

PROSECUTED FOR BLASPHEMY.

THE FREETHINKER.

EDITED BY G. W. FOOTE.

Sentenced to Twelve Months' Imprisonment for Blasphemy.

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

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

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]

THE HUMORS OF THE CHURCH CONGRESS.

(Concluded from page 321.)

How low is the ebb to which the Church has sunk may be gathered from the names of the laymen dishonored by their owners' presence at the gathering of the mountebanks. The most prominent were Professor Flower, Professor Pritchard, Sir C. W. Wilson, Mr. Talbot, M.P., Mr. Walter, M.P., Mr. Selater-Booth, M.P., Mr. Leighton, M.P., Lord Brazon, Mr. Thompson, M.P., and Mr. Hubbard, M.P.

Where are the names of the illustrious of to-day whose work is the helping of man? One name truly in the list is that of one who has deserved well of the public. It is that of Professor Flower, and we shall find him preaching to the assembled clergymen most unpleasant truths. Statesmen? Where are the Gladstones, Northcotes, Chamberlains, Brights, Salisburys? Scientific men? Where are the Huxleys, Tyndals, Darwins, Fosters, Geikies, Hookers? Poets? Where are Swinburne, Browning, Tennyson, Morris? Literary men? Where are Arnold, Black, Ruskin, Leslie Stephen, Morley? Artists of any kind? Leighton, Millais, Irving, Sullivan? Not there. And yet this Church pretends it is the all in all to humanity, and that in its work all men rejoice. If this were even partly true we should have at the meetings of the Church Congress the representative men of all callings in place of the miserable handful of nonentities seen at Reading.

That I am not exaggerating the claims of the Church, and therefore the disgrace that falls on her dishonorable head, when she fails to bring together men of note at her Congress, is shown by the words of the Archbishop of Canterbury in St. Mary's Church. "There is no function or routine of life or thought which it is not the duty of the Church to occupy." Truly there is no part of our life over which the trail of its poisonous garments has not been drawn. But we do not regard this omnipresence of the vile creed and its vile expounders as the result of duty on their part. It is an intrusion, and the presence of clergy in our hospitals, in our schools, and in our homes, is to us a loathsome thing.

Rightly enough did the primate say that this century will be regarded as the battle-ground between spiritualism and materialism. All things are on their trial and the Church is found wanting. How sadly wanting may be brought home to the minds of many who do not know the whole or even a part of her wicked history by the showing of the cloven hoof on the part of the Bishop of Oxford. This prelate read a lecture to the people who prefer enjoying their Sunday on the river to attending church. He pictured the scene of Sunday desecration and regretted that the idlers cannot omit one day in the week from their pleasure. Let it be understood that the Bishop did not dare to say a word against the poor and working classes who thus spend their one day of rest. It was the well-to-do people whom he rated. But if he does not blame the former he has no right to blame the latter. For the working men have a choice between recreation of body and mind on the river and attending to their eternal welfare in the church. They decide in favor of the former, and the Bishop does not blame them. The idlers all the week have exactly the same choice, and they make the same decision. It is of no avail for the religious person to say that in the one case the man is working all

the rest of the week, and must therefore have recreation on Sunday. If it is a matter of his eternal salvation, no such poor excuse as this can hold. The fact is that the working man knows that his future is in no way dependent on his attending church, and the well-to-do man knows the same thing, and they both, with great wisdom, prefer the river to the pew.

Let us give the Devil and his servants their due. On the question of opening museums and art galleries on Sunday the opinion of the Congress was rather favorable than otherwise. It may be said in passing, that any other would not, from our point of view, have been other, wise. This tendency in the right direction was the result of the presence of such earnest men as Messrs. Shuttleworth and Headlam, who are so good as men that we almost forgive them for being parsons.

But the real nature of the terrible profession came out when one of their number ventured to observe that School Boards had been to a great extent successful. On this the clergymen shouted No! as their professional ancestors shouted No! when Galileo said that the earth moved. In that shout they proclaimed themselves in their true colors. Posing before the world, rapidly growing incredulous and scornful, as the friends of education, in this their Congress, an unwonted burst of honesty produces the cry that tells us, as the voice of history tells us, that this murderous profession has been the deadliest foe of knowledge. But with its vulpine cunning it recognises that knowledge is in turn its enemy, and that cry of No! is but one fragment of the universal wail of dread and of despair going up from those who see their calling doomed as education advances.

EDWARD B. AVELING.

JUMPING COMMENTS UPON THE BIBLE.

[Continued from p. 322.]

Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods (Joshua xxiv., 2).

It is a long jump from Genesis xi. to Joshua xxiv., no doubt, but the subject is the same—viz., Abraham, that I closed with last week. The child Abraham, as previously reported, grew at a marvellous rate; and his mother took his father to see the prodigy. Terah was a courtier, a class of men often enough very cunning, but rarely remarkable for knowledge or wisdom. Now when Terah saw his son he deemed it best to present him at court, for although he knew there was some danger in that step, he thought there would be much more should Nimrod discover that he was hiding such a child from him. So he and his wife resolved to take him home at once. Terah soon found that his son was intellectually no less wonderful than he was physically. On the road home the precocious youth bored his father about the nature of the gods, and which was the right and true one. Terah's answers were anything but satisfactory, for Abraham seemed determined to probe matters to the utmost. How he had learnt to talk and reason the story does not say; perhaps the holy ghost could tell you if he would. However, he spoke with such good effect that his poor father was thrown into quite a perspiration, and foresaw trouble at the court of Nimrod. Abraham was no courtier, and had no modesty to check his impertinence;

and Terah plainly foresaw that he would as soon dispute with Nimrod as a chimney-sweep. Artificial distinctions were unknown to this overgrown child, and he was no more abashed in the presence of Nimrod than a sensible man would be before the shadow of monarchy remaining in this country. Nimrod was as much confounded by Abraham as the Jewish rabbis were at a later date by the twelve-year-old Jesus. And, of course, the king resolved on vengeance, especially as Abraham scouted his gods.

