucrative priesthood interdicted to men as it now is to women, and be worshipping a divine woman instead of a divine man—addressing our prayers to "Our mother which art in heaven." But we get the bulk of our religion from the polygamic Jews, who held women in strict subjection, and whose law allowed husbands to put away their wives on the plea of mere "uncleanness." Monotheism has been erroneously thought to be the distinguishing feature of Judaism. It would be more correct to say that whereas the philosophical nature worships of India, Egypt and Babylon represented the feminine element, conjoining Maya with Brahma, Isis with Osiris, and Ashoreth with Baal, the Jewish Elohim were exclusively

masculine, the stern Jahveh and his angels having none of the qualities of the gentler sex. The idea of god becoming incarnate through the medium of a woman is one very repugnant to the Jewish mind, and it was doubtless introduced into Christianity from Egypt. The worship of Mary enabled Christianity to gather in its fold many whose devotions had become attached to feminine deities. It is still the stronghold of Roman Catholicism and there is certainly as much to be said for the reverence of an ideal of tender loving womanhood as for any other worship. Protestants have gone in the same direction by emasculating Jesus.

Modern ideas of the equality of woman are bound to have an effect on religion. The prominence given to female speakers among the Salvationists in direct opposition to Paul's injunction that women should learn in subjection and keep silence in the churches, is a sign of the times. Theodore Parker commenced a bold innovation when he prayed to "Our father and mother which art in heaven."

Much more thoroughgoing, however, is a manifesto signed by Mrs. M. A. Girling, which has been issued from the Shaker encampment at Tiptoe, Hordle, near Lymington, Hants. This production is so extraordinary, that at the risk of another blasphemy prosecution, we reprint a considerable portion as exhibiting a noteworthy phase of religion in the nineteenth century. The manifesto is entitled "The Close of the Dispensation—the Last Message to the Church and the World;" and commences "Children hear your Mother's call." After telling how god had become incarnate in Jesus, who declared that who had seen him had seen the father, it proceeds:—

"From the time he took that body into heaven until now, he has only revealed himself to the people by his own spiritual presence and his power, as he had done before he took upon himself a body of flesh and blood; or, at least, it has been but a few that have ever seen him. His body remained in heaven from the time he ascended until about twenty-three years ago, when the fullness of his time had come for the same Jesus, the god-father and the god-mother (which had remained both in one until then) to give out of himself the mother part of that which was once a body of flesh and blood, and had been crucified. When he gave out of himself the god-mother life it was celestial, and was then called the bride, the great city of light coming out of heaven from god; and it was god come out from the lord god. It was the celestial god-mother, life the female part, or the love light, that which once was woman life."

This somewhat mixed description of the evolution of deity proceeds to tell—

"How, when the god love came as a bride she must have a terrestrial body of flesh and blood, in woman's form, so that she might be complete as god-mother in shape, as the male part was complete as god-father.

"It pleased the lord god, called Jesus, the father supreme, to take the body of the woman called by name Mary Ann Girling to be the terrestrial habitation for the celestial god-mother, love life, to dwell in, the same life that Jesus gave out of himself, and to make the terrestrial body of the woman the perfect form of his bride. Her body contains the celestial life which came out of god from heaven.

"It is the same life that once was crucified in the male form. The marks of his crucified body that went up to heaven in his body came down from heaven in the celestial life even in her body, and in due time re-appeared through her body; thus proving that it is the same life of Jesus, now the god-mother and savior from the lord god out of heaven.

"Great has been the mystery surrounding me; yet it is holy, truthful, loving, divine."

When this great mystery of godliness is accepted "there will be no more war or death, the full light of the millennial reign of peace and power will be manifest."

Mrs. Girling closes with the declaration, "I am the second appearing of Jesus, the Christ of god, the bride, the lamb's wife, the god mother and savior, life from heaven, and that there will not be another." She finally asks "the whole human family as my children if they have any pleasure in my suffering for them any longer." We would not with any words of ridicule add to Mrs. Girling's suffering; for it is evident she does suffer from that most terrible of human afflictions—disease of the brain. Her letter proves that her madness, like that of so many more, has been induced by the absurdities of Christian theology. But what shall we say of those who, while they look upon Mrs. Girling as a blaspheming fanatic or lunatic, yet believe that god took up his abode in a Jewish woman nearly two thousand years ago? Distance lends enchantment to the view. Those who readily credit miracles said to have happened thousands of years ago are just as ready to scout the same if alleged to have happened in their own time. The absurdity of the doctrine of the Incarnation is seen when brought close to us in the person of Mrs. Girling.

J. M. WHEELER.

DEUS BAXTERIUS.

Gods are at a discount just now, therefore little attention will be paid to the discovery of a new one. We have heard of god the father, god the son, and god the ghost; now for Deus Baxterius, a brand new one.

