

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.]

COMIC SKETCH.—5.



THE FATE OF THE LAST PARSON.

THE HUMORS OF THE CHURCH CONGRESS.

DURING certain days of last week, the usually reputable and always pretty town of Reading was made disreputable in appearance and ugly to boot by the presence in it of the disgraceful profession. In these days of congresses and associations nobody has as yet started the idea of a congress of criminals, say undoubted murderers. A kind of gratitude, therefore, ought to be the feeling of the lover of the morbid to those who provide him with the opportunity of seeing gathered together in one place many hundreds of the men who are, by their calling, slayers of the human mind.

That the good people of Reading do not wholly revel in the notion of being over-run by legions of two-legged black-beetles, is shown by the statement that the Reception Committee had to confess to a disappointment with regard to offers of hospitality. This is as it should be. The shrewd Berkshire folk know the risk they run in entertaining stray strangers of the unscrupulous calling. No one has ever heard of the British Association, a body of scientific men, having any lack of offers of local hospitality. In the case of that association the difficulty is to decide what to select and what to reject. But even the English people are learning that their true benefactors are the men of science, not the creatures of the Church.

Further evidence of the waning power of this evil organisation is given by the prevalence of the feeling that one meeting at a time is quite enough for a Church Congress. Twenty-two years ago, when the first congress of this kind was held, two meetings at once were not only feasible but necessary, because of the number of laymen as well as clergymen that took interest and part in them. But to-day the interest of the laymen is either diminished or is taking the form of a suspicious interest. Let us remember that when the first Church Congress was held, the immortal "Origin of Species" was only just out; and that now its influence for good and against the Church has been telling

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for man twenty-four years. One other suggestion as to meetings we should like to make to the members of the Congress. It is that their next be held in heaven.

With these two healthy signs—the reluctance of the decent inhabitants of Reading to admit the wolves in priests' clothing into their homes, and the feeling that the two meetings went to be held, must be reduced to one—we can afford to smile not very indignantly at the impertinence of the clergyman who is reported to have protested that the Church Congress would soon descend to the talkee-talkee level of the British Association. This is so ridiculous as to be almost sublime. A set of mountebanks meet in solemn conclave to mumble over old superstitions without once laughing in one another's faces or winking the knowing wink; they keep up, not only before the public but (far more difficult task) in the presence of one another, the tragic farce, and one of them fears that the conversation of the mountebanks may have something in common with the discussions of a great scientific body! It is as though children talking over fairy tales had fear that their conversation should have the tone of the school-room.

The first day of the Congress was devoted to the discussion of the recent advances in natural science in relation to the Christian faith and recent advance in Biblical criticism, and historical discovery. In connexion with science and faith, it is interesting to note the growing fear of the impostors. They know they are being found out. Years back they would not have discussed science at all; and they are still as incompetent to discuss it to-day from the point of view of knowledge of the matter. But they see its advancing waves, washing away not only the outer walls, but the very foundations of their church; and it is pretty to see them, with much gathering up of clerical robes, running down to stare at and chatter and vapor on the border of the slowly-advancing tide, staying its progress with all their babbling never a whit. As to the discussion on recent advances in Biblical criticism and historical discovery, it is to be hoped that most of that was taken up with prayerful study of the Shapira MS., facsimiles of which were, doubtless, provided for the faithful.

E. B. AVELING.

(To be concluded.)

JUMPING COMMENTS UPON THE BIBLE.

[Continued from p. 307.]

And the lord came down to see the city and the tower (Gen. xi, 5). In those days the lord had no angels to go and come for him, and so he went on his own errands. Later he made angels; and then he hit upon a better expedient still—he expanded himself until he filled all space. The Christians still entreat him to come down into their temples and dwellings, but he never heeds them. On this occasion he went to see the wonderful city and tower, just as you might go the Fisheries Exhibition. But the sight alarmed him! And he exclaimed, when he saw the works, "Now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do!" In plain words, that means that Jehovah was really afraid that men would raise the tower to heaven, and so secure themselves against another flood! How extremely childish this is must be apparent to all. The lord is and always has been in his dotage. Therefore all must be children who would go and dwell with him, "for

of such is the kingdom of heaven." Strong-minded men and women are not wanted there.

The lord having no engines by which to destroy the tower—thunderbolts and earthquakes not having been invented—undertook to confound the language of men, so that they should not understand each other. The results were awful. "Mortar!" shouted a bricklayer; and up came a hod of bricks. "Bricks!" cried another, and up went a hod of mortar. "Bring up that plank!" shouted a third; and up went a can of tea. A mason dubbed his man a block-head, and the man felt delighted at the compliment, and fully expected higher wages on Saturday. The architect gave orders to push on as fast as possible with the building, for the sky seemed threatening rain. Therefore the master mason gave instructions to his men to pull down the left wing and rebuild it better. The men misunderstood him, and walled up several of the windows. No two men spoke alike. If a man said "Good morning," to his fellow, his fellow thought he called him names. Then they fought to assist their mutual understanding. Things went on like this for two days, when the whole world dissolved partnership, and supposing the tower and its vicinity bewitched, all spontaneously left it, rushing away to every point of the compass, some of them never stopping till they met on the opposite side of the world. The lord and his party went back to heaven, climbing the unfinished tower, and stepping from its walls into paradise, where they laughed till the universe shook again, at the wonderful success of their joke.