But here I am met by a difficulty. There is no sort of doubt at all that Nimrod did his uttermost to win the crown of martyrdom for Abraham, and would have succeeded, had not a miracle most inopportunistly sprung up to rob him of that eternal honor. But for that untoward miracle, Abraham would have had the honor of figuring in the calendar as the young martyr of only fifteen months old, who was put to death by Nimrod because he could not withstand the wisdom with which he spake. But it is not very clear why Abraham was to be martyred; whether it was for confounding the king before his whole court, or for another reason, does not clearly appear. The better account of the two is this, substantially. Terah was either a manufacturer of idols or else he had charge of Nimrod's pantheon, where all the principal idols were kept and taken care of. One day, some great national feast day, all the city went out to the Ninevite *Champ de Mars* to enjoy themselves. Abraham, scorning to take any part in the heathen festival, stayed at home, and explored the city. In the course of his investigations he stumbled into the chief temple (some say it was his father's workshop or warehouse), and looked with not a spark of reverence upon the idols great and small there set up. No more abashed before gods than he had been before the court, he took an axe, and with most sacrilegious hands proceeded to demolish the gods whose worshippers were too far away to defend them. He had destroyed them all except the largest in the place, when a most happy thought arrested the blow he was about to deal him. Instead of demolishing that one he put it to a remarkably good purpose. He took a piece of cord and tied the axe around the neck of the only surviving god, and then calmly awaited the return of the people from the festival.

The first to arrive in the temple was his own father, who for several seconds failed to realise where he was; the chips and rubbish about rather puzzled him. When he had fairly taken in the situation he was horror-struck, and demanded who had been guilty of this sacrilege. In almost the same breath he accused his incomprehensible son, who, however, pretended to be innocent. "The fact is, my revered parent," said he, "a woman came to the temple with an offering of fine flour; and the gods all scrambled for it in so rude a manner that it came to a deadly fight; and at last that big one there took his axe and destroyed all the rest, as you see. In proof of my veracity, behold the very axe still suspended round the neck of the murderous god!"

This story only made Terah more furious. It was absurd, he said, to suppose that idols, gods of wood, could quarrel about an offering, or that one of them should destroy the rest.

Abraham did not forget the sarcastic and obvious remark that it must be exceedingly absurd to worship gods that could not do as he averred. But Terah was in no mood to argue; his blood was up; his piety—like that of Judge North—was boiling over; and he resolved to bring his wicked son to condign punishment. So he dragged him before Nimrod and told the mighty hunter how his son had treated the national gods. Nimrod and his whole court were almost speechless with horror and indignation. The fury of Jehovah himself when his breath was hot enough to kindle coals (see Psalm xviii., 8), scarcely exceeded it. So Nimrod ordered immediate preparations to be set on foot for the execution of the culprit.

A large meadow was filled up with wood to a great height, and, at the suggestion of the Devil, they constructed a large engine, a kind of *lithobolus*, or *balista*, or catapult, sufficient to hurl a man to a great distance. This was needed for special reasons. The fire was to be so tremendous in size, and they wished to light it and let it blaze up a little before flinging the victim into it; and how, without an engine of this sort, were they to get him into the midst of the fire? When the fire was just hot enough and the court and people were expecting eagerly the grand holiday sight of a heretic roasting, they fastened poor Abraham to the engine and fired him off! And now, behold a wonder!

The aim was correctly enough taken, and the victim flew along the parabolic-projectile curve right into the midst of—not the fire, not the pile of wood. The whole pile, fire and all, disappeared in a twinkling. A flash of lightning never came and went faster. And the young saint fell upon a bed of flowers in the very midst of a beautiful meadow!

I do not know how Nimrod endured the disappointment; though no doubt he learnt the lesson never to hunt saints again or try to kill them. What became of Abraham immediately after I cannot say; though I doubt not he thoroughly enjoyed the day's sport and fun, as much as some of us enjoy the smashing gods in these degenerate times.

JOS. SYMES.

(To be continued.)

DREAMS.

"LOVELY, fair, and wondrous earth,
Bringing countless forms to birth,
Mother Nature, mad'st thou me
Wondrous in my destiny?
Have I yet another life
After all this earthly strife?"

Shall I live for evermore
On some fair far-distant shore?
Shall my being rise again
From its dust and travel-stain;
Cast its mortal robe away
Mother Nature, canst thou say?"

"Child of mine, thy dreams restrain,
Dost thou covet endless pain?
Thou shouldst know, O foolish child,
Pain was ne'er from life beguiled;
Being ne'er from pain was free—
Never yet, nor e'er shall be.

"Endless being—dreadful quest!
Dost thou never long to rest?
Does thy spirit never ache,
Never wish its cords to break,
Never long to be at peace,
Never from its woes to cease?"

"All things ripen, then they fall,
'Tis the common lot of all;
Earth, and other worlds ne'er saw
One exception to this law—
All dissolves in sleep at last,
Numbered with the silent Past.

"Life with golden harvests crown,
Ere thou hast to lay it down;
Crowd with labor every day,
Soon the hours will pass away,
Till the shadows in the west
Bid thee with mine offspring rest."

J. H.

HOLY DAY v. HOLIDAY.

