

PROSECUTED FOR BLASPHEMY.

THE FREETHINKER.

EDITED BY G. W. FOOTE.

Sentenced to Twelve Months' Imprisonment for Blasphemy.

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

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

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]

A VISIT TO G. W. FOOTE IN PRISON.

ONCE more the dreary desert of our prisoners' lives has had its oasis. If the recurrence of the opportunity for seeing them means so much to us, conceive what it must mean to them! A week yesterday our brave friend, Foote, had three visitors, so that one hour and a half was added to the two out of the twenty-four in which his hateful cell can be left. Mrs. Besant saw him, I saw him, Mrs. Foote saw him, in succession. W. J. Ramsey also had his two or three friends.

As I was not one of those who saw Ramsey, let me hasten to make known to the readers of the *Freethinker* the serious information as to his condition conveyed to me by his brother. James Ramsey tells me that he was pained and alarmed at the shattered state of his elder brother. The long confinement has told most terribly upon his constitution, and the effect will, it is feared, be by no means transient. His memory is certainly weakened. Circumstances upon which conversation had turned on the occasion of the last visit—a special one, only a few weeks back—had wholly escaped his remembrance. Even in speaking to his friends his mind seemed loose and nerveless. He wandered from the subject under discussion, and seemed to find difficulty in following what was said. Let us rejoice that more than two-thirds of his martyrdom have passed. But let us remember, even when he is with us again, even if all his old strength and cheeriness return, how he has suffered at the hands of the abominable creed.

On my arrival at the prison I found a letter awaiting me from G. W. Foote. The letter will be published in the next issue of this paper. He had heard of his friend Wheeler's illness, and a considerable part of the letter as well as a considerable part of our half-hour together later on, was taken up with the expression of his pain and grief at the untoward event. His love for his co-worker is a very beautiful thing, with the pathos that a deep affection between men always has.

After I had read the letter, I passed through a heavy gate and through the heavier door, up stone stairs, to a room set apart for our interview at a distance. A moment's pause after I had been locked in, and then the sound of the unturning of another key, the throwing open of another door, the firm step of my friend and his strong face visible at the regulation distance. He looked more worn and weary than when last I saw him, but as firm as ever. The nights and days and weeks are very long and unvarying. They have left the trace of their monotonous footsteps on his face.

Our talk was mainly on business. It is difficult to unburden your heart when official ears are waiting for its overflowing. Yet there were inquiries and kindly messages in regard to friend after friend. Not a word of complaint. Even the chafing at the enforced absence from public work was but hinted at. He is reading book after book, laying in stores of ammunition for the good fight against ignorance and blind faith in which he will a few months hence be taking his old part again. He has abandoned all hope of release. Indeed, I do not think he ever really indulged in much of that hope. He had estimated more accurately than some of us the cowardice and falseness of the Home Secretary. Even that official's lie about him only moved him to contempt. He was not astonished.

His chief concern next to his friend Wheeler is the paper and the magazine. Let every reader of the *Freethinker*

imagine that he sees, as I did, the serious, anxious face, and hears the earnest voice of the founder of this paper speaking from within prison walls. We dare not give the paper back to him one whit less prosperous than it was when he, for a moment, relaxed his hold on the helm. During the next few months let all our exertions be redoubled on behalf of the *Freethinker* and of *Progress*, that we may not have even a reproaching thought in our hearts when we meet him and read his words once more.

Within the same week that I pay a visit to G. W. Foote, the blasphemer, in Holloway Gaol, we read that Matthew Arnold, the blasphemer, is to be placed on the Civil List with a pension of £250 a year.

EDWARD B. AVELING.

JUMPING COMMENTS UPON THE BIBLE.

[Continued from p. 266.]

JUMPING over the birth of Jabal, the father of all Arabs and gypsies; and of Jubal, the progenitor of all musicians; and also of Tubal Cain, ancestor of all brass and iron workers, I alight upon Genesis, chap. v. Here we have the third account of the creation of the Adam. The chapter opens quite a different tract or pamphlet, having no connexion with the former parts of Genesis. If the Bible is inspired, the holy ghost must have forgotten some parts when he dictated others—unless he did it all for amusement, and so was not particular what he said. Or he may never have given it a thought that doubters and sceptics might ever tear his revelation to tatters and hold it up to ridicule.

In this third account of the Adam there is nothing said of the temptation or the serpent; the tree of knowledge is not mentioned, nor the expulsion from paradise. *Adam lived one hundred and thirty years and begat a son in his own likeness after his own image* (Gen. v., 3). And Adam was in the image of god. We can only explain this language by supposing that in those days it was exceedingly rare for children to resemble their parents; else the holy ghost would never have laid so much stress upon the fact that Seth was "the very picture of his dad." This new story gives no account of Cain or Abel. Perhaps the writer did not know anything of them, had never heard their names.

At 105 years of age Seth begat Enos; and Enos at 90 begat Cainan. Probably this is Cain under a slightly altered name; the writer of this part of Genesis not knowing very well what to do, made Cain or Cainan the son of Enos instead of his uncle. When a man is inspired he must say something; and it would be unfair to expect reason and truth from one in that condition.

This chapter is the most interesting in the Bible in one respect. In it people live so tremendously long, though nothing like so long as they did in Ancient India. It is rather surprising that the writer did not give full reins to his fancy in this matter. He might just as easily have made his heroes live for a few millions of years each, and piety would have reverently believed it all. The worst of it is the writer forgot to tell us any good that those old fellows ever did. He might have filled up the outline a bit and told us how many thousand tons of good food they destroyed in their day, and how many sheepskin coats they wore out. Such details would have been edifying to the devout and interesting to lovers of statistics. But we have none of those things. There stands the chapter a good

specimen of divine revelation, which never yet gave a single useful fact to mankind.