And the lord played a worse joke still some 1800 to 1900 years ago. He gave the world a revelation of his supreme will, throwing together scraps of his autobiography, history, romance, poetry, mythology, statistics, ritual, law, agriculture, cosmogony, ethics, politics, criminal jurisprudence, lies, nonsense, pointless jokes, puns, platitudes, false philosophy. This he put together in a book called the Bible, and would have printed it if he had known how. And the result? The churches have been fighting about the meaning of this book ever since—"they rest not day and night" praising the book and quarrelling about its teachings. In this contest reason is never allowed to intrude. Theological language is always at sixes and sevens. Millions upon millions of human lives have been destroyed to prove how divine and precious is the Bible; it has perverted the best and noblest sentiments of human nature and social life; it has confounded all those who have endeavored to follow its lead; it is a will-o'-the-wisp, an *ignis fatuus*—a maze, a labyrinth, a whirlpool, in the midst of which men neither understand themselves nor their neighbors.

Another leap, and we find ourselves in the company of Abram or Abraham, son of Terah and friend of god. The very best parts of Abram's biography are not in the Bible. I beg to suggest that the gentlemen who meet in the Jerusalem Chamber, Westminster Abbey, to improve the Bible, should insert the Rabbinical stories of Abram and other saints, for such additions, even if much that is now in the book should be omitted to make room for them, will enhance the value of the word of god a hundredfold.

Abram's father was Terah, and also Azer or the planet Mars; likewise Zarah and Athar. It is not every man who can boast of five or six fathers. Abram's father—(I relate the story from memory)—lived in high honor at the court of Nimrod; and a prophecy went forth that a son of Terah should dethrone the king. Therefore his wife, reflecting that Nimrod would destroy their new child, should it be a boy, removed out of the town and took up her residence for safety in a cave. There Abram was born. To make doubly sure, his mother did not mention the event even to her husband; and she spent as little time in the cave as possible, to avoid suspicion. Abram was a remarkable boy for his age, and grew wonderfully fast. At fifteen months old he was as big as an ordinary boy of fifteen years. And "on what meats did this our Abram feed, that he was grown so great?" There lies the point of the whole case. He merely sucked—his thumbs, or his fingers! Don't be sceptical; the lord was in those digits of Abram, just as he was in the burning bush of Moses, as he is in a Salvation drum, or the hallelujah beer sold at the "Eagle."

Things turning out so unexpectedly, Mrs. Terah thought it time to tell her husband; and one evening she conducted him to the cave on a visit to their extremely interesting son. Lest any should doubt the divine truth I am relating, I will mention an incident that took place a few months back at Euston Station. I was in the waiting-room waiting for

the midnight train to Birmingham, my companions being a young lady, and a gentleman with a little boy, apparently of four or five years. He was running about the room. And his father remarked to the young lady, "That's a wonderful child. How old do you think he is?" She said, "Four years, perhaps." "He is only four months old," replied the father; "I am just come from Canada with him. Don't you think he is a wonderful child?" I asked him if he had not made a mistake; and he solemnly assured me that the child was only four months old. I gave in, thinking this child, like some in Palestine in former days, might have been filled with the holy ghost from his birth. Besides, I reflected that I had no means of proving that he was more than four months old; and if he had said four weeks, I should have been equally silenced.

My space is run out, and Abram must grow no more until next week.

JOS. SYMES.

(To be continued.)

NATURAL MAN.

[Concluded from p. 315.]

So far we have seen the progress of man has been won by a vigorous struggling against the harmful forces of nature. In truth, nature has been a very useful servant to those who understood her, but a harsh and brutal master to those who were ignorant of her ways. She is not, nor ever has been, worthy of worship. She destroys every being that lives once, and sometimes by the most painful process it is possible to conceive. How many thousands she has starved with hunger, frozen with cold, poisoned, drowned, or swept away by earthquakes or other frightful calamities, mankind will never know. All we can know is that thousands have been thus sacrificed, and that in proportion as man used one force of nature to counteract the effect of another he has advanced. Edwin Arnold has graphically described man's progress in the following lines:—

"Men
Perished in winter winds, till one smote fire
From flint-stones hiding what they held;
The red spark treasured from the kindling sun.
They gorged flesh like wolves till one sowed corn,
Which grew a weed, yet makes the life of man.
They mowed and babbled till some tongue struck speech,
And patient fingers framed the lettered sound.
What good gift have my brothers, but it came
From search and strife and loving sacrifice?"

When the sceptical man had a chance of life, his advance towards civilisation was rapid. The sceptical mind investigated; new discoveries were made; the printing press increased in usefulness and power; new forms of industry were started, and a higher happiness made possible for the masses of the people. The art of agriculture steadily improved; and the shipping of merchandise from one nation to another was greatly facilitated by improved skill in navigation.

Great, however, as were the strides towards civilisation in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, they were eclipsed in the early part of the nineteenth century by the utilisation of steam-power, electricity, and other great natural forces, which had the effect of greatly increasing the wealth-producing power of those nations that adopted them. Nor was this all; for immediately following, machinery which saved an enormous amount of labor was introduced; food and clothing became cheaper; the people multiplied rapidly, and with this increase of population grew a proportionate demand for food and labor.

In a short time the struggle for existence was manifestly keener than it had ever been before; the rich became richer and richer, while among the poor the tendency was to get poorer and poorer. Uncomplainingly the people devoted themselves to the labor of each day. Theology they set aside for six days of the week, and concerned themselves about the gods on Sunday. Though they did not often say so, the majority of men thought it was far better for them to be diligent workmen, performing all the secular duties of daily life, building houses, making clothes, machinery, writing books; acting the part of good husbands, fathers, or citizens—than to have the most orthodox belief it was possible for a being to entertain. And this sentiment grew stronger and stronger, and proved of immense importance to mankind.

For hundreds of years theologians had talked about the importance of saving men's souls; and those who possessed the smallest, seemed to make the most fuss about them. But now the aspect of things was changed. Men began to talk about looking after their bodies; and some ventured to suggest that if they had souls in their bodies it would, perhaps, be no disadvantage to them if their bodies were well fed, well clothed, and their whole being well trained.

