

# 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.—6.



THE ORIGINAL SALVATION ARMY.

Hallelujah Sals and converted Jacks, all of ye olden tyme.

## A VISIT TO MESSRS. FOOTE AND RAMSEY.

THIS afternoon (Oct. 26) I went to Holloway Gaol to visit our friends who are suffering the vengeance of pious hypocrisy. In the first place, I am bound in honor to say that the prison officials, from the Governor downwards, were all that I could possibly wish; and from their conduct I gather that our friends do not suffer more than the law itself inflicts upon them. Here my concessions to the powers that be must stop.

I was permitted to see the prisoners the full regulation time; but what a sight! Only our faces were visible to each other, and we were kept from four to six feet apart the whole time. There is an apparatus fitted up for the purpose in one room of the building. Stalls are arranged along a short passage, in appearance outside like the separate baths in a public bath-room. The cell they put you in is square, the side opposite the door consisting, for 2ft. 6in. or so from the roof downwards, of a stout wire grating. A similar grating constitutes the roof, which was not high enough to permit me to stand upright. On my left hand was a window, and in front of the grating two boards approaching each other to within eight inches or so, furnished an aperture through which you could look out of the cell into another aperture just like it, two or three feet off, and through that aperture into a cell somewhat like your own, only without a grating, in which you saw the face and bust of the friend you were visiting. The only communication possible is confined to language; nor was speaking very audible at times, I perceived.

Now what had I done, thought I, to be treated like this? I gave up my living more than eleven years ago and plunged into poverty for conscience' sake. And since then I have uttered and written only what I honestly thought, and what I deem to be of service to my fellow men. "The very head and front of my offending hath this extent; no more." And my friends: what have they done? They were not

only treated with the same indignity to which I had to submit; but they have been shut up in that building, denied what real men most value—their liberty—for many months. I was permitted to leave when the regulation time was up; they were compelled to remain. And what have they done? Just what honest men in their position could not help doing. They are imprisoned because they were too honest to please the hypocrites in Church and State, whom a stupid populace permits to rule the destinies of this nation and to rob the industrious of untold millions year by year. Reader, dost thou observe what I have just written? Pardon me for emphasising it. Foote and Ramsey are suffering because they told the truth. They deserve honor and recompense; they are treated like felons. Honest men did not send them to prison; an honest Government would long since have released them. Only roguery, malice and hypocrisy could punish them for what they did.

Ramsey was the first to appear. I was glad to see him look so stout and well, though one of his eyes is somewhat out of order, and the doctor is treating him for it. He seemed jolly, considering; more so than I did, I think. He has not lost heart, nor has the Christian treatment administered to him converted him to that most gentle and lovable religion. It is wonderful how reluctant the heart of man is to yield to such soft solicitations of divine grace. He told me he had sent a petition to the Home Secretary, about the end of August, demanding the opportunity to clear himself of the foul and gratuitous charge that official had made against him in reply to Mr. P. A. Taylor. Of course Sir W. Harcourt is too pious a man to grant so just and reasonable request, and far too polite to reply to Mr. Ramsey's petition. There is such a thing as dignity amongst the "uppers"—a magnificent sentiment, which enables you to lift your head the higher in proportion to your rascality. If you have perpetrated an unjust act, stand upon your dignity. If you have slandered those who cannot call you to account for it, put on your full stock of dignity. If you are too cowardly to make any reparation, throw over your dignity an air of injured innocence, touched up and consecrated with the rapt and holy bearing of a martyr—and you will get all the sympathy, while your victim is doubly damned. Our sainted Home Secretary will be able to appreciate the truth of what I say much better than I can. He can defend the faith by slander with the grace his office bestows upon him; a bishop could hardly do it better.

Mr. Ramsey tells me he has not forgotten that Tammany Ring known as the London Corporation, and is resolved to study its ways somewhat when out of prison. He promises that he will devote many of his hours to the investigation of the City records, and from time to time publish details of his discoveries. I most heartily wish him success. There is nothing so much needs looking after as governments, whether municipal or imperial—except it be a national church.

Mr. Foote is thinner, though not so pale (neither is Mr. Ramsey) as I expected. He does not speak as if his heart were broken or his health undermined. He expects to serve his full time, and is resolutely braced up for the ordeal. Evidently, the Christians have not heard the last of him, and they will probably need all the divine grace they can get to endure him, when out of prison. He will not spend much time recruiting his strength, I understand, but plunge into the fight as soon as he is out. I believe, myself, there is a great future for him, and that this year's

incarceration will have done him good, and not harm. No thanks to the stupid or hypocritical persecutors. Their object was to crush and silence him. He declines to gratify their malice.

We spoke of my approaching voyage; and while deeply regretting my removal from England, most heartily he wished me success in the great South to which I am bound. I, too, am sorry that I am going—in some respects. If I rightly divine, we have by no means seen the end of the fight with superstition and persecution. Britain has her Revolution yet to come, social, political, and anti-religious. The fight will be bitter and long. I wish to have my full share of it. I expect I shall. It extends, and will extend, to the colonies. And while our friends here are fighting for liberty, I hope I shall be doing the same on the other side of the globe.

Altogether my visit was not so sad as I anticipated—though I am fully persuaded I was more sad than the prisoners when it was over. If I needed to be inspired with more deadly hate for Christianity, this visit would furnish it. I have seen millions of its benighted victims outside prison walls; I have now seen two of its enlightened victims shut up like criminals for endeavoring to enlighten others. Is not this enough? What more can a patriot need to inspire him to work and fight for the total overthrow of superstition?