THERE is no more certain sign of the widespread revolt against mere creed religion amongst the people than the gradual but sure emancipation of Sunday from its old associations of religious gloom and misery. Puritanism, which was and is simply Christian asceticism followed out to its logical conclusion and reduced to practice, decreed that Sunday should be kept as the old Sabbath of the Jews was kept—that delightfully pious people who used to reason with the sinner, who dared to pick up a few sticks on that day, by the humane process of stoning him to death. But for a little periodical recreation being given them they would probably have found things a bit dull on the blessed "Sawbath." With the constant chance of the capital diversion afforded by the excellent sport of taking "pot shots" at a living fellow creature, until he was unkind enough to put an end to the general fun and amusement by perversely dying on the spot, there was naturally not much demand for the milder forms of "rational" recreation, and consequently there was no agitation for the opening of museums in the desert.

Well, we have progressed a little since that time. It was

a wicked crime—punishable with death then—to pick up sticks on Sunday. It is now a crime, in the opinion of many people, to look at pictures and statuary, or to listen to music and singing on Sunday. It is true we are not now punished by death for disobeying; but we are awarded twelve months in gaol by the zealous defenders of Jahveh, for daring to laugh at the inventions of his holy priests. So poor humanity has not much to congratulate itself upon after all.

Fifty years ago, Sunday was as supremely miserable a day in England as it still is north of the Tweed; and the unco' guid used to enjoy the general flatness immensely, just as now a-days pious old ladies—of both sexes—are delighted to make everybody as miserable as they can on the "lord's day." It was thought imperilling one's salvation to enjoy a good dinner on that day. It was considered wicked to look happy and cheerful; wicked to read any book but the "holy" Bible (and nice reading for Sunday or any other day some of it is, too!); wicked to dig in one's garden; wicked to sing or to whistle. It was deemed necessary that all young people should go to Sunday-school, to be told preposterous lies by their elders; and afterwards to church or chapel (three times a day), to be told more lies by some inane old driveller in a black gown. All this is still so in that land of cant and humbug—Scotland. But, thank man, in England *nous avons changé tout cela*. Freethought has grown and spread on every side since those days, and the happy results are seen in the vastly changed character of Sunday, which is fast becoming a blessing to man, instead of the curse it has too long been. Children are now actually allowed to play and laugh on that day. Our young men no longer waste their hardly-earned weekly holiday in church or chapel. They mount their bicycles and go off into the green country, to worship mother nature and lay in a fresh stock of health and spirits; or they take their sweethearts for a row on our beautiful rivers. Bands discourse sweet music in the parks, to the great benefit and enjoyment of the working classes. The clergy preach to the half-empty pews, and will soon find their occupation gone; for education and consequent enlightenment are spreading, and the people are becoming too intelligent to go and listen to their fables. The Salvationist howls in vain at the street-corner. Only small boys stop, to jeer at him. The mealy-faced young men who stand at the doors of gospel-halls, find that the most lavish distribution of tracts, offering any amount of the "blood of the lamb" gratis, fails to create a demand for the article.

Secular clubs and halls of science are springing up in all directions. The people are no longer cajoled and humbugged with tales of an imaginary heaven hereafter: they mean to have a heaven in this world; and bishops, priests, kings, and all other enemies of mankind, will find that they must "clear out" in the good time coming. The kingdom of man is at hand; and Sunday, formerly known as the "lord's day," is fast becoming a secular holiday: a day of rest from labor, indeed, for all classes, but a day of rational amusement: a day of self improvement, of beneficial recreation, of general happiness and enjoyment; and the scowls and threatenings of all the priests in the world will not avail to prevent it.

CARINGTON FORSTER.

SOLOMON'S ROD.

If the teachings of the Bible were not at times positively injurious in their tendencies, they would probably meet with as little notice as they really deserve; but while thousands of human beings are under the sway of their fell influence—regarding their every word as law, their every platitude as oracular, it behoves every thinking man and woman to raise the veil and relentlessly expose the evils almost sure to result from the following out of certain of these spurious "gems of wisdom."

Not the least in its evil effects is the injunction attributed to Solomon—viz., "Spare the rod and spoil the child." Nothing could be more erroneous, more cruel, or more unnatural. Who cannot recall amongst the memories of his schooldays the much-beaten boy of the school? At first a bright-faced joyous lad, entering heartily into every game, the leader in every adventurous excursion; he becomes gradually morose, sullen, obstinate, revengeful, under the harsh treatment of his Solomon-like preceptor.

Does that boy get to the head of his class? Is he any longer the bright, happy playfellow in the school-ground and the cricket-field? No! The natural result follows. Driven to desperation he attempts to escape what has become to him a hateful prison-cell. He is caught, brought back, punished, ignominiously expelled the school—ruined perhaps for life.

This is no fancy picture, but one drawn from a vivid memory of the past, one which has its counterparts in the minds of almost all who read my words. It is asked: who or what is to blame for this? The reply is, the brutality of the proverb-maker of the Hebrew scriptures, foolishly and wickedly imitated by one of the many victims of a hideous and misleading superstition.

Given that a child possesses a high, noble spirit, the application of "Solomon's rod" can have but one of two equally deplorable effects. Either his youthful happiness and hope will be turned to bitterness and revengefulness; or he will, broken-spirited, become a dull, hopeless creature, without a spark of his former animation. But who will say that he would not have been amenable to a fair share of loving kindness, a little sympathy, and wisely-administered advice? Who will say this bright, happy boy would not have wound himself around his good preceptor's heart, loving and esteeming his companionship, heeding his advice? Who will say this same boy might not, after leaving his home or his school, with honors and rewards for his studiousness and good conduct, if not rise to greatness, at least occupy a useful position in life, respected and beloved in his circle of acquaintance?

It is to be presumed that Solomon carried his precept into practice upon his own sons, and here we have the clearest evidence of its ill effects. The brutal, unnatural nature of his son Rehoboam confirms what I have written. After Solomon's death, when his son takes his place as ruler, the people pray that he will relieve them of the grievous yoke with which his father had oppressed them. And the son of the wise king, with the benefit of all the proverbs first hand, and a scriptural bringing up, replies to the appeal: "My father made your yoke heavy, and I will add to your yoke. My father also chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions!" Cruelty begets cruelty.