Necessity forced all but a small minority into the labor market. And after years of labor the earth was converted from a howling wilderness into a home fit for habitation. Here let me distinctly affirm that all that is admirable in civilised life—the comfort of home, the pleasure of education, the fascination of the drama, the beauty of painting or sculpture, the usefulness of scientific acquirements—owe their value to the secular labor of mankind.

Theology deserves no credit in respect to these things. Theology did not help man to supersede the sailing vessel by the steamship, the old coach by the railroad, the reaping machine by the scythe, nor the fastest locomotion by the telegraph wires. The theologian did not discover the telephone, nor did he learn how to light—with a brilliancy previously unknown to man—our streets and great public buildings by means of electricity.

One Stephenson is worth a thousand theologians; one Edison of more value to the world than all the gods that mens' imagination have ever pictured.

But see what additional wonders the secular laborer has accomplished. He has removed forests of trees and converted them into housss, the hides of cattle he turned into boots and shoes, the wool of sheep he has transformed into robes of beauty and utility. He has bedecked our walls with paintings, put books upon our shelves, and with sweet music gladdened our hearts. To accomplish all this he has had to rely solely upon his reason. Yet theologians call this splendid attribute *carnal reason*, and declare that it is no safe guide to man. It has been man's only guide; and when he has trusted it he has been more often in the right than otherwise. Even his errors have assisted him in future labors. Faith he has had, but it has always been secular faith. Experience has been his guide, science a lamp unto his feet. Even when he has walked down the wrong path, he has done so with his eyes open.

Theological faith is sightless. It allures you to the brink of a precipice and precipitates you to the earth beneath. It is a ship without a rudder; the tempestuous waves toss it about recklessly, the wind drives it savagely against the rocks, and to-day this ship called "Theological Faith" is a dreary wreck.

But reason grows stronger and clearer as the ages roll on. Man has discovered that he can trust it; that he can use it; that he can assist himself and others by the employment of it. In other words, he can do his own thinking, reason out his own principles, act his own life. He can be a man. And it is better for an individual to be a bad original than a good copy of somebody else. Man is civilised to-day. He has fought a good fight, he has conquered a foe; but better than all, he has converted an enemy into a friend.

What is man's future policy? Is there not still plenty of labor for him to perform? Is there not an ocean of enigmas yet to be unfolded, a gold-mine of knowledge yet to be explored? Is there not poverty to be remedied, pain to be alleviated, ignorance to be removed? The reformer has yet something to inspire his fervid soul; the philanthropist plenty to touch his generous heart. Why even now the wealthy rogue struts pompously upon the stage of life in grand attire, and fares sumptuously every day; while honest poverty in rags lies hungry and fainting at his door. Even now the rich own all the land, and many poor have not where to lay their head. Even now all men are not equal in the sight of the law; and one man gets pensioned for work for which another is incarcerated in gaol. Even now our sisters are outraged and turned adrift upon the world to be the playthings of vicious men for evermore. Even now our workhouses are filled with men and women who are able to work for an honest living—if they could get it—but cannot because labor is cheap and there are too many waiting to perform it. Even now our gaols are filled with society-made criminals, that education and better circumstances might have rescued from a life of misery and crime. Even now youth is stunted and starved, and men and women pine away, racked with some terrible disease which thoughtless and careless parents have transmitted to them.

Reformers abate not your enthusiasm but work bravely on. Through the world diffuse the glorious light of knowledge, let men learn that all crime is a mistake, that effects always follow causes, and that a good effect never follows from a bad cause in a nation that is governed on the principles of truth and justice.

Remove poverty by sound advice to the poor and by strenuous efforts to improve mens' surroundings. Stay the drunkard in his downward course, and assist unceasingly all social and political progress. Popularity you may never attain; even praise for your unselfish labor may be denied you while you live. But good work must leave its influence in the world; and your children's children will assuredly profit by it. For as Carlyle truly says: "Beautiful it is to see and understand that no worth, known or unknown, can die even on this earth. The work an unknown good man has done is like a hidden vein of water flowing underground, secretly making the ground green. It flows and flows; it joins itself with other veins and veinlets, and one day it will start forth as a visible perennial well."

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

A REMARKABLE CONFESSION.

THE Church Congress, recently held at Reading, will be memorable, if for nothing else, for the extraordinary confession—probably unique in its child-like simplicity—made by the Rev. Archdeacon Denison. Speaking of the rapid spread and growth of "infidelity," as the clerical party love to term the revolt against superstition, the rev. gentleman uttered the following remarkable words. He declared that "The present danger was very great, and especially from those who call themselves the 'educated classes.' He had no fear of the uneducated, but the utmost fear of the great mass of the people who appealed to nothing but the intelligence of the human mind."

The Archdeacon has, in a few words, given to the world a perfect justification of the famous declaration of the great Gambetta: "Clericalisme, c'est l'ennemie!" He openly confesses that he has no fear of the uneducated. And why? Because the uneducated and ignorant are always an easy prey to superstition, and those who live by it. But he declares that he has the utmost fear of the people who appeal to nothing but the intelligence of the human mind. Well indeed may the clergy dread an appeal to the intelligence of the human mind, but they have hitherto avoided confessing as much.

It is said that "children and fools speak the truth;" and without being impolite enough to call the Archdeacon a fool, we may certainly congratulate him on having spoken the truth as regards the feeling of the clergy as to the progress of Freethought, in a way perfectly marvellous, considering how many of his class carefully conceal their real fears, under a pretence of great confidence in their faith.

Archdeacon Denison has spoken not only "wisely, but too well," and we should imagine that for the future he will be a little more careful in describing his "fears." He should remember that there is "a chiel amang ye taking notes, and faith, he'll print 'em!"

CARINGTON T. FORSTER.

HYMN FOUNDED ON THE TEN COMMANDMENTS. (Written for the Salvation Army.)