GENESIS vi.—“Here beginneth” the record of the flood. When the Adam or Adamites began to multiply and they had plenty of good-looking daughters, the sons of the gods, or Beni Elohim, cast sheeps'-eyes at them, and married as many as they cared to. The lord was thrown into a fit of rage, and began to give vent to his wrath in sundry ominous threats and imprecations. In those days there were giants—the reader may supply their dimensions for himself; and he need not be scrupulous about a hundred yards or so. Say they were a mile high; nobody can contradict you. And the strongest evidence you can ever hope for in theology is the fact that no one can contradict your statement.

It repented the lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart (vi., 6).—The lord is unchangeable; here is one of the scriptural proofs. He is the first to repent; the conclusion is that he must have been the first sinner. His repentance, however, did not do much good to anybody. Instead of laying the blame where it all honestly fell, upon himself, he blamed his creatures for being just what he made them. So god resolved to commit indiscriminate murder because his creatures did not please him—a grand example for all kings, rulers, parents, slaveholders and cattle-owners for all time! Any civilised deity would have made a distinction between the good and the bad, and punished only the latter. Any rational ruler, god or otherwise, would never have permitted his kingdom to become corrupt. In this case “all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth”—from man down to the microscopic monad; there were only a handful of saints left—viz., Noah and his family, and such other sacred things as they had about their dwellings and persons. Those shall be saved in the ark, along with others yet to be named.

So Noah, being warned in time, set to building his ark. By the way, they have just found the timbers, half-buried in the snow, on Mount Ararat. No doubt they will discover the stalls and cabinets, all labelled and numbered, in which Noah kept the menagerie during the flood. Pity we can't bring mountain and all to Great Britain; then sceptics *must* become saints in no time at all.

The dimensions of the ark were as follows:—300 cubits long, 50 cubits-wide, and 30 cubits high. Altogether the area was 15,000 square cubits, and the solid content 450,000 cubical cubits. A cubit originally was the length of the forearm from the elbow to the tip of the middle finger, and it varied at different times and places. The Jewish cubit was sometimes 18 inches, at others 21. Suppose we take the larger value. Then the ark measured 525 feet long, 87 feet 6 inches wide, and 52 feet 6 inches high. This ship was the largest ever built—except the “Great Eastern.” Of course Noah found no difficulty in its construction. He merely had to get the wood, cut it into shape, fasten it together in the desired fashion, pitch it within and without, and lo! it was prepared for the storm. Anyone who questions the patriarch's ability in so trifling a matter had better lay down this paper never to raise it again. Of all people in the world, sceptics and unbelievers are my dread. You believe in the “Great Eastern,” why not believe in the ark? Must we bring its remains from Mount Ararat to convince you? Must we resurrect Noah and his family, and repeat the experiment of the flood to excite your faith?

Into this ark Noah was ordered to collect two and two of all animals in the world (vi., 19, 20). Some priest or Levite added to the story later, and gave Noah orders to take clean animals by sevens (vii., 2). “If you have faith prepare to use it now!” To build the ark would have been no trifle to a man not inspired; but to collect pairs of all the animals in the world! and no natural history book, no collection of specimens to guide him! Ah, Noah! much better had it been for thee hadst thou but died prematurely at the age of 599 years, instead of lingering on to 600 and having a task like this imposed upon thee! Prythee, good Patriarch, how many fly-catchers, bird-catchers, hunters, microscopists, animal tamers, and others didst thou employ? And how long did they take to finish their work? And how didst thou know when all the animals were in? Art sure that no species was omitted? How didst thou feed them when in? Art perfectly sure the pairs were all rightly adjusted? Art perfectly sure, good Noah, that thou wast sober when thou toldest this tale of the flood? Couldst thou do the like again, thinkest thou? For my part, let

me be set to drain the ocean with a sieve, rather than have thy task to do!

There are said to be 400,000 different species of insects now in the museums of civilised nations; those have been collected and classified by the labor of over a century, by people who know their way about the world, and who have means of transit such as modern times only can boast of. They are not impeded by forests and marshes and the total want of roads, as man must have been in the days of Noah. There can hardly be *more* species now than in ancient times, if orthodoxy and not Darwinism be true, though there may be fewer. And into the ark, if the story is true, all insects must have found their way, except such as spend their whole time in water. A few details will be given in my next which will tend to raise admiration for the divine wisdom and goodness, and to show how totally god's ways and thoughts differ from ours.

JOS. SYMES.

(To be continued.)

SPURGEON AS AN INFIDEL.

WONDERS will never cease! We are all familiar with the Rev. Chas. Haddon Spurgeon as a religious orator of a robust order of eloquence (the term *ranter* would express the idea in terser language, but let it stand); but it never occurred to our feeble minds that he had ever been an infidel. His intimate knowledge of the secret workings of divine providence, his frequent ablutions in the blood of the lamb, and his generally official religious character as vice-gerent of the divinity upon earth (at least in his own estimation) precluded the idea of the Rev. C. Spurgeon ever having lived without god in the world. This startling fact has, however, come to our knowledge, and it happened on his wise.

A printer's devil at the Paine Press (around whose saveloy, by the bye, was wrapped that wonderful tract upon Sabbath-breaking to which we referred here some time ago) in a fit of almost criminal extravagance purchased a penny bloater. When the fish had been safely brought home it was found to be bad, although when taken from the stall it had been perfectly fresh. Examination disclosed the fact that the herring had been wrapped in a leaflet issued by the Religious Tract Society, and the contact had irretrievably damaged the quality of the fish.

The tract proved to be a little essay entitled “The Freethinker,” “extracted by permission from the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon's sermons;” and after a careful fumigation for the purpose of overcoming the fumes of gone-wrong bloater, we studied the precious document. It was headed by a wood-cut, evidently put to this pious use after it had served its original purpose, representing a large ship being destroyed by lightning. The air is still and clear, the waves are mere ripples; but there is the conventional zig-zag flash, and the wind, which hardly stirs the surface of the water, is blowing to ribbons the sails of the sinking vessel. The relevance of this second-hand wood-cut will appear further on.