Happily, however, the time is swiftly approaching when this book-fetish will be no longer worshipped and obeyed by an ignorant and superstitious people. Education will surely relegate it to its proper position—no longer to be revered as an oracle, but simply to be valued for its scraps of history and legend, and as throwing light on the manners and customs of an age of ignorance and brutality.

EDGAR T. BENTON.

ACID DROPS.

A PAMPHLET, written by a Scotch clergyman, begins with the following passage:—"In England it requires ten men to make a pin; in Scotland it requires only one man to make a minister; and hence it is that, in polish and point, a batch of Scotch parsons are far inferior to a batch of English pins."

CHARLES FOXSTONE, of Wellingborough, sends us a pathetic account of an old man and woman 75 years of age working in the fields under rain blown from the cold north-east. The woman was nearly blind and so weak that whilst she used the rake with one hand she supported herself on a stick by the other. Their wages were 10d. a day each. Their brute-master is a god-fearing man. This is the outcome of eighteen centuries of Christianity and capital.

The following is given in G. T. Vigne's "Narrative of a Visit to Ghuzni, Cabul, and Afghanistan":—"A celebrated Faquir of the sect of the Lufis, poor and wretched, made his appearance in the bazaar at Multan; and, going to a Tabaki, or cook-shop, requested permission to dress his dinner, which was rudely denied him. A similar request was made to another, and was met by a similar rebuff. The Faquir, proud and indignant, called upon the sun to descend from heaven; the obedient luminary appeared in the air above the bazaar, and he cooked his dinner in its rays. The scorched and exhausted inhabitants of Multan crawled to him in terror, and implored him to send the sun on high again; a request with which he thought fit to comply." Joshua can take a back seat after this.

At the little village of Devoran in Cornwall, a young man named Evans was brought up to the respectable calling of

shoemaker. Thinking he could obtain a living by a much more easy method, he forsook his trade for the more disreputable calling of local preacher. He was at length successful in being sent out as a missionary to Australia. His poor and aged father and mother are left behind in England. This pious brother in the lord and dutiful son calls on the little shopkeeper at the bottom of the street. He is to supply his parents with goods to the value of 5s. per week. He will remit the money. Their landlord, he says, shall have his rent from the same source. He goes on his sacred mission. Many months elapse. Not a word of comfort for his aged parents, or a remittance for the trusting shopkeeper and landlord. Letters are posted to him; still no tidings. The poor old people have received goods to the value of close on £20. The shopkeeper naturally feels uneasy, and frequently remarks to the poor old mother on the strange silence on the part of her son. Anxiously she watches the arrival of every mail. She visits the post-office for the last time. The mail is just in. No letter. The next time she is seen, poor old creature, she is hanging by the neck in her humble cottage. About one third of the money due has been remitted. The father is supported by the parish, partially if not wholly, while the son is preaching to the aborigines, Honor thy father and thy mother that thy days may be long in the land. Perhaps he consoles himself with the command of his master to forsake all, even father and mother for his sake.

HERE is a new hymn for Publican Booth's crew. It is on the Creation story.

"God took a pinch of nothing,
And made the glorious earth;
Another pinch of nothing,
And oceans had their birth.

A little lump of nothing
Produced the powerful sun;
And so he worked on nothing
Till sky and stars were done.

And when the world was finished,
Of dust he made a man,
By mixing it with nothing,
On some mysterious plan.

Then took a rib from Adam,
With nothing for a knife,
And mixing it with nothing,
He made a full-grown wife."

ONE sentence in the Pope's reply to the pilgrim-priests puts in a nut-shell the criminal doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church: "Love the submission which you owe to your pastors, and may the obedience you solemnly promised form your constant rule of conduct." Hug your chains, slaves!

In the Catholic Breviary are to be found these words: "*Qui dicit ecclesiam Catholicam Romanam non esse infallibilem, anathema sit*" "Whoever says that the Roman Catholic Church is not infallible, let him be accursed." This is to-day the belief of all Catholics. But still a large number of Roman priests, men who are the very body and soul of the Catholic Church, are now, and have ever been, revelling in crime and debauchery. Charlemagne was obliged to issue the following edict: "We have been informed, to our great horror, that many monks are addicted to debauchery and all sorts of vile abominations, even to unnatural sins. We forbid all such practices in the most solemn manner, and hereby make known that all monks who indulge in the gratification of such lusts, will be punished by us so severely that no Christian will ever care to commit such sins again. We command our monks to cease swarming about the country, and we forbid our nuns to practice fornication and intoxication. We shall not allow them any longer to be — s, thieves, murderers and so forth, to spend their time in debauchery, and singing improper songs. Priests are herewith forbidden to haunt the taverns and market places for the purpose of seducing mothers and daughters, etc."

"THAT gentleman who once went down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell among thieves, it must be confessed, had a rather hard time of it. Records of an indisputable character run to the effect that he was maltreated, stripped of his worldly possessions, and left by the wayside wounded, bleeding, and half-dead. By and bye the good Samaritan came along, and rescued him from certain destruction, behaving altogether in a style which would do infinite credit to this superfinely polished age. There was something very practical about the *modus operandi* of the savior. He took up the unhappy victim, stanced the flow of blood from his wounds, conveyed him to an hotel, settled the prospective bill, and generally came the gentlemanly sort of business. Altogether he behaved like a thoroughly good-hearted man, and his deeds have never been forgotten." — *Sportsman*.