[Each verse is intended to be sung by him, her, or them who have broken the commandment to which it relates.]

1st and 2nd Commandment—

I WORSHIPPED stocks and stones, good lord!
How could I have the face?
But now, I worship only thee,
And am a child of grace.
Old Satan 'twas in serpent's guise
That made me thus transgress;
But now he's left; and here am I
So jolly good. Oh, yes!

Chorus—So we'll drive the Devil back
To hell's infernal slums,
With tamborines and thwack
Of hallelujah drums;
For we're cherubim and seraphim,
And god almighty's chuns

3rd Commandment—

Once like a trooper I did swear—
 (All troopers are blasphemers !)
 But now I take no name in vain,
 Nor god's nor my redeemer's.
 Swear not at all ! or in your face
 Heaven's portals shall be slammed.
 Be good like me ; or, by the lord,
 Shall all of you be damned !

Chorus—So we'll drive the Devil back, etc.

4th Commandment—

I once worked hard the whole week long,
 I took no day of rest ;
 But now each day my Sabbath is,
 And I am seven-fold blest.
 The wicked work. I'll work no more,
 But pass my hours in mirth—
 Dance, sing, preach, eat, drink to the lord,
 And live in heaven on earth.

Chorus—So we'll drive the Devil back, etc.

5th Commandment—

My father and my mother erst
 I honored not, and wronged ;
 But now I honor both, and so
 My days shall be prolonged.
 They're dead and buried, and I trust
 Are both of them at rest.
 Thank god !—Ah, at a distance 'twas
 I always liked them best.

Chorus—So we'll drive the Devil back, etc.

6th Commandment—

I once did murder in my thought,
 And almost did in deed,
 Urged by the Devil ; but the lord
 Came to me in my need.
 Let all who homicidal feel
 Mend like me in behavior ;
 And only in the service stay
 Of Jesus Christ, our savior.

Chorus—So we'll drive the Devil back, etc.

7th Commandment—

Yes, I was gay ; the fruit forbidden
 I've eaten, rind and core ;
 But I repent, and wish in heaven
 The child was that I bore.
 Let all who've naughty been like me
 Repent then and do rightly.
 For now I'm happy, and I lie
 In Abram's bosom nightly.

Chorus—So we'll drive the Devil back, etc.

8th Commandment—

I was a thief and pilfer'd wipes.
 'The beaks oft ran me in ;
 But, like the thief's upon the cross,
 God wiped away my sin.
 Then thieves repent, and do like me,
 For you may do much worse.
 We run no risks ; god's hand for us
 Doth open every purse !

Chorus—So we'll drive the Devil back, etc.

9th Commandment—

In former days I lied and bore
 False witness 'gainst my neighbor ;
 But now to tell the truth, alone,
 For or against I labor.
 My candor he don't always like,
 But god makes me amends.
 I'm saved ; and care for nobody
 While he and I are friends.

Chorus—So we'll drive the Devil back, etc.

10th Commandment—

I coveted my neighbor's wife,
 His maids, and all the lot ;
 In doing this, my friends, I know,
 I did what I should not.
 Now, covetous of good alone,
 Of his'n naught can charm me !
 For I'm a valiant soldier now
 In the Salvation Army !

Chorus—So we'll drive the Devil back, etc.

A CENTURY hence, if the Bible is again revised to suit the times, the passage in the parable of the ten virgins, "Give us of your oil for our lamps have gone out," will read, "Give us of your electric light for our circuit is temporarily broken."

ACID DROPS.

BIGOTRY is not confined to this side of the great waters. In Melbourne, Mr. Walker, a Freethought lecturer, attending a public meeting on the opening of museums and libraries on Sunday, was assaulted. On his bringing an action against his assailant, a Dr. Madden, who defended the latter, tried to prejudice the jury by urging that witnesses who affirm are discreditable, and insinuated that an ordinary secular "naming" of a child was a dedication of it to the Devil. The jury refused to be misled by this mad 'un, and found for the plaintiff.

THE Rev. Mr. Sayers, a black man, has been lecturing at Market Harboro'. He exhibited a real flogging-post, made by a local carpenter, appropriately called Wood, the day before the lecture. The post was to have cost 10s. Wood only received 5s. Mr. Sayers also left the town without paying his printer's or his landlady's bill. As the latter was a widow, his behavior was cruel, though clerical.

G. O. BARNES, the great mountain Evangelist from Kentucky, prayer-bellowing at Bexley Heath, roared out recently: "You are a good fellow after all, god." From the familiarity of Barnes, his mountain appears to have been a high one and brought him on a level with god.

AT Birmingham Emily Robinson, brought under the evil influence of religion, stole money to buy a Church Army bonnet. Her father often had to fetch her home from Church Army meetings at 11 or 12 o'clock at night. No wonder the magistrate told the poor girl (only 15) that she was on the high road to ruin.

AT the meeting of old ladies (the Social Science Congress) Dr. Blake Odgers is reported to have given an opinion adverse to the abolition of the Blasphemy Laws. The Rev. R. Shaen was in favor of doing away with prosecutions except for forcing blasphemous publications in the streets. If this fragment of the law is enforced it will go hard with the tract distributors and the vulgar females who hawk the *War Cry*.

A LARGE bill announcing Mrs. Besant's lecture on the Atonement is now boldly displayed in the shop-window of a Freethinker at Stratford. The parson of a neighboring church went into the shop, and requested that it should not be exhibited, as it was calculated to do harm, and to hurt the feelings of those who believed in the Atonement. The bill is still exhibited, in spite of clerical impudence.

LAST Sunday week, despite a cold biting north wind and threatening clouds, Hawarden Church was crowded with visitors from all parts to listen to the Premier reading the lessons for the day. Not to worship. Never mind about god!