Order! order! for the Rev. Chas. Haddon Spurgeon, who speaks as follows:—

“Reader, you may be a man without faith, a man of reason, a Freethinker. I, too, have been like you. There was an evil hour when once I slipped the anchor of my faith; I cut the cable of my belief; I no longer moored myself hard by the coasts of revelation; I allowed my vessel to drift before the wind; I said to reason, ‘Be thou my captain;’ I said to my brain, ‘Be thou my rudder;’ and I started on my mad voyage. Thank god, it is all over now; but I will tell you its brief history.”

Here is a dreadful picture presented at the opening! Following the rev. gentleman's clumsy nautical metaphor, he foolishly trusted to the guidance of his *reason* (kindly shudder, gentle reader); he put his faith in the dictates of his *brain* (the shudder, as before, please); and started on his “mad voyage,” although reason and brain had been expressly invoked to control him. However (and please at this point give vent to a sigh of relief) *it is all over now*: he has ceased to trust those deceitful guides, brain and reason. But it is worth while asking this question. If his voyage was mad when brain and reason controlled him, what must it be now?

Let us see what this mad voyage was; and again the Rev. Chas Haddon Spurgeon speaks after this manner of speaking:—

"It was one hurried sailing over the tempestuous ocean of Freethought. I went on, and as I went the skies began to darken; but to make up for that deficiency the waters were brilliant with coruscations of brilliancy. I saw sparks flying upwards that pleased me, and I thought, 'If this be Freethought it is a happy thing.' My thoughts seemed gems, and I scattered stars with both my hands; but anon, instead of these coruscations of glory I saw grim fiends, fierce and horrible, start up from the waters, and as I dashed on they gnashed their teeth and grinned upon me; they seized the prow of my ship and dragged me on, while I, in part, gloried at the rapidity of my motion, but yet shuddered at the terrific rate with which I passed the old land-marks of my faith. As I hurried forward I began to doubt my very existence; I doubted if there were a world, I doubted if there were such a thing as myself, I went to the very verge of the dreary realms of unbelief. I doubted everything."

Truly this was a most extraordinary experience. The "sparks flying upwards" seem to suggest a sudden fall upon the back of the head, and the "grim fiends, fierce and horrible" appear very much like the delusions of delirium tremens; but we should condemn promptly and sternly any insinuation that Mr. Spurgeon's experiences of "infidelity" were simply the hallucinations attending recovery from a long carouse. Mr. Spurgeon suffers a good deal from gout; but we have never heard of his being an intemperate drinker, and we can only class his unique experience as a mystery, like the Athanasian creed.

Mr. Spurgeon doubted even his own existence. We have known hundreds of atheists, but never one who could relate a similar experience. Our bigoted "friends the enemy" at any rate are resolved that we shall not doubt *theirs!*

But C. H. S. at last regained his religious trust. When he had arrived at the supreme folly of doubting his own existence—

"Here the Devil foiled himself; for the very extravagance of the doubt proved its absurdity. There came a voice which said, 'And can this doubt be true?' At this very thought I awoke. I started from that death-dream. When I arose faith took the helm. From that moment I doubted not. Faith steered me back; faith cried, 'Away, away.' I cast my anchor on Calvary; I lifted my eye to god; and here I am alive and out of hell. Therefore, I speak what I do know. Ask me again to be an infidel. No; I have tried it: it was sweet at first, but bitter afterwards. Now, lashed to god's gospel more firmly than ever, standing as on a rock of adamant, I defy the arguments of hell to move me, for 'I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him.'"

There is no record of Mr. Spurgeon having gone to sleep on his "mad voyage," but apparently he did, for the "voice" awoke him. He then dismissed his two deceitful pilots, reason and brain, and re-engaged that thoroughly trustworthy one, faith. This gentleman steered him back to the port whence he had started, and he cast anchor on *Mount Calvary!* The marine metaphor proves to be too much for Mr. Spurgeon; he keeps it going all right for a time, but at last commits the unpardonable solecism of representing the captain of a ship as casting anchor upon the top of a mountain. Perhaps he is thinking of Noah and the ark on Ararat.

Farewell! Captain Spurgeon of anchor-casting proclivities. We needed not to be informed that, in religious matters at least, you have forsworn the use of brain and reason; but if we may be permitted to offer you a word of advice, we would urge you nevermore to voyage beyond your depth, but to keep your penny ferry-boat plying to and fro between the Tabernacle and the kingdom of heaven. On that route you are safe from shoals and shipwreck. But venture no more upon that stormy ocean where true-hearted men seek the truth, and invoke in their quest the guidance of brain and reason.

GEO. STANDING.

A LITTLE girl, having been forbidden by her mother to pick any fruit in the garden, excused herself by saying that Satan had tempted her. "Why did you not say, 'Get thee behind me, Satan,'" replied the mother. "I did," answered the little girl; "and he got behind me and shoved me into the gooseberry bush."

"We know not what a day nor an hour may bring forth," says the Bible. Our irreverent young man says he doesn't so much mind not knowing what it'll bring fourth. The devil of it is we don't know what it'll bring first.

THE DELUSIONS OF THEOLOGY.—IV.

AMONG the multitude of chimeras the theologian persistently palms upon his credulous followers, there is none more palpably harmful, when viewed in the light of reason, than the delusive doctrine of divine providence. Deity, the theologian asserts, is ever watching over with fatherly care the doings of his children; and is ever anxious to promote their well being. Even when he punisheth them it is for a wise and good purpose. But so perverse or corrupt is the nature of man that he cannot be got to act upon this belief in every-day life. When he is afflicted by disease and pain he seeks to mitigate the one and cure the other without any reference as to whether god is punishing him or not. His whole life, in fact, is a struggle against the destructive forces of nature—or in other words, against the benevolent arrangements of a wise and good god.