OUR disreputable Home Secretary has been distinguishing himself again. Of course, it is only a question of life and

death, a man's liberty and character and such small matters. The case is that of Morris Nicholson, sentenced for manslaughter. Let Mr. Arthur Hallam Jesse speak: "It was in vain I went to the Home Office, and, having shown them a written confession by the convict's brother that he had really done the deed, begged them to investigate the matter. In vain Sir J. E. Eardley Wilmot, both in and out of Parliament, called attention to the case. In vain others appealed to the Home Office. Now the brother has come forward and confessed in a police-court that he alone was the guilty person, and Mr. Alderman Isaacs felt it right to express his strong opinion that Morris Nicholson was not the person who had caused the death, and therefore that he had been wrongly convicted." Comment is needless.

Two Kingston-on-Thames Secularists have been engaged in a heated argument concerning the meaning intended to be conveyed by a large notice-board affixed to the side of a house near the railway station. The board in question conveys in large characters the information that "Time is Short." One Secularist asserts that the board has been set up by some of the apparently pious persons who infest the neighborhood as a warning to those "sinners" who have not yet been able to screw their superstitious notions up to salvation pitch. The other Secularist, however, holds totally different views on the subject; and it is mainly through his perversity that the dispute has arisen. He argues that either the board has been set up by some considerate persons for the purpose of warning the many travellers who approach the station from that side, and have the board in full view (and who are generally seen running to catch the earlier morning trains), that it is necessary they should accelerate their movements if they desire to go by the train; or that some dyspeptic person, whose digestive organs may have been unhinged by a series of these early morning rushes, has (years ago, for the wood-work is in need of a few coats of paint) had the board erected, with true Christian feeling, in order to induce the unwary to imitate his example and ruin themselves internally. As there seemed little chance of obtaining information, locally, about the matter, the two Secularists decided to ask our opinion. We give it up.

THE dishonest Bishop of Manchester has been weeping and wailing over the publication of the celebrated letter of Chas. Darwin. Dr. Fraser talks of "a mind enfeebled by disease," and hints that the letter is therefore worth little. We remind the dishonest prelate (1) that his Church lays great stress upon death-bed testimonies to the value of religion (2) that Darwin's letter was written about the same time as he published "Vegetable Mould and Worms," a book as clear and careful as any of his earlier works.

We see the announcement of a new weekly devoted to the cursed creed and called *The Christian Million*. This reminds us of the Paul Merritt-orious story, "The Hidden Million," we read last Christmas; and there will probably be as much truth and nature in the one publication as in the other. Anyhow, it would seem that the Christian million is daily becoming more and more hidden.

AN ANSWER TO MR. SPENCER COX.

THAT's where the hen scratches. The pure unvarnished truth is more than the Christian can stand. This is no time for mincing matters or being nice about expressions.

The Bible has topped the worst that any Atheist could say. Strength comes to us daily the more we examine the absurd doctrine. We want to be shown that there are less criminals, fewer drunkards, more honest people in act, more real brotherly love existing amongst Christians at the present day than there were fifty years ago. Take the Christians of any town or village. Do they all attend one place of worship? No, they cannot agree. Their belief does not commence, "I believe." It commences, "I do not believe so and so." Hence we have Church people, Wesleyans, Baptists, Plymouth Brethren, Nondescripts, and Atheists. Actually a family of Atheists.

Obscenity must be met by plain speaking; and as long as the Bible remains in its present form and is looked upon as the divine guide of Christianity, so long shall the Atheist find justification for the worst so-called blasphemy his mouth can utter.

A Christian-Freethinker is quite a new specimen of the genus *homo*. It is well that the two parts of the expression are separated by a hyphen. With all due respect I would advise Mr. Cox to ignore the first word or else strike out the last, and return to the fold, for he is evidently a stray sheep.

HENRY L. COSE.

ONE part of the Athanasian Creed we most unfeigningly believe. "The father incomprehensible, the son incomprehensible, the holy ghost incomprehensible."

SPECIAL NOTICES.

On Saturday, October 13, Dr. Edward B. Aveling visited G. W. Foote in prison. An account of the interview will appear in our next issue.

In our next will appear a full-page Cartoon of "Publican" Booth, the Boss, the Book, the Boose, and the Bird. Order early.

DR. EDWARD B. AVELING'S LECTURE.

Dr. Edward B. Aveling (interim editor of the *Freethinker*) will lecture at Milton Hall, Hawley Crescent, Kentish Town Road, on Sunday, October 21, at 7 p.m. Subject:—"The Value of this Earthly Life."

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.

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RECEIVED.—Matthew Plackett, William C. Jennings, E. Percy P. Macloghlin, John W. Graushaw, A. Bannister, Silo, H. Church, Thomas Williams, H. Passers.

G. JONES.—The trial of Messrs. Foote and Ramsey before Lord Coleridge can be obtained at our office. Price 6d.

GEORGE WALKER.—You forget that it is the express wish of G. W. Foote that nothing of the kind should be done while he is away.

JONAH.—There is no branch in Chelsea. We hope there soon will be.

WILLIAM WRIGHTSON.—As yet there is no Secular Catechism drawn up. It is to be hoped that one will be ere long.

W. B.—We believe that it is not true that Colonel R. G. Ingersoll intends paying a visit to this country shortly.

H. A. KEMP, 17 Pearson Street, London, E., has the following *Freethinkers* to dispose of; the proceeds will be given to Mr. Foote's Election Fund:—Nos. 19, 20, 22, 23, 24, 26, 27, 28, 29, 46, 48, 49, 50, 51 and 52, Vol. II.; 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 14 and 34, Vol. III.

Z.—Jokes are always welcome.

URMSTON, Flixton, and Dayhulme.—Will *Freethinkers* of the above neighborhoods communicate with George H. Bamber, 15 Corne Grove, Urmston.

NO NAME.—If your note was not noticed in earlier numbers of the *Freethinker*, it did not reach us.