MR. WADDY, M.P., preached two sermons in a Wesleyan chapel at Sheffield on the same day. There were crowded congregations ; and yet a house at Netheredge, a suburb of Sheffield was broken into and fourteen gold and silver watches stolen from a chest of drawers.

THE following scene occurred at Lewisham during prohibited hours on the lord's day:—

Waiter (to applicant for drink): "Where are you from sir?"

Applicant (awake to the situation): "Oh—hell!"

Waiter (dryly): "Come in, sir. Quite far enough to make you a traveller!"

DANTE'S INFERNO REVISED.

Satan: "Who are you?"

"A bank cashier."

"Defaulter?"

"Yes."

"How much?"

"\$2,000,000."

"Felix, give him a top seat away from the fire where it is nice and cool. Never mind thanking me, Mr. Cashier. You're welcome. Next!

"Who are you?"

No 2.: "A bank cashier."

"Defaulter?"

"Yes."

"How much?"

"\$8,000."

"Here, Felix! take this fellow and give him a seat right on top of the stove!"

SPECIAL NOTICE.

Dr. Edward B. Aveling (interim editor of the *Freethinker*) will lecture in the Claremont Hall, Penton Street, Pentonville, on Sunday, October 14, at 7 p.m. Subject: "Children and Freethought."

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.—A. T. Ashmore, A. G. Barralet, R. S. S., W. Hadley, H. D., W. P. Harris, T. Powis, Philip Curson, an Ex-Ritualist, Captain Dyas, Silo.

MOSARK ZAZ is requested to send his address to R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter Street.

HENRY TYLER.—Glad to hear from you again.

T. K.—Will use, and send the copies required.

CARINGTON T. FORSTER.—Thanks for correction. You are right.

W. MACINTOSH.—Not quite up to the form of the former.

JOHN CHICK.—Your suggestion of music to greet our friends when they come out of prison, will be considered carefully with all the others that kind friends are making.

W. D. CARLE.—Branches of the N. S. S. across the water are held at 28 York Street, Wa worth Road; "Attwell Arms," Attwell Road, Peckham; "Angel Tavern," Lambeth Walk; Henley Hall, Henley Street, Battersea.

J. HILL has the whole of Vol. II. of the *Freethinker* to be sold for the benefit of the Testimonial Fund. Apply at 28 Stonecutter Street.

PERCONTATIO.—Dr. Aveling's cabinet photo costs 2s.

MR. H. UNDERDOWN, Temperance Cottage, Stopford Road, New Brompton, has undertaken to sell the *Freethinker* and all Freethought literature. We send this week Mr. Underdown the quire of *Freethinkers* given by Mr. Hartmann for distribution.

A. BOWMAN, 15 Sheldon Street, Bishop's Road, W., has 32 and 33 of the *Freethinker* for '82 for sale; also 200 back numbers of the *National Reformer*. Proceeds to go to the Testimonial on behalf of Messrs. Foote and Ramsey.

MR. ANDREW GILBERT, Skinner's Lane, Long Lane, Broughty Ferry, N.B., has the following *Freethinkers* for sale, one third of the proceeds to go to the Testimonial Fund:—Nos. 5 to 21, Vol. I.; 1 to 5, 7 to 29, 35 to 53, Vol. II.; 1 to 38, Vol. III. Also *National Reformer*:—Nos. 10 to 29, Vol. XXXVI.; Vol. XXXVII. complete; Vol. XXXVIII. complete; Vol. XXXIX. complete (minus No. for February 5, 1882.) Containing debates between the Rev. A. Hatchard and Annie Besant, Joseph Symes and George St. Clare, Dr. McCann and Charles Bradlaugh. A so Vol. I. of *Progress*; Nos. 1 to 4, Vol. II.

A. G.—Our friends are not obliged to attend divine service, but they do attend; and even the degrading worship of religion is a relief from the horrible monotony of prison life.

BISHOP COLENZO's great work on "The Pentateuch and Book of Joshua," five volumes, published at £2 10s., to be sold for 15s. 28 Stonecutter Street.

PETER.—Profane jokes are always welcome.

JAMES O'SHAUGHNESSY writes advocating half-hearted Freethought as against Mr. Benton's vigorous attack.

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.

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.

In the October number of *Progress*, Belfort Bax finishes his remarkable "Modern Revolution," dealing with the aspect most interesting to our readers—the religious. Dr. Edward Aveling has the first of a series of articles on "Ape-Men," in which he gives an account of beings born of human parents but of ape-structure and habits. A graphic history of a fatal railway accident by one of the survivors, and a paper on Paine and Franklin are also in this number.

On Wednesday evening, October 24, at 8 p.m., Dr. Edward B. Aveling will give an Evening of Readings, grave and gay, at South Place Institute, near Moorgate and Broad Street stations. He will be assisted by Mrs. Theodore Wright and Miss Adeline Holyoake. The readings will comprise Jean Ingelow's "The High Tide;" Browning's "Holy Cross Day;" Shakspeare's "King Henry's Wooing;" Rossetti's "Sister Helen;" Aveling's "Reading Room of the British Museum;"

Plato's "The Death of Socrates;" Mark Twain's "Buying a Horse;" Shelley's "The Skylark;" George Eliot's "Mrs. Poyser has her say out;" Shakspeare's "Dogberry, Verges, and the Watch." Gallery tickets, 6d.; body of hall, 1s.; reserved numbered seats, 2s. 6d. Tickets can be obtained from Dr. Edward Aveling, 13 Newman Street, W.

T. K., a city man, writes us a most delightful letter. He is one of the many who, unable from circumstances to speak out quite openly, are yet doing good work quietly. He has many conflicts in that home of the masher, the city, with "the pious rake and the simple-minded Christian," disarming and enlightening many. These are the men that make our work lighter and yet more strenuous than before by their kind words and wishes.