If we examine carefully into the meaning of this phrase of the theologian's, "divine providence," we shall find that, like a good many other phrases in common use among the pious, it has no definite meaning. It is a word with which the theologian juggles, and he varies its meaning to suit his own ends.

When a vessel is wrecked, and hundreds of persons consigned to a watery grave, the theologian sees the finger of the divine being in the saving of one person who, like Rip van Winkle's wife, "did not go by dat boat." When the "London" sailed many years ago for Australia, a young man, who had taken a berth in her, was fearful that she would not reach her destination, she rocked and rolled about so much on her way to Plymouth. Consequently, when the vessel stopped at Plymouth to take up a few passengers, the young man got off, declaring that he would not trust himself any longer on such a vessel. The captain, hearing that the young man had given up his berth, sent to a lady who was anxious to go to Australia, and who had been unable to secure a place in the ship. The lady took the berth vacated by the young man. As we are all aware, the "London" went down and only a few hands were saved; but the Plymouth lady was not numbered among them.

The young man was, doubtless, told by theologians that god in his providence had thought wise to save him, and had therefore guided him in his decision to leave the ship. But what about the lady from Plymouth? And what about the hundreds of other men and women, whom god in his wisdom had mercilessly slaughtered? Was this another evidence of his divine providence? God's providence was manifested in a very peculiar manner in the recent earthquake and in the Sunderland disaster. Good, bad and indifferent are destroyed at one fell swoop; believers and unbelievers share the same fate. And this last fact can scarcely be consoling to the theologian, who all along protests that it is only the wicked unbeliever that god would deliberately harm. To the atheist knowledge of nature is man's only providence—science is his only reliable guide. And by the aid of science he finds that he can conquer the harmful forces of nature and render his life useful and happy.

Seeing that the theologian cannot expect intelligent men and women to acknowledge the reasonableness of his doctrines, he appeals to their passionate desires, and promises to them that believe, a reward in the next world, but for those who disbelieve, god has prepared a burning hell in which to frizzle them up for ever and ever. All this we are asked to believe god does to show his infinite mercy and goodness. Hell is the fear of the ignorant; heaven their constant hope. The theologian knows this and works his card accordingly. Heaven is the picture card among the three in the trick which the theologian plays, and nobody seems to know where it is when it is thrown, and even doubt whether it is a genuine card at all. Any unprejudiced person would think that the "present life" was the card most valued by believer and unbeliever alike; but the theologian says it is not; and the superstitious bow their servile acquiescence.

But what is the theologian's hell in reality? It is said to be a place of torment for the wicked; a place where souls are burned but not consumed. The Devil is the stoker. He piles on the coals, smokes a pipe, and dances a hornpipe for the sole gratification of the occupants of the pit.

And who are in hell? The poets of progress, great thinkers, orators, and reformers of all kinds; and their candid opinion of the Devil is that he is a very "decent fellow"—that taking him "for all in all they will never look upon his like again." Nobody can say a word about

his moral character. He was always strictly truthful and honest, and if he were cast into hell—(some think that he went there voluntarily)—it must have been because he rebelled against a tyrant god who hated none so much as thoughtful men and truthful devils.

The theologian's hell is a figment of the imagination; and the Bible Devil a perfect gentleman. Yet there is a devil Freethinkers have to fear. His name is Ignorance. And there is a hell they must avoid—the hell produced by evil conduct towards one's fellows—"those thorns that in our bosoms dwell, that prick and sting us."

The theologian's heaven is a fool's paradise. It is a huge promenade concert; and many are the "soiled doves" that there do congregate. Heaven is called the home of bliss. But the lovers are very disreputable. Abraham, David and Solomon were very good ancient lovers; and these were only equalled in more modern times by James II., George III., and the notorious Charles Peace. But this certainly is not the company with which Freethinkers would choose to mix.

But there is one heaven which all men desire, but few only can attain—and that is the heaven of Supreme Happiness resulting from a well-spent life, which no theology can give nor take away. For this let Freethinkers work, remembering—

"That the dark clouds of error are vanishing fast
An' soon will hae sunk to the shades o' the past.
The bricht star o' reason begins to appear,
Dispelling the shadow o' sorrow and fear,
While freedom, sweet freedom, the richt o' our birth,
Is comin' like simmer to gladden the earth;
Sae noo strike the harp an' this sang gie to me
The blightest o' ony that breathes o' the free."

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

ACID DROPS.

ONE George Moore, has been summoned for assaulting an undertaker on the festive occasion of a burial. This George Moore is not the Bones of the Christy Minstrels, though that osseous professional is now and again summoned for assault. It is a gentleman of color, however, as far as cloth is concerned. It is hardly necessary to state that the pugilistic assailant of the undertaker was a clergyman. The bench were of opinion that the case was as discreditable and disgraceful on both sides as anything possibly could be. A brawl between a parishoner and incumbent of the parish over the dead body of an infant was too objectionable and too vile to be commented upon. As we agree with the remarks of the bench we forbear to comment.

At a certain hospital for diseases of the chest there are two boxes at the entrance gate. One is to receive donations for the hospital, the other for the chapel. An incorrigible punster might say that the former was also for the good of the chap ill. But the fact that two boxes are used is an excellent comment upon religion. It is not synonymous with beneficence. Can any one imagine a human being putting money in the chapel box when the hospital one stood hard by?

THE *Rock* regrets that Mr. Anderson's Pigeon-Shooting Bill was thrown out in the Lords. With its customary dishonesty the *Rock* omits to point out that the bishops of the Church of England are responsible for the out-throw. Not one of them voted for the Bill.