T. KEMP.—The person you name is not worthy of treatment at our hands. The only respectable thing about him, apparently, is the bearing of the name, not without honor in English literature, but sadly dishonored in his person.

J. FAGAN sends us a very interesting letter as to infidel conversions, confirming our opinion of Mr. Whitmore's dishonesty.

JOSEPH COLLIER.—Thanks. But offering only one third to the Fund makes the offer come within the category of advertisements.

T. SEARTEL.—Fear we cannot as yet make use of your communication.

T. M. WITHAM.—The returning officer need not of necessity be a lawyer.

B. BOLT.—We cannot give you the author's name.

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 6l.

It is particularly requested that all orders for literature should be sent to Mr. E. Forster, 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 hal penny ones are preferred.

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

SUGAR PLUMS.

THE Testimonial Fund for Messrs. Foote and Ramsey claims the first attention of *Freethinkers* and friends of freedom generally. The proposed Election Fund is only in nubibus as yet. All contributions should be forwarded to Mrs. A. Besant, 19 Avenue Road, London, N.W.; they are acknowledged in the *National Reformer*.

MR. JOHN BURTON sends a letter to the Hertfordshire paper that printed the mad religious letter on the Java disaster to which we referred in our issue of September 30. Mr. Burton gives the scientific explanation of the terrible phenomena, and points out that cases of this kind are less likely now than they were in the past. The letter is scientific and therefore devoid of the cowardly dread of the religious writer. But the scientific letter is signed John Burton, and the religious letter was signed J. Davis Burton; and we have our suspicions of a "goak."

THE Rev. J. R. Russell, at the Bristol Road Baptist Chapel, Weston-Super-Mare, said: "Go where they would in the present day, ministers of almost every denomination were complaining that they could not get their most intelligent young people to work in the Sunday-school or come to the prayer meetings, and it was the greatest difficulty in the world to move them or make them feel that there was a call for them. And this not only with the young men and women outside the Church, but with those inside. They felt that they had to lay aside a little of their dignity to become Sunday-school teachers, and these were some of the people who put themselves in the way of the lord's work."

THE Tuesday evening lectures commenced at South Place Institute on October 16. Thomas Davidson dealt with "The Methods of Progress." After four variegated evenings J. Allanson Picton, M.A., begins the course of six lectures on "The English Commonwealth," that his illness in the spring nipped in the bud. Tickets for the course of six lectures, 5s.; single lectures, 1s. With a view to extending the advantages of these lectures to working men and women, the Committee have decided to issue tickets, admitting to the gallery, at 1s. for the course, or 3d. to any single lecture; and they request the assistance of secretaries of working men's clubs and trade organisations in making these lectures known amongst their members. Tickets may be obtained of any member of the Lecture Committee at the Institute on the evening of the lectures or upon application by post to Conrad Thies, *hon. sec.*, 76 Graham Road, Hackney, E.

THE Finsbury Branch of the N. S. S. have made "a thing of beauty" of Claremont Hall. When Dr. Edward Aveling lectured there on Sunday last, he and others visiting the hall for the first time under the new régime were astonished at the alteration. The hall is now quite prettily decorated, and by the new arrangements of seats it looks much more comfortable for lecturer and audience alike. Even the lighting seemed improved, and the narrow appearance of the room has vanished with this social "re-distribution of seats." Stormy as the night was, a crowded audience of the thoughtful type always associated with this hall, was present.

ON October 23, at South Place Institute, J. W. Rhys-Davids lectures on "The Radical Ideal," at 8 p.m.

OUR readers are reminded of the Evenings of Readings and Music at South Place Institute, Moorgate Street, on Wednesday, October 24. Mrs. Theodore Wright, Miss Adeline Holyoake and Dr. Edward B. Aveling are the artists concerned. 8 p.m. is the time, and the "evening" will last about two hours. The programme is given in another part of the paper.

A BILL for the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws, introduced by Mr. Ellis on behalf of the Government of the Peckham Parliamentary Debating Society, reached its second reading on Saturday last; and after debate it was allowed to pass its second reading. The many local Parliaments of London do work that is not wholly imaginary.

AT St. John's Lecture Room, Cambridge Street, Great Marlborough Street, W., Mr. F. Verinder (*hon. sec.* Guild of St. Matthew and member of Council of National Association for Repeal of Blasphemy Laws) will lecture on Tuesday next, October 23, at 8.30 p.m. precisely. Subject:—"The Blasphemy Laws." Admission free. Discussion invited.

OUR editor, G. W. Foote, intends bringing out a new edition of "Heroes and Martyrs of Freethought," compiled from the original sources, on his exit from the Christian clutches.

IN answer to many inquires, we may say that the "Hymn for the Salvation Army" that appeared last week is reprinted, and is on sale at 28 Stonecutter Street.

THOS. STEDMAN, of 22 Rackham Street, Notting Hill, writes in confirmation of the contradiction of the Rev. C. J. Whitmore's untruths as to Charles Southwell. He says: "I have spent many happy moments with my friend, and was in his company a very short time before his departure from England; and I thoroughly believe that he held to the last those principles which he not only advocated but for which he also suffered."

A VOICE FROM THE ARMY.

THROUGH the instrumentality of a friend I have been brought into closer connexion with Freethought literature than I could have anticipated.

A few years since I should have recoiled at the bare thought of tenets so anti-religious. Now, thank reason, I am proud of the implicit belief I have in them, and am well able to discern the superstitious folly which screens one's mind, obscuring the light of reason and truth.

Slowly but surely have I traced the Ariadne thread to

ts starting point; and not only have I been enabled to detect the false from the true, but a brighter future has been opened for me, seeing that my mind is not weighed down with the delusive thoughts of a hereafter.