THE *Republican* for October is as good as ever. An article by J. M. Harvey is one of the best and most outspoken we have read this long time. The editor does us the honor of quoting a passage from *Progress* of this month.

LAST Sunday after the lecture at the Battersea Branch of the N. S. S., the following resolution was carried unanimously: "That this meeting strongly condemns the continued retention of Messrs. Foote and Ramsey in Holloway Gaol, and regrets that the Home Secretary did not treat their case with the same consideration as he did that of the Strome Ferry rioters."

In the N. S. S. *Almanack* the South London Branch is advertised as meeting at the Surrey Lodge Coffee Tavern. Negotiations for this place fell through at the last moment. A company is now started by this branch and its friends for building a Secular and Radical Club in the neighborhood of Kennington. Many shares have already been taken. All information to be obtained of C. Gater, 78 Webber Street, Blackfriars Road.

THE Gospel Temperance Mission having passed a resolution that no Freethought tracts shall be distributed in the open-air at Markhouse Road, Walthamstow, Mr. Snelling (of the Walthamstow Branch of the N. S. S.) will on Sunday afternoon next deliver an address in the Markhouse Road, near the National Schools. All Freethinkers in the district are requested to attend and bring tracts with them.

A PERSON from Stockton-on-Tees is persistently writing to us with the object of obtaining a gratuitous advertisement in the *Freethinker*. We refer him to the prices of advertisement in these columns that he will find on page 327.

ON Wednesday, October 3, the North-Western Branch of the N. S. S. held its first annual meeting at Milton Hall, Hawley Crescent, Kentish Town, the headquarters of the branch. Dr. Edward Aveling presided, and a large proportion of the 170 members were present. The quarterly and annual reports revealed a most flourishing condition of affairs, due to the great energy of the earnest men and women who are members. The president laid before the meeting some of the plans for the coming year. To make those plans successful the help of all Freethinkers in the neighborhood and of all who may join the branch even though their places of residence are not hard by Milton Hall, is necessary. The secretary is E. Thomlison, 18 King Street, Camden Town.

THE Archbishop of Canterbury has been recently praying god to multiply those who will assist to throw down the dangerous class-barriers now existing. When they are thrown down, amidst the crash will be heard the falling of archbishops' palaces.

MR. WHITMORE has contributed to our pages, and next week we shall publish a communication from Henry Tyler. Not, however, the woman-slanderer and company-monger, but a Freethought namesake.

ON Sunday last Dr. Edward B. Aveling lectured twice at the Secular Hall, Ball's Pond. The audience was large in the morning, and the hall was crammed in the evening. The evening lecture on "Science and Religion" derived a certain amount of adventitious interest from the fact that two auditors left the hall in shame and confusion that they had professed even nominally a creed so terrible in its nature and in its results as Christianity. A third person, one Venables, a music-seller, also left, brandishing a stick and cursing generally. But as he was said to be in a condition that is usual with him, but not with temperate people, we will not discredit the Christian cause with his advocacy.

"Good lord deliver us," as the unclaimed letters said.
"Good lord have mercy upon our soles," as the fishmonger said on a hot day.
"Oh lord, you're greater than I," as the winkle said to the wheelk, in tones of surprise.

PROPOSED FUND TO ENABLE MR. G. W. FOOTE TO OPPOSE SIR WILLIAM HARCOURT AT THE NEXT ELECTION.

ALREADY promised, £4 5s. The following additional promises have come in on behalf of this fund (if started): John Chick, £1; George F. Ball, £1; F. C. Blackburn, jun., 10s.; James Duckworth, 5s.; E. Rawson, 10s.

CHRISTIAN FRUIT.

A VERY commonly-received notion credits Christian believers with possessing moral qualities superior to those held by others, whose only supposed inferiority relates to the views they entertain as to the value, or otherwise, of so-called religious teaching. Why this opinion is so generally accepted as correct we are at a loss to understand, apart from the reflexion that early impressions have a tenacity which everyday experience of a contrary nature fails to entirely overcome.

With a large number of well-meaning people, the mere profession of Christianity affords a free passport to their confidence, but that they should regard the word Christian as the synonym of all that is beneficial and virtuous, is, on the face of all we know, a most conspicuous blunder. It is true that some professing Christians readily disclaim a partisanship, or sympathy, with those who, while claiming to have accepted the Christian as a rule of faith, act contrary to principles of integrity and charity. Furthermore, they as readily insist that the value of Christianity, as a living guide, is not to be judged by the conduct of such persons!

Our next difficulty is, as to what test we are to apply in searching for evidence in favor of the value of any religion if the daily life and actions of those who profess to believe in its tenets are not to be taken into consideration. In fairly examining this phase of the question we are confronted with the practice of such professors; for is it not a common appeal by the professing Christian, in favor of his religion, that its glorious function is to save its votaries from wrongdoing?

An appeal to history, however, completely falsifies such a claim; in fact, nothing could possibly afford such condemnatory proofs of the utter worthlessness of Christianity, in this particular respect, as the records of the lives of its zealous devotees. The only ground on which believers in Christian oracles ought to expect toleration from those who have such good reason for repudiating their theological puzzles, and peculiar decrees in morals, is that the practical results shall be free from trespass on the rights of others. In this view, Christianity, as illustrated by professed believers in its teachings, is most conspicuously a failure; for instances are extremely few, if any, in which, more or less, Christians have not manifested an aggressive policy. That conduct in this respect can be justified on the ground of consideration for the good of others, is a proposition altogether too ridiculous to be entertained.

Christian advocates may be divided into two classes—the professional and the non-professional. In point of practice, it is difficult to say which of the two is the more rabid and bitter in its treatment of those who do not imbibe its unphilosophical specifics for the ills of humanity. The non-professional, or, in other words, the amateur, Christian advocate is, in great part, composed of elements which are indebted for their unsavory peculiarities to the mouldering influences of the particular professional under whose paternal guidance the mental aptitudes of the victim have been cultivated. Like a medicinal composition, much depends on the school of thought in which the manipulator has been trained.