Two distraints for Church tithes took place at Boughton Monchelsea, near Maidstone, last Monday, at the instance of the Rev. F. Scott. Hay was offered for sale in each case by a Rochester auctioneer, who was employed by the aforesaid follower of the meek and lowly Jesus. Enough hay was sold to pay the tithes. At a meeting held after the sale, a resolution was passed condemning the action of the black-coated dragoon in distraining for half-year's tithes instead of for these of the year as is the custom.

GENERAL BOOTH seems to be unaware that "lying lips are an abomination to the lord." He stated the other day that 3,000 attended one of his meetings at the Plait Hall, Luton. The mayor of that town writes to the London *Daily Chronicle*, contradicting numerous other statements of Booth's as to his doings at Luton, and says that Plait Hall will only hold 1,600 persons. Truth-loving Booth also said that 1,600 assembled in the old theatre of that town; but the mayor says that it will only hold half that number. The "Grecian" orator could give the late Mr. Noah a good start at packing. But Booth evidently counts double, except when his dupe bring him the cash from his various "knee-drill" shops. Then he keeps his "Eagle" eye open.

WHEN a chaplain of Lord Bath's was teasing a Papist to know how he could make up his mind to admit that absurdity—Transubstantiation, the other made answer, "Why, I'll tell you when I was young I was taught to swallow Adam's apple, and since that I've found no difficulty with anything else."

PLENARY inspiration has been gradually modified. A cold-water advocate, replying to an opponent who quoted Paul's advice to Timothy, "Take a little wine for thy stomach's sake," retorted, "Yes, and he might have added as he did on a former occasion (2 Cor. xi, 23) 'I speak as a fool.'"

PRISONERS' AID FUND.

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

C. W. (Pontypool), 1s.; Cardiff Branch N. S. S., 6s 6d.; Collected in box by J. F. Haines, 2s. 9d.; Scarles and Claringbull, 1s.; J. Fitzgerald, 1s.; J. J. Evans (Toronto), £1; W. Horsfall, 5s.; E. Ellsmore, 1s. 6d.; A. W. Freer, 2s. 6d.; J. Ladle, 6d.; J. C. Coate, R. Dayton, C. Brown, J. Smith, E. Ismay, — Legros, — Curtis, — Baker, and J. Coate, 6d each; Eight weeks subscriptions by a few members of Huddersfield Branch N. S. S., £1 2s.; — Finn (Canterbury), 2s. 6d.; — Ston, 3d.; — Walker, 6d.; — Hooper, 2d.; a Friend, 6d.

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

We are authorised by the Executive of the National Secular Society to announce the formation of a Testimonial for Messrs. Foote and Ramsey, to be presented to them publicly on their release from gaol. An illuminated address will be drawn up for each, to serve as a permanent memorial. The money, after payment of the cost of these addresses, will be handed over to them, with the exception of £10, which will be presented to Mr. Kemp. [£20 were paid over to that gentleman on his release from prison.] All money sent "for the Testimonial" will be divided equally between them. Any who desire that their gifts should be distributed in any other proportion must so state at the time of sending them. Mrs. Besant has consented to act as treasurer. All moneys received, and the total amount in hand, will be acknowledged each week in the *National Reformer*.

ANNIE BESANT,
CHARLES HERBERT,
GEORGE STANDRING, } Committee of
N. S. S.

C. Harding reports a memorial with 22 signatures to Sir W. V. Harcourt. E. F. Amsly reports memorial acknowledged by Sir W. Harcourt. Captain R. H. Dyas offers half-a-dozen of his work, "Upas," for sale for the benefit of the fund.

THE NEW CREED.

I BELIEVE in goodness, which is almighty, and maketh a heaven on earth, and in the love of humanity, its son, our aim, which is conceived by the virtuous mind, born of true religion, suffered under the reign of superstition, was crucified, dead, and buried in the ages of "faith," and descended into the hell of hate and persecution. With the gradual spread of enlightenment it rose again from the dead, and has ascended with pre-eminence, and sitteth enthroned in the hearts of the good, from whence it shall judge the lives of the quick and the dead. I believe in the human race and the holy brotherhood of man; the communion of minds, the forgiveness of love, the resurrection of truth, and the life of the world that is.

CARINGTON J. FORSTER.

MASTER: "Well, Sambo, you call yourself a preacher, but you can't even tell me who made the monkey." Sambo: "Oh yes, I can, massa." Master: "Well let's hear it." Sambo: "Him what made the monkey made you."

THE NATIONALITY OF THE DEVIL.—A Highlander of the name of M'Lean, undertook to prove at a public meeting that Gaelic was the language spoken by Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. On the day after, the following conversation took place between two Highlanders who were present at the meeting: Dougald—"Weel, Tonalt, what did ye'll think o' the meetin' last nicht?" Donald—"Naething ava, Dougald." Dougald—"What way that, Tonalt?" Donald—"Did ye'll no see ony harm in M'Lean trying to prove that Gaelic was spoken in the Garden o' Eden?" Dougald—"No, Tonalt, what harm can there be?" Donald—"Weel, Dougald, ye'll no see sae far as I dae. Did ye'll no observe that if aince M'Lean was to prove that Gaelic was spoken in the Garden of Eden, did ye'll no see and observe, man, that that wad mak' oot the Deevil to be an Highlander!"

SPECIAL NOTICE.

Our next issue will contain G. W. Foote's letter to Dr. Edward Aveling. The issue succeeding it will contain the first of a new set of "Freethinker" pictures.

DR. E. B. AVELING'S LECTURE.

Dr. Edward B. Aveling (interim editor of the *Freethinker*) will lecture on Sunday, September 2nd, at 7, in the Hall of Science, 142 Old Street, E.C. Subject—"Jesus Christ and Socrates." Dr. Aveling will deliver a message from Mr. Foote. Note the time; 7, not 7.30.