How can I, an intellectual and reasoning being, be guided by men, yecept "priests," who, apart from the reasonable fallibility of all men, strive to sow dissension and practise the most vile and outrageous wickedness? Assuredly "religion is a cloak for all evil." It is to them we are directed to look for example; they, the blessed ones, following calmly, meekly, blindly in the footprints of a savior. Exemplary beings! They who lead us on from step to step until we are sure of a place on the great celestial stage.

Religion is truly mysterious. Can these preachers see in the religion they profess anything palpably divine? No! *Ergo*,—They are blind. *Query*.—"Can the blind lead the blind?"

My friends, trust not to blind worms, rank with the mire of theology, wallowers in Latin filth; but to your English-speaking fellow men. Seek the glorious estate of reason. Men will assist you; and aided by your fellows you will aid in supporting the goddess Reason, and in the dethronement of poor old time-honored Jahveh.

HENRY TYLER.

SOMETHING LIKE THE TRUTH.

It must be acknowledged with dolorous repugnance that, where royalty is concerned, we are, as a nation, a lot of cringers. After we have worked out our own spiritual emancipation, and by our Freethought literature and otherwise assisted others to do the same, there remains for us the slaying of that hideous fetish—servile reverence and fear of all things that have the aroma of aristocracy about them. If one may judge, however, from the signs of the times in England, the taking in hand of that necessary work is still remote. In nearly every newspaper in the country, items of intelligence appear from day to day, chronicling with scrupulous fidelity the course of the "trivial life and misfortune" of some penniless German "lairdie" and his mate. But where in all the broad country can be found an outspoken sentence like the following, taken from a recent number of the *New York Times*, and which simply translates into terse Anglo-Saxon the facts which are notoriously public property?—

"This endless talk about the debts of the Duke of Teck and his fat wife, Mary, must throw the 'howling Radicals' of England into a fine rage. And they are not to be blamed for raging, for the Teck section of the reigning family is about the most irritating specimen of royal blood and noble that an effete monarchy could produce.

"Why should this fair green earth be burdened with a Duke of Teck? Why doesn't the fellow go and earn his living? Or, if the accumulated stupidity of a long line of heavy Wurtemberg ducal ancestors unfits him for any useful occupation, why can't he have at least sense enough to die?"

"He and his wife, who is a cousin of the Queen, receive 25,000 dollars a year from the public funds, and the Queen suffers them to use a couple of her spare palaces. But even with these advantages the improvident pair are continually making a public scandal about their debts. The Duke gambles heavily, and, being a dull clod, always loses, of course. Their royal kin have paid up their debts many times, but the recent auction sale of their effects indicates a disposition to let them shift for themselves in the future.

"What a pitching out of all such lumber there will be in England one of these days when the common sense of the people asserts itself!"

When will our people keep their heads cool enough, and our Parliamentary representatives their common-sense long enough, to withstand the encroachments upon the nation's purse of these miserable, swaggering, idle drones?

M. N.

A SECULAR SUNDAY-SCHOOL.

In one respect at least our Christian opponents are wiser than we are, and set us an example which we should hasten to imitate, in the care of their children on the Sunday. We have neither their wealth nor their organisation, so it cannot be expected that our teaching on the Sunday should rival theirs; but it is a duty incumbent on all Freethinkers to see that their little ones are not inveigled into Christian schools on that day, and to give them some sound religious instruc-

tion to enable them to estimate the fables of Jewish and Christian mythology at their right value.

We are glad to know that a Sunday-school is held in connexion with the Battersea Branch of the N. S. S., and still more glad to learn from the personal visit of a contributor to *Progress* the quality of the instruction there given. The teacher—alas! that there should be but one—when our friend looked in unexpectedly, was dealing with what Christians call Bible stories—incidents recorded in the Old Testament—notably the Tower of Babel. Simply and clearly she gave the children to understand how unnecessary it would have been for an omniscient god to have troubled himself about the building of that tower, for he must have known how impossible it would be for the builders to breathe—say five miles high, and might have spared himself the trouble of confounding their language. With regard to this latter part of the story there followed some excellent remarks as to the origin of language, in a style as simple as it is possible to treat the subject. Mrs. Sowden, who has undertaken this work, is at all times happy to see persons at the school interested in education, and will be glad of any help, whether in personal service in teaching, money, or school furniture.

We should be glad if such schools were looked on—as they will be in the future—as a necessary adjunct to every Secular Society. Our children are our dearest treasures, and we should not be sparing in money, time, or trouble, to save them from the evil effects of Christian influence, but send them forth in the world able to give a reason for the unbelief that is in them. Mrs. Sowden's address is 40 Park Road, Battersea.

A LETTER FROM GERALD MASSEY.

GERALD MASSEY, poet, has sent to our dear friend, G. W. Foote, a copy of his work on "Natural Genius" with a most kindly message. He writes Dr. Aveling as follows:—

"Dear Sir.—I have received no order from the Home Secretary, and should one come it will be too late, as I leave to-morrow for Liverpool. Therefore, notwithstanding the weight of the work, I shall have to ask you to be good enough to convey a copy to Mr. Foote. Please say that I had intended to take it myself but have been disappointed; also that he has my sympathy. I fight the same battle as himself although with a somewhat different weapon. He will, probably, be the last literary man to suffer under the old law of blasphemy. I hope he will not lose heart or strength, and am,—Yours faithfully,
GERALD MASSEY.

"October 8, 1883."

SONG OF A VICAR.

I AM a vicar and my views, I trust,
Are orthodox on things ecclesiastic;
Though some affirm, in tones of deep disgust,
My conscience savors of a spring elastic.
Their wit thus ambles
With huge laborious elephantine gambles.