We do not deny that in many instances paid advocates of Christianity are sufficiently high-minded to soar beyond the petty-fogging narrow-mindedness of the congregations to whose so-called spiritual longings they administer the much-sought-for consolation. Indeed, it may not be wrong to assert that many paid pleaders in behalf of Christianity are restrained from expressing their honest thoughts because of the bigotry and intolerance of their flocks. On the other hand, some flocks are not infrequently the too willing tools of cunning, deceitful, luxury-seekers, styled "ministers of the Church of Christ."

Amongst the conflict of views and objects of Christians in humble walks of life, the most prominent feature is the supineness with which the work of priestcraft is accepted by them; and could it but be made clear to them that theology is but the dry-bone skeleton of their handiwork, their manhood would rise in true majesty and strike a death-blow at each and every form of priestly superstition and tyranny. Let it be shown that its origin was conceived by the vilest of men for the purpose of enslaving human thought by ghastly fear. Christian fruit has been the product of selfishness, grinding ambition, inconsistency of profession and practice, and of downright injustice to mankind.

In worldly matters it has laid its unholy clutch on regenerating science, it has tried hard to stifle free inquiry, and free expression of thought; even to-day the existence of Christianity is not regarded as secure without meting out merciless imprisonment and tortures to three high-minded men who have risen in moral grandeur and publicly denounced the infamous swindle. PONTYPOOL.

WHEREFORE STAND YE IDLE?

CAN ye thus stand idly dreaming
All life's golden hours away?
Heeding not the strife around thee,
Waken, while 'tis yet to-day!
Though not foremost in the battle,
Lend a ready, willing hand:
Snatch the brand from out the burning,
Take a nobler, firmer stand
'Gainst the foe that now would crush us—
Ignorance in bigot form—
'Till the sunlight of man's reason
Shall proclaim a brighter morn.
Though it be but one frail mortal
You may save from blind despair,
Quickened to a sense of danger,
Teach the fallacy of prayer!
Surely it were worth the effort—
Thus to lead one wandering soul
From the track of evil thinking
Upward to the worthier goal!

NELLIE.

ONE OF MR. WHITMORE'S CASES.

No. 3 of Mr. Whitmore's bogus list was C. S.—Charles Southwell. We have much pleasure in printing part of a long and most interesting communication from one who knew him to the end. It will show that Southwell was infidel to the last:—

"My personal reminiscences take me back to the most popular and celebrated atheistical controversialist of his day, Charles Southwell (originally a cabinet-maker), whose acquaintance I chanced to make when fulfilling a theatrical engagement at Liverpool.

"I attended Southwell's death-bed, and was consequently a witness of that last eventful scene which sooner or later awaits us all. My dear friend died at Auckland, New Zealand, on the 7th August, 1860, in the forty-sixth year of his age. The disease to which he succumbed was consumption, brought on by exposure to intense cold in the Pyrenean mountains, when serving as a soldier in the British Legion during the Carlist-Isabella war in Spain.

"For several weeks before his death he continued to receive the visit of his friends and talked to them with his old liveliness. To a Christian minister, an exceedingly good man, who frequently called Southwell the greatest orator in the world, he said: 'Ah, my dear friend, did you pray for me last night?' This good minister, with tears in his eyes, answered: 'Indeed I did with all my heart. I prayed for your speedy recovery.' 'And assuming that there is such a being as a god do you think he would permit me to suffer like this?' 'God knows best,' was the reply. 'My friend,' answered the dying sufferer, 'I know that I am on my death-bed; I know also that my views with reference to god or gods are the same as ever. Why all this fuss about dying? A good, wise, humane god would never have occasioned his creatures a moment's needless suffering. I have said what I have repeated upon numberless occasions, and still maintain that theist, deist, polytheist, atheist, or other terms having reference to god or gods are altogether meaningless. All men must die, and the sooner I shuffle off this coil the sooner I shall cease to suffer. Addison sent for a friend to let him see how a Christian could die. I shall die as calmly as he, finding more real consolation in the affection of the living friends of my way of thinking, who now surround me, than in any of the senseless creeds of Christianity.'

"Such were the last words of my dear friend Southwell, addressed to the Rev. Mr. Campbell, a few hours before his death. Whenever Southwell's friends approached his bed, his noble features would light up with a glow of inexpressible tenderness. Gradually he sank into a state of complete unconsciousness, passing to that bourne from whence no traveller returns, in the presence of his devoted wife and dearest friend. After life's fitful fever—he slept well."

"THY KINGDOM COME."

At first, after I had been converted from a merely nominal Christian into a hearty believer in the efficiency of Christ's atoning sacrifice as saving me from all sin, I conscientiously and fully accepted the whole doctrine of the evangelical teaching; and I endeavored, although I admit that I often fell short of the standard I had adopted, to carry out in my life and conduct the principles I professed. Amongst other services for my divine master, I engaged in Sunday-school teaching as one of the instrumentalities for hastening the coming of his kingdom best suited to my circumstances.

In those days I had no conception of a standard of conduct apart from the divine will; and I regarded this world and man as made by god for his own glory; while, animated as I was by a feeling of gratitude to him for his unspeakable gift but not being wholly exempt from an unconscious other-worldliness, having respect unto the recompense of the reward, I thought it right to labor and pray for the coming of the reign of Christ on the earth. Work and prayer was inculcated by Bible, by hymn, by preacher, and by those who joined in the exercises of teachers, Bible class, prayer or mission meeting. In public vocal prayer I myself sometimes engaged, and joined those who petition the divine majesty to hasten the coming of his kingdom! his kingdom! his own kingdom! His own glory! His own interests!