JOS. SYMES.

## A DEGRADING RELIGION—II.

### SILLY MIRACLES.

It is a *sine quâ non* of the Christian faith that every true believer must regard the alleged miracles of Jesus as actual occurrences, which demonstrate the divine character of the Nazarene.

When the disciples wrought miracles no claim to divinity was put forth by them. They were, it was said, merely "allowed to work miracles" by god's help. And had they been able to eclipse altogether the wonderful performances of Jesus, nobody would have dreamt of claiming for them divine attributes. Why? Because they were men, poor men; the people who witnessed their performances knew that they had not been miraculously born; but were acquainted personally with their parents and friends, and knew exactly what manner of men they were.

If the gospels give any indication of the character of Jesus, it is clear from them that he was above and before them all—a pretentious and dogmatic man; and modern Christians, if in nothing else, certainly imitate him in these respects.

If there is one man more than any other in this wide world whom I delight in shunning, it is the bombastic creature who calls himself "Christian;" who possesses none of the higher qualities of Christ; and who has nothing to recommend him to our notice but the pretentiousness of the ignoramus, and the dogmatism of the bigot.

Pretentiousness is not the characteristic of a wise man. And yet Christians, and even the most learned among them, have mistaken the self-assertion of Jesus as an evidence of his wisdom. The wisest of men have always been modest. Socrates said that if he were wise it was only because he knew how ignorant he was. Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, Epictetus and Plato were wise men, yet who more modest? And in the nineteenth century, whose wisdom more conspicuous than that of the philosopher, John Stuart Mill; the scientist, Charles Darwin; the statesman, William Ewart Gladstone? Yet who can say that these men were arrogant or pretentious; nay, none so charmingly modest, unassuming and free from dogmatism than these. And is it likely that if the almighty maker of Darwins and Gladstones sent his only begotten son on earth, that he would have instructed him to comport himself with such unbecoming arrogance as that displayed in the presence of the woman who had given him birth, and upon other occasions, to the dismay of the ignorant and the disgust of the learned? I cannot degrade myself into the belief that a wise and good god would have so conducted himself.

But what of the miracles of Jesus? Were not many of them extremely silly? What good purpose was served by the miraculous fast for forty days and forty nights? Would not Jesus have done more real good if he had eaten sumptuously during all that time, and when the Devil came to him and demanded to be convinced that he was in reality

the son of god, he had availed himself of the opportunity and converted the Devil? What a splendid chance was here thrown recklessly away! The Devil might have been converted into a friend, into a believer in Christianity, but now he will be an enemy for evermore.

And what utility was there in the miracle by which some devils were turned out of two men "coming out of the tombs," which evil spirits ultimately found their way into the bodies of a herd of swine, and played such havoc with their constitutions that they immediately committed suicide, much to the astonishment and pecuniary loss of their owners?

And what was the use of Jesus walking on the sea, during a storm, when he could have stilled the waves before he commenced his watery tour?

And what wisdom or goodness was displayed by Jesus in allowing Lazarus to die, in order that he might have the pleasure of raising him to life again? Did Jesus imagine that people would think him tender and loving because he wept; or divine because he cried with "a loud voice" to wake a dead man from the dreamless sleep of the grave?

Or did Jesus perform a useful miracle when he cursed the fig-tree? or when he came into the house where his disciples were feasting, like a flash of lightning, when all the doors and windows were closed? I say it is degrading to a man of sense to be asked to believe such nonsense.

I wonder that when men are seriously asked the question whether they believe in the miracles of Jesus, they do not reply: "Why not ask me to believe in the 'Arabian Nights' stories at once?" Both are alike incredible.

But under the influence of Christianity some of the best men I have ever met have been forced into mental and moral serfdom. They have been afraid to say how much of the Christian creed they have repudiated, lest their religious employers should think that they believed too little to be honest; or the employers have been afraid to say how much of it they disbelieved for fear of losing the custom of some person who puts piety before truth, religion before honesty.

And so Christianity has become "an organised hypocrisy," a game for knaves to play at; and many are they who are taken in by the sophistry of the special pleader and the gorgeous glitter in the churches, and the long array of fashionables who support the degrading creed. But the creed is decayed and crumbling; its débris lie athwart our path, waiting for the sons of Freethought and moral courage to clear it away.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

## JUMPING ON THE BIBLE JUMPER.

I do not uphold the "Old Book" as a revelation, but none the less do I maintain that the critic is open to criticism; and I am sure Mr. Symes will not resent controversy or correction.

In "taking a header" into the Noachian deluge, by a slip of the pen he says the earth is 25,000 miles "in diameter," instead of "circumference." But with regard to the text quoted—"Your blood of your lives will I require," etc.—the teaching of Moses and the principles of natural selection appear to be far more nearly identical than Mr. Symes admits in his comments. We may pause to remark that Mr. Symes affects to believe that the beasts would be more amenable to the bible doctrine than man. The carnivora accept the risk. "Whoso (be he man or beast) sheddeth man's blood, by man (to the best of man's endeavor) shall his blood be shed." And in both cases the extermination of the blood-shedder is furthered by the slaughter of the man-killer. There can be no doubt whatever that, where prisons and legitimate procedure afforded too many loopholes for the escape of the assassin, his death was imperatively demanded, lest he should breed a tribe of homicides.

All philanthropists must hope that a time will ere long arrive when it will be easier to keep a murderer in life