Before me lies a report of a discourse by the Rev. M. Baxter, on "The Signs of the Times: the Coming Millennium;" and below is a short account abridged from the *North Cheshire Herald*.

About five years hence a throne will be set up "midway between the highest heaven and this earth," and god the son will sit on it. This seal-opening performance, which sounds like the dissection of a carnivore, will take about three and a half years, for a new act commences as each seal is broken. Act 1 (on opening first seal): A white horse appears; 144,000 Christians will vanish; all who see this flight will fall on their knees and be saved. Act 2 (after several months): A red horse; "hundreds of thousands of persons now living" will be the victims of war, famine, and pestilence. Then, "after some time," Act 3: A black horse; our Russian and American food supply will be diminished by two thirds; thousands will be reduced to skeletons; the plague of 1666, the American yellow fever, and the Indian cholera, are nothing to be compared with the "coming judgments." Act 4 opens with a pale horse; the martyrs will repeat their grievances, and "a great persecution, slaughter, and massacre of Protestant Christians" "will in a few months" take place; ten Republican governments will be erected, and Christianity will be extirpated, all believers to be slain. Act 5, 6 and 7, "in quick succession," produces an earthquake, black sun, red moon, and a shower of stars. "People mourned over the 200 children killed at Sunderland;" but the advancing judgments are infinitely more terrible. "In conclusion he asked them to accept Christ;" and "they could stand serene, undismayed, and unterrified in the midst of these terrible scenes."

Now as god the son said god the father only knows the time, clearly the title Deus Baxterius is not out of place. Besides, if further proof of his divinity be required, no man could gloat over such a calamity as that which befel Sunderland, and, apparently, enjoy the thought of the greater slaughters to follow.

Deus Baxterius has told us when the end will be: in five years. Scene of action: half way up to highest heaven (distance not yet worked out). Duration of performance: three and a half years. Before that time all Christians will be massacred. This is no doubt held out as an inducement for accepting Christ; in other words, accept Christ and be massacred. We had better remain Freethinkers!

Even in such a divine programme there are a few causes for thankfulness; for in five years 144,000 Christians will be missing; in seven years Christianity will be no more; ten Republican governments will be set up.

Apart from the mirth which such a specimen of oratory cannot fail to evoke in the mind of a Freethinking listener, there is a serious side which must not be overlooked. We should bear in mind that such utterances, coming from theological quacks, are taken as "god's truth" by thousands of our fellows; that many are frightened out of their wits, or driven melancholy, and then shut up in asylums by them; and remembering this, let us not be idle in counteracting the influence for bad which such pious charlatans have over our too credulous brothers and sisters.

Besides, is it not the terrible creed uttered by Deus Baxterius which has for the time being deprived our "apostles of progress" of their liberty and work? Surely this of itself is sufficient to cause our cry to be, "*Ecrasez l'infame!*"

W. JAMES.

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

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CORRESPONDENCE.

AN APPEAL TO MR. GLADSTONE.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I hoped that the Home Secretary would have recalled the remainder of the sentences upon Messrs. Foote and Ramsey. As he has refused, and as their imprisonment is to be continued, I feel it a duty to enclose another subscription for the support of their families. It seems to me that we should not entirely relinquish hope, and that a strongly worded appeal to Mr. Gladstone, setting forth the special circumstances of the trial before Justice North, and indicating unmistakably that the law which has been so severely vindicated will not again be broken, now that it is understood, might probably be more successful. I shall be glad to sign the appeal.—Yours, etc.

M. J. SHAW STEWART.

Woodborough House, Rockleaze, Bristol.

THE REV. F. HAYDN WILLIAMS AND THE FREETHINKER.

The following correspondence has passed between the Rev. F. Haydn Williams and Dr. E. B. Aveling:—

"33 Park Road, Blackpool, July 15, 1883.

"With compliments to the interim editor of the *Freethinker* and an expression of sincere regret that an occasional obscenity (in the form of a witticism) mars the influence for good of the publication."

"13 Newman Street, W., July 21, 1883.

"The interim editor of the *Freethinker* presents his compliments to the Rev. F. Haydn Williams, and asks him to be good enough at once either to withdraw or to substantiate the accusation of obscenity made in his note of July 16."

"33 Park Road, Blackpool, July 18, 1883.

"F. Haydn Williams presents his compliments to the interim editor of the *Freethinker* and, in reply to his note received this morning, refers him to the issue of May 6, 1883, page 141, under "Correspondents," "W. Cosford.—God may be too wise to err," etc. Also to *Freethinker*, May 20, 1883, page 154, "The Divine Burlesque"—the latter part. F. H. W. submits that jokes of this kind on the sexual relationship fairly come within the meaning of "obscenity."

"13 Newman Street, W., July 19, 1883.