CORRESPONDENTS.

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

THE *Freethinker* will be forwarded, directly from the office, post-free to any part of Europe, America, Canada, and Egypt, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 6s. 6d.; Half Year, 3s. 3d.; Three Months, 1s. 7½d.

RECEIVED.—John Metcalfe, Diderot, F. Daking, M. H. Bunton, H. Clark.

T. P.—The letter has never reached our hands. It may have reached Mr. Wheeler before he was taken ill. We shall be glad to hear from you at any time.

A. TAME.—Thomas Paine's "Age of Reason" can be obtained at our publishing office. Price 1s; cloth 1s. 6d.

G. H.—Glad to hear you owe your conversion to the *Freethinker*. Conversion by it is better than aversion from it.

G. H. G.—Try again. They were nearly good enough.

SEC.—Unfortunately we have no space for Guide Notices. Anything special we are willing to notify.

H. HATTON.—You can obtain bound volumes of *Progress*, with index and title-page, price 3s. 6d., at our publishing office.

SALDARO.—Always glad to hear from you.

DERBY.—It would certainly spoil Sir William Harcourt's chance of being returned if Mr. Foote opposed him at the next general election. Money would be required for such a purpose, but it would be well spent if only to put the present Home Secretary to a little annoyance.

ZIG.—See advt. on back page for price of trials. We should advise you to make haste and secure them.

I. MOSS.—We are always glad to receive good jokes or cuttings for Acid Drops.

THOMAS WILLIAMS.—Your antagonists are as ignorant as usual. Voltaire and Thomas Paine were Theists, not Atheists. Nevertheless, neither of them showed the cowardice of which they are accused by your antagonists. The conduct mentioned would only have been possible for a believer in Christianity.

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

J. HOLDEN.—C. Stocker, 29 Vauxhall Road, Liverpool, newsagent for Freethought literature, will answer your other question.

It is particularly requested that all orders for literature should be sent to Mr. K. 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.

SPECIAL.

THE Rev. C. J. Whitmore, of Kentish Town, has "funked." He dare not discuss with Dr. Edward Aveling the pamphlet entitled, "What Becomes of the Infidel Leaders?" We shall publish in an early issue the correspondence between this defamer and coward on the one part, and the interim editor of this paper on the other.

SUGAR PLUMS.

THE North Western is one of the most flourishing of the branches of the N. S. S. It numbers over 150 members, has a most excellent hall at which it holds meetings, and includes many earnest and energetic men and women. It should be, and is a great centre for usefulness in the districts of Camden and Kentish Town.

In September, 1881, a few months before the death of Charles Darwin, Dr. Ludwig Büchner and Dr. Edward B. Aveling paid a visit to the great English naturalist. The

conversation turned mainly upon the views of Darwin as to religion. An account of the visit and of the conversation is now for the first time published in pamphlet form. Every Freethinker should read it, and circulate this blow at Christianity everywhere.

GERALD MASSEY lectures on Sundays, September 9, 16, 23, 30, at St. Georges Hall, Langham Place, at 3 p.m. The lectures are on "Man in search of his soul," "The fall of man and what it meant as a fable," "The non-historic nature of the gospels," and "Why does not god kill the Devil?" How well we remember a volume of Gerald Massey's poems, moving us in very early days to some perception of poesy! We wish he had continued writing poetry. He would have had one disciple ever at his feet.

THE House of Commons recently sat into Sunday morning. The only member to object was drunken Mr. Callan.

MRS. SOWDEN, one of our best science students at the Hall of Science classes, has for a third of a year conducted a Sunday-school for Freethinkers' children. Seventy names are on the books. The children who have been most steady in attendance are to have a day's run in the country. Freethinkers who love children and admire such splendid work as that done by Mrs. Sowden, should aid her and delight them by sending help for the country jaunt. The address is 40 Park Grove, Battersea Park, S.W.

CHRISTIANITY: OLD AND NEW.

FEW of those who have in their early days received Christian training, can have failed to notice the great difference between the preaching of to-day and that of ten or fifteen years ago. Then it was customary on the part of many "brethren" to show forth god's goodness by their endeavors to frighten people into heaven with direful tales of fire and brimstone; but to-day he is an old-fashioned and very bold parson who dares to tell his listeners much about the wrath of god and the fate of the unconverted. Parsons have been compelled to adapt themselves and their teachings to existing circumstances; and now that people cannot be frightened out of the broad way, coaxing has been adopted. By its means the clerical fraternity still keep their position for a time. They hold out to the faithful (*i.e.* their supporters) the promise of a good berth hereafter if they experience the new birth here. This is much more palatable than the old doctrine; and we find many, who might be expected to be out of the reach of bribery, swallowing the sweet morsel; and with it, anything they are told to ingest, whether it is digestible or not.

Now and then we come across a preacher who adheres to the old tenets and does his best to retard any advancement in matters theological. A striking case of the "old and new" has recently come under my notice. A Nonconformist minister, of the old school, resigned his charge, and gave as his reason a providential call from an American church. He will be much better off in his new place; so the call is decidedly providential. Before leaving he issued a printed address to his congregation in which he reiterated his old teaching, pointing out that the duty of god's people consists chiefly in making preparations for the future life, and that matters connected with the present are of minor importance, and to be left to the ungodly. The Sunday following the farewell a student from a Lancashire College officiated, whose views contrasted strongly with the teaching of the late pastor. This student considered it the duty of everyone to obtain a knowledge of every-day life: to read the news of the day: to take an active part in politics, and in anything of material interest to the welfare of the community. Notwithstanding some advanced views, he held to a form of theology of which the following is a sample. He had heard a Secularist lecture on "The Origin of Man." Life was traced from the highest point reached by evolution to its lowest known forms, but beyond that the Secularist "did not know." The student admitted all that the lecturer advanced; but considered it a dreadful thing when the lecturer admitted he was unable to go further. "Awful conclusion!" said the student. "He did not know!" Then he went on: "Brethren, do we say we do not know? No! We say, 'our god knows.'" Whether the poor fellow's eyes were closed to the absurdity of such an utterance, or whether he considered a little theology necessary on getting so far, I know not. I do know that what otherwise would have been a sensible discourse was spoiled by such an anti-climax.