I am of course Conservative, forsooth,
Synonymous to me are Rad and bad law;
Addicted not unduly to the truth,
Abhorring e'en the name of Bradlaugh.
That grisly spectre
Of pope or primate's person no respecter.

I sometimes, too, administer the law
In tones profound from rustic bench judicial;
My sacred presence there inspires with awe
Delinquents and the officers official.
While as for poaching,
Heaven help the luckless knave that's caught encroaching.

I have a "locum tenens" who remains
In cure of souls for small remuneration;
A humble wretch who pumps his weary brains
To edify a bumpkin congregation
Of boorish asses,
Fit snoring types of England's rural classes.

I sternly strive with strong unsparing hand
To grasp my rights, my tithes divine appointed,
And execrate that most obnoxious band
Whose impious hands would touch the lord's anointed.
Dark plotting schemers
Short shrift would suit such visionary dreamers.

I am custodian and exert my right
O'er what is designated as god's acre;
Sometimes involved in theologic fight
With Catholic, or Wesleyan, or Shaker,
Disputing hotly—
Less like a priest, perhaps, than clown in motley.

I must acknowledge that when here is brought
 An unbaptised babe for due interment,
 I do refuse consent when humbly sought,
 Though maybe thus I jeopardise preferment.
 But sousing for 'em
 My task unpleasant's done with due decorum.

I was endowed with power ordained
 To grant the blackest, deepest sins remission,
 The holy spirit, too, I thus obtained.
 The bishop spake and gave me my commission,
 "Eheu fugaces,"
 My lines since then have been in pleasant places.

I have a house capacious that contains
 All things to minister to man's enjoyment;
 My company is sought by county swains
 All eager to afford me some employment
 For rod or rifle,
 A picnic fête or some such festive trifle.

So time rolls on and seasons follow fast,
 No wondrous things take place 'mid scenes so rural;
 And though my foes their scorn upon me cast,
 My livings are not numbered in the plural.
 Which feeble flicker
 Must close this note,—Yours truly, Sir,

A VICAR.

CORRESPONDENCE.

THE BIBLE IN BOARD SCHOOLS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—With feelings of intense gratification I have noted that our leaders are more and more urging upon the rank and file of the secular party the duty and necessity of taking advantage of the conscience' clauses of the Elementary Education Act, and of withdrawing their children from religious instruction in public elementary schools.

I fear, however, that Secularists may consider they have fulfilled all their obligations in the matter when they have used their privilege and withdrawn their children from such instruction. May I be allowed to point out that there remains something more to be done? That is the total abolition of religious instruction in such schools. As yet we have only obtained a favor; what we must agitate for is the recognition of a right. Do not let us be cheated into allowing any religious instruction to be given in State-aided schools.

There are many and weighty reasons why, as Secularists, we should raise this question again and again, and make it a battle cry at all School-board elections. Let me point out a few of those considerations? In the first place, if we are to make any marked progress we must use every effort to prevent the minds of the young from being warped and twisted at the very time when they are expanding and inquiring. As the case stands at present, whenever we pay a school-rate we are strengthening the very religion of which we are the determined opponents. Next, it is worthy of note that while religious instruction is given in State-aided schools, the principle is maintained that it is the duty of the State to provide for the religious needs of its people. Is not this another of the deadliest foes to progress? Lastly, it seems to me that we have never sufficiently considered the question in its relation to the persons on whom devolves the task of giving the instruction in question.

Under present conditions, however a master may loathe and despise the work, he must do it or starve. Is this fair to the members of an honorable profession? I make no exaggerated statement when I say there are hundreds of public elementary school-masters who feel keenly the false position in which they are placed: that they are to teach their pupils from a book upon which they look with detestation. You, sir, from the position you occupy, are able to do something towards relieving the teachers of their burden; and I call upon the secular party to support any action you may take in the matter.—I am, Sir, sincerely yours,

CHASON.

[Dr. Edward Aveling will bring this question up at the London School Board ere long, and earnestly asks all Secularists and teachers to supply him with every information they can in the matter.]

MR. HARTMAN'S *Freethinkers* are this week sent to Mr. J. H. Witham, Foxley Oaks House, Whittington, Chesterfield. Mr. Witham will be pleased to hear of Freethinkers in Chesterfield and neighborhood desirous of forming a branch of the National Secular Society.

A FAMILY paper published an article on "House-keeping Hereafter." "Merciful heavens," said a mother of ten children and keeper of one husband and two servants, "if I thought there was going to be any house-keeping hereafter I'd never die." "Don't think so, my dear," groaned the husband.

PROFANE JOKES.

ONE of the leading ministers in Edinburgh plays the violin. A sort of fiddle D.D., so to speak.

MORE scraps outside the photographer's window:—*Lady* (to accompanying clergyman): "Is not Canon X beautiful?" *A. C.*: "H'm. Ha. Pigeon-breasted." Very rude, wasn't it? And quite oblivious of the fact that the holy ghost came as a dove and that to be "pigeon-breasted" was only to have the holy spirit in the heart.

"MAMMA," said a little girl one evening, "did not you say that heaven was a place full of glory?" "Yes, my dear," replied her mother; "but why do you ask me that question just now?" "Because I have been thinking that all these stars are little holes to let the glory through."

"A THIEF can't be a butcher," according to the Bible, says our irreverent young man. "Let him that stole, steel no more."

BLESSING OLD NICK.—A pitman belonging to Scotswood, after being converted, was very earnest and active in his new sphere of life. At one meeting, after tossing his arms about and shouting "Glory!" for a long time, he fell asleep. Meanwhile, the preacher was delivering his sermon, and was speaking about the Devil in strong terms. "The Devil," he said, "is gangin' about like a roarin' lion, seekin' whom he may devour!" The convert at this stage woke, shouted out, "Bliss his holy nyem! bliss his holy nyem!"

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