No doubt the glory of god and the good of man are only other names for the same thing, for we know that god is good. But the good of the creature is subordinated to the glorification of the creator. Alas! to show that even in our very highest exercises we are not secure from the wiles of the enemy of our souls; it was while actually engaged in prayer that a seed of doubt gained entrance to my soul. I in my boyish days had many seasons of doubt and disbelief; but by the grace of god I was now washed in the redeemer's blood, and sanctified in some degree by his spirit. And, according to the doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints, I ought to have been strong in the power of his might, to repel and overcome these assaults of the enemy. I do not know how to account for it on New Testament principles; but the doubt grew in my mind as to why it was necessary for us, by millions night and morning, thus to be urging the almighty to advance his own interests and enhance his own glory on the earth. A hell-born excess of devoutness made it appear presumptuous thus to keep nagging at the divine manager of the universe to attend to his own affairs; and a little cloud of doubt no bigger than a man's hand began to show above the horizon, which was ere long to darken the entire sky. By degrees I found my doubts pervade other realms of Christian belief; and as knowledge increased faith became weaker, until at length not a shred was left.

The truly soul-stirring work of Darwin on the origin of distinct species of vital forms, led to conceptions of god as an abstraction; and from Spencer, Huxley, Tyndal and Galton came further and yet further enlightenment, until every trace of religious belief, so far as supernaturalism is concerned, appears to have vanished from my mind. The desire to increase the quantity and quality of life has taken the place of a desire to glorify god; and I stand a confessed secularist in belief.

J. GREEVES FISHER.

REVIEWS.

Our Corner (Freethought Publishing Company, 63 Fleet Street) for October is full of interesting and teaching matter and yet is not heavy. It is pleasant to think of this magazine reaching the hands of little children, the homes of men, women and children, and aiding them in a godless culture.

National Secular Society's Almanack (same publishers.)—This is a sort of literary Liebig's extract of meat. The amount of information crammed into it is so extensive that it would bewilder if it were not so admirably arranged. The articles are varied in everything but their excellence.

A MONETARY COMPARISON.

THE following appeared in a Unitarian journal called *Christian Life*:—"Last week's *National Reformer* contains a paragraph which affords an amusing illustration of the extent to which Secularism can succeed in inspiring its followers with practical benevolence. The item runs thus (the italics are ours): 'On Sunday morning Mr. Grout delivered an address, entitled, "Prayers: serious, comic, and otherwise;" to an immense audience. The collection for the Freethinkers' Benevolent Fund realised *twenty-four shillings*.' The same day's *Christian World* reports an open-air religious service held at Wakefield, Yorkshire; at which a collection for the local hospital was taken, and it amounted to over £131. Christianity, after all, is the truest Secularism."

One would like to know if the meeting in Yorkshire was a Unitarian meeting. If it was not, the editor's remarks are entirely out of place. If the meeting at Wakefield was a meeting of the Church, or of any of the dissenting bodies not Unitarian, then the editor condemns Unitarianism more than Secularism, for although the chairman—the lecturer being unaware of the collection until after his lecture—succeeded in getting £1 4s. from an almost alien audience, the Unitarians have not collected one penny for a benevolent object at any open-air gathering. Therefore, if Christianity is true because it gathered more money than Secularism at an open-air meeting, how false must Unitarianism be which gathered nothing.

To make a fair comparison the editor ought to test the two under similar conditions. For instance, if a Christian speaker went amongst the Jews lecturing against the Jewish religion, and then asked for subscriptions to a Christian benevolent society, how much would he be likely to get? Would he get £1 4s. in pence? I doubt it. Anyhow, until such a test is made there is no true comparison.

J. GROUT.

FROM A NEW STANDPOINT.

"I RATHER like this church business," observed the police reporter, tipping his hat back and laying down his pencil. "I never reported a sermon before, but I think I could get into the racket with a little practice and make it work away up in G.!"

"What church have you been to?" asked the law reporter condescendingly.

"I don't know the name of it," mused the police reporter. "I forgot to inquire. It's the one where the man has the good sense to wear his duster in hot weather. Most of the fellows, when I was a boy and had to go to church, used to wear the same coat all the year round; but this man came out in his white linen, and it made me cool to look at him."

"Do you know what he preached about?" asked the law reporter, with a sardonic smile.

"He didn't seem to preach about much of anything. He'd start out all right, but as soon as he got under way the choir would clip in and break him up. And the congregation kept talking to themselves all the time, so you couldn't hear what the man was getting at. In my report I go for that congregation now, you bet."

"How did you like the service as a whole?" inquired the law reporter.

"I suppose it was well enough," replied the police reporter. "They passed something around and all hands took a snack but me. I don't believe in carrying things too far, and while I'm not a Christian I don't go to church to eat. The service was good but I didn't take any. What do you call that thing where they pass around a box and all hands chip in?"

"Did they sing while it was going on?"

"Yes, a man got up in a sort of side chapel where they've got a tall piano, and sang something about Naomi kissing her mother-in-law. What is the name of that part of the business?"

"The Offertory. Did you put anything into the plate?"

"I didn't know the limit, and the man didn't wait long enough for me to ask. I was willing to go into the game, but I want to know what the ante is at least. When they got through with the deal they took all the boxes and dumped the winnings in together and handed them up to the man that was bossing the thing; but I don't think it amounted to much, for he had to get down on his knees to see what he had captured. But I like it. I'm going to study upon the racket, and if I don't get into that game before I finish you can call me a Dutchman."

And with this threat, to embrace Christianity from the Episcopalian standpoint, the police reporter went back to his account of the proceedings, which he headed, "A Very Enjoyable Affair," and closed with the statement that "the exercises were kept up until nearly dinner time."—*Brooklyn Eagle*.

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