When men will be honest enough to come out in their true colors, and how much longer we are to have this Nebuchadnezzar's image of science and religion are hard points to determine. The old school is going, and if the theological seminaries continue to turn out such advanced theologians, it may be hoped that, at the outside, the next generation will be but little, if at all, plagued with Christianity, the bane of all true progress.

However, theology dies hard, and there is much to be done ere mankind will be free from its bonds. Whilst it is encouraging to note the last stages of Christianity and the internal causes of its decay, it will not do for us to leave the matter there. We must war relentlessly against the creed which would deprive us of our rights; and although it is our duty to strike hard and often, we can still bear in mind that it is the creed and not the Christian we seek to destroy.

W. JAMES.

A TALE OF REVENGE.

REVENGE is sweet; a blow for a blow
Is a salve for wounded feeling;
The working of vengeance is sometimes slow
But is always soothing and healing.
And if wrong was done long years ago,
And the injury has but one manner of curing,
'Tis consoling to feel in our silent enduring
That vengeance gets sweeter by proper maturing.

The tale of revenge I now relate,
Goes back to a fairly ancient date—
About three thousand years or so,
When Israel's sons and dark-eyed daughters
First went to dwell where seaward flows
The Nile's exceedingly turbid waters.

One son—called Joseph—most moral it seems,
Was wooed by a Mrs. Potiphar,
Who found he wouldn't fall in with her schemes,
(Of the kind with which the Bible teems).
For this rigid youth
Adhered to the truth,
And swore that in his most amorous dreams
He had never so much as thought of her.

Such virtue was all the talk, of course,
(The seventh commandment was not yet in force)
And laxity was not uncommon;
But virtue sometimes is rewarded on earth,
And Joseph the Jew got a Government berth,
And the public scoffed at the woman.

A famine came on, yet the Jews grew rich—
For even then Jew palms would itch,
But the means of their riches were sinister;
For though corn went up to a famine price
They bought it for nothing ('twas very nice)
From the virtuous Joseph who in a trice,
Had become Pharaoh's own Prime Minister.

At last the Egyptian blood grew hot
At what they considered Semitic tricks;
So to labor hard they condemned the lot,
And set them working at making bricks,
And drawing water and hewing wood
As the best sort of thing for the Jewish brood.

The bondage was stiff and somewhat cruel,
For the work was hard and so was the fare,
A choice of food was extremely rare;
The staple diet was water-gruel—
So the Jewish people grunted and groaned,
And swore the wrong could be never condoned.

Then Moses, who knew a "fake" or two,
Arose and tried what he could do;
Showed by a number of conjuring tricks—
Developing serpents out of sticks
Which gobbled up snakes in a brace of shakes—
That Jews knew more than just making bricks.

Many other wonderful things he did,
Till Pharaoh thought he'd better get rid
Of the Jewish crew,
Who were raising a stew
As no decent people would ever do.
So Pharaoh kindly agreed to allow
The Jews to depart to avoid more row.

Now Moses was "fly," as most Moses's are,
And intended to roam through the desert afar;
He was "up" in finance—as Joseph had been—
His wants were immense and Egyptians were green.
So he thought that he'd float the first Jewish loan
In a fashion that might, perhaps, serve to atone
For the slavery that his race had known.

He issued his orders with craft and with skill,
And the good honest "children" gave ear with a will.
Each one was to borrow—of course, from Egyptians—
Whatever he could by way of "subscriptions"—
"Jewels of silver and jewels of gold,
And raiment"—the items need not be told.

The order was "borrow," but we all must feel
Such borrowing meant "to beg" and "to steal";
However that be, it is certain they got
More Egyptian valuables than they ought;
It also is certain they "sloped" with the lot.
And ever since then
These Semitic men
Are known by the rings and jewels they wear;
And over the earth, where'er they repair,
They keep on borrowing silver and gold
At a rate now high, now low;
They are buyers of raiment—the sellers are sold.
And Moses is known as "Old Clo."

Though starting from Egypt on capital borrowed
They won in the struggle for life;
The Egyptian was soft—for his softness he sorrowed,
But the Jew is as keen as a knife.
And recently he's lent Egypt again
A part of the wealth that he stole;
For each shekel he lent he's extracted ten,
But still keeps her down in the hole;
And makes old John Bull
A convenient tool
To roam o'er the land
With a gun in his hand
To punish the evils of Pharaoh's rule.

The tables are turned and Israel is free,
'Tis the Egyptians who suffer from "bonds";
And in bonds that people is like to be
For they can't make snakes out of wands!
The Jews make the most of heaven's decree
To spoil the Egyptian's—the Egyptians are spoiled;
But where one would like the Jews to be foiled
Is in reading the phrase as a wider description,
And treating us all as if we were Egyptian.

TEUTON.

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Additions to this list should be sent to Mr. R. Forder.

SIR WILLIAM HARCOURT is said to be well versed in the knowledge of the lie-abilities of Government.

A BACKWOODS preacher once elucidated as follows in connexion with the parable of the virgins: "In ancient times, my beloved hearers, it was the custom, after a couple had been married, for ten virgins to go out with lighted lamps and meet 'em on the way home, five of these virgins being males and five females."

CORRESPONDENCE.

"THE DIVINE BURLESQUE."