"Sir,—The charge of obscenity made by you is one against the Bible not against the *Freethinker*. It is the Bible in Matthew i., 18, that states that Mary "was found with child of the holy ghost." The Bible, I admit, is obscene. But the *Freethinker*, in calling attention to its obscenity, even by means of ridicule, is, I contend, doing a duty to humanity.—Faithfully yours, E. B. AVELING."

PROFANE JOKES.

A DUBUQUE boy was troubled to think he might not know his father in heaven; but his mother comforted him by saying, "All you'll have to do is look for an angel with a red nose on him."

AN old negro named Pete was very much troubled about his sins. Perceiving him one day with a very troubled look, his master inquired the cause. "Oh massa! I'se sich a great sinner." "But Pete," said the master, "you are foolish to take it so much to heart. You never see me troubled about my sins." "I know de reason, massa," said Pete. "When you go duck shooting and kill one duck and wound another, don't you run after de wounded duck?" "Yes," said the master

wondering what was coming next. "Well massa, dat de way wid you and me; the Debil has got you sho'; but he am not sho' ob me, so he chases dis chile all de time."

At a religious meeting lately, a lady told how much religion had done for her, and how much better she was with than without it. When she had spoken another lady got up and said, "She fervently hoped, if religion had done for the preceding speaker all that she said it had, she would soon become good enough to pay her the three shillings she owed her."

CHILDREN'S SUMMER EXCURSION.—Parents wishing for tickets are requested to write (enclosing stamped and directed envelope) to the secretary, but it is to be distinctly understood that the children whose parents are members of the National Secular Society will have the preference. Therefore it is necessary to state what branch they belong. The ages of the children are from six to thirteen. Tickets free. We gratefully acknowledge the following sums:—Per Mrs. Hurry: — Hurry, 2s. 6d.; G. A., 1s.; N. W. (Plymouth), 5s.; G. Wrought, 1s.; A. Glasgow, 1s.; W. Abel, 3s.; W. C. M., 2s. 6d.; J. Cheesewright, 3s. Per J. Payne: J. Payne, 1s.; E. Payne, 6d.; W. Payne, 3d.; M. Payne, 3d.; two Friends, 3d.; S. Bransgrove, 3d.; R. Weeden, 6d.; J. Lewis, 4d.; A. Langley, 6d.; A. Weeden, 3d.; Mrs. Bulkrige, 2d.; D., 1d.; Election, 1s. Per Miss Reynolds: Mariannue B., 2s.; Mrs. Snow, 2s.; Mrs. Sackett, 1s. Per Mrs. Burton: A. E. M., 1s.; — Grey, 1s.; C. Williams, 1s.; Mrs. Burton, 2s. 6d. Per Mrs. Cookury: C. W., 6d.; A. G., 6d.; — Rust, 1s.; Mrs. Thorn, 1s.; — Still, 6d.; R. S. C., 6d.; — Skinner, 6d.; — Newcombe, 1s.; Mr. and Mrs. Wood, 5s.; Miss Alfer, 2s. Per Mrs. Billott: Medina, 1s.; — Billiott, 1s.; E. Fitzpatrick, 6d.; a Friend, 6d. Per A. Hilditch: Miss M. Bater, 1s.; C. Bater, 1s.; — Pyatt, 1s. 6d. Per F. Henderson: W. Hadley, 6d.; — Mahonie, 1s.; R. E. R., 6d.; G. Wertheim, 5s.; — Albrecht, 6d. Per J. Simpson: C. Wiles, 1s.; S. Mail, 6d.; J. Simpson, 1s. Per T. Simpson: Claydon, 6d. Per W. Cookury: A. E. M., 1s.; Friend, 2d.; — Culver, 1s. Per — Cottrell: J. G., 6d.; J. B., 1s.; Friend, 1d.; A. Brewen, 6d. Per H. Smith: H. E. Merington, 6d.; Davey, 1s.; J. Kinsey, 1s.; — Scott, 6d.; — Darall, 6d.; J. H. S., 1s.; T. G. Boxen, 1s.; That'll do, 2d.; — Taylor, 1s.; a Friend, 1s.; S. H., 2s. 6d.; — Limanings, 2s. 6d.; T. Fisher, 6d.; G. J. Warren, 1s. Per J. G. Dumville: J. White, 1s.; W. P. Ball, 1s.; A. Allard, 1s.; W. J. White, 1s.; E. Weeks, 1s.; G. Burrows, 3d.; G. Bradshaw, 3d.; T. Yan, 3d.; A. Outlenge, 3d.; G. Rubery, 6d.; a Friend, 3d.; — Foley, 6d.; A. Rubery, 6d.; F. Seymore, 6d.; — Hartfield, 2d.; E. Reynolds, 6d.; — Pratt, 3d.; C. L. R., 6d.; — Muller, 3d.; Collected in the Hall of Science, £1 12s. 8d.—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.

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

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"MILL ON BLASPHEMY."

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