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Mr. H. J. Beckwith's explanation appears to be somewhat misleading, seeing that he quotes only *some* of the lines from the latter part of his "Divine Burlesque," which I described as obscene. The lines to which I specially alluded are not cited by Mr. Beckwith. Would it be correct to infer that he thinks them scarcely justifiable? It seems to be a misuse of language to speak of the last portion of the "Divine Burlesque" as "a hint in irreproachable language."

It is no justification of obscene jokes and witticisms in the columns of a modern publication to say that there is obscenity in a book of ancient Jewish Scriptures. Accepting Mr. Beckwith's view of the Bible, however, for the sake of argument, his case may be put thus: The Bible is obscene, and, being so, is injurious. We, of the *Freethinker*, are anxious to do away with its bad influence as an obscene book. We therefore invent lewd jokes and make use of *double entendre* about those passages we consider to be obscene. *Similia similibus curantur*.

If the homœopathic principle is thus applied, the more infinitesimal the dose the better for all parties. Probably the allopathic principle would be more effectual.

I would, however, suggest that it argues a lack of literary culture and historic insight to pronounce the Bible an obscene book. The allegations I have seen in the *Freethinker*, and kindred publications, are that in Leviticus, and in the historical books of the Bible, in the Song of Solomon, and in the gospels there are obscenities unfit to be read. I would submit that analogous passages to those condemned as obscene in Leviticus, may be quoted from recent works on sanitary matters; to those in the historical books of the Bible from the sober and serious annals of Ordericus Vitalis; to those in the Song of Solomon from Swinburne and Rosetti; to those in the gospels from the Arthurian legends. Yet no man in his senses would call any of these obscene. Narrow-minded bigotry is not confined to sectarian Christians. It is sometimes manifested even by so-called Freethinkers, and hence the cause of Free-thought is "wounded in the house of its friends."

F. HAYDN WILLIAMS.

Blackpool, August 25, 1883.

[We leave Mr. Beckwith, as one quite capable of taking care of himself, to deal with the suggestion contained in the first three sentences of the above letter. But we anticipate Mr. Beckwith by putting his case in a light more clear than that afforded by Mr. Williams' letter. "The Bible is regarded as divine, and so is injurious. We, of the *Freethinker*, are anxious to do away with its bad influence as a book supposed to be inspired by god. We therefore show that the book is filthy." Mr. Williams, in his comparison between the Bible and other writings, forgets that these other writings are not supposed to be inspired by an all-good god. We challenge Mr. Williams, moreover, to produce from any reputable writer a passage approaching in grossness to that in Genesis xix. 4-8, 33-6, where the behavior of the Sodomites, of Lot and his daughters is described].

ESSAYS AFTER BACON.

IV.—ON DEATH.

It hath been said, men fear death as children fear to go in the dark; and no doubt as that fear of the dark in children is increased by tales of goblins and the like, so is the fear the grown man has of death increased by the goblin-tales of superstition and the horrors of a fabulous hell of dire and doleful torments. Certainly, the contemplation of death, as a change from active life and work to a state of quiescence, and may be oblivion, must always lead men's minds to gravity and solemn thoughts; but the fear of it—it being an inevitable tribute to nature—is weakness. If, indeed, there be a future state of intelligent and individual existence after we cease to live in our present form, why should men go in fear or terror of the change which brings them to that other state of life? Were it not fitter that they should regard it but as the necessary end of their span of existence, and so school their minds to look forward to it with equanimity. For no man need be in fear of future punishments (if such there be indeed) who lives a just and honorable life; and no man who lives such a life should be so mean as to expect a reward hereafter for doing what is simply right. The Freethinker who acts his part on earth according to his conscience—for your Christian has not a monopoly of that same though he would have you believe so—especially need be in no fear of death. Within his mind there can be no terror of the torments promised to the damned in hell by the gentle religion of Christ. In death the Freethinker has all the hope, all the resignation, all the calmness of a peaceful and serene mind—begotten by a faith, not in creeds of a priesthood, but in the supremacy of nature (of which he is an indestructible portion), whose laws are unalterable, whose decrees must be obeyed; and knowledge that in his death he is but undergoing a pro-

cess as natural as his birth, or the sustenance of his body by food when in health, or the other various acts of his being. Neither need men fear the pain of dying; it is as natural to die as to be born; and the one, no doubt, is no more painful than the other; for in the one case the vital parts, which are the quickest of sense, become first lost to sensibility; and in the other those parts have scarcely achieved their full power of sensation. Moreover, when death is nigh the thoughts become less anxious from bodily weakness, and doubtless the possibility of future life is a subject which calls for no special mental effort at the trial of dissolution—which is, indeed, a gradual sinking into a slumber from which we wake no more to view the earth. Therefore so let us consider it, and cast aside all idle fears of the pain of dying or of that which may be beyond. H. J. BECKWITH.

PROFANE JOKES.

A SCOTCH minister was asked if he was not very much exhausted after preaching three hours. "Oh no," he replied; "but it would have done you good to see how worried the people were."

CHRIST'S coat was without a seam. Our irreverent young man says this is a proof of the prescience of Christ. He anticipated Longfellow's line and could say, "My things are not what they seem."

A NEW prison chaplain was recently appointed in a certain town in Scotland. He was a man who greatly magnified his office, and entering one of the cells on his first round of inspection, he, with much pomposity, thus addressed the prisoner who occupied it: "Well, sir, do you know who I am?" "No; nor I dinna care," was the nonchalant reply. "Well, I'm your new chaplain." "Oh, ye are? Weel, I hae heard o' ye before." "And what did you hear?" returned the chaplain, his curiosity getting the better of his dignity. "Weel, I heard that the last twa kirks ye war in ye preached them baith empty; but I'll be hanged if ye'll find it such an easy matter to do the same with this ane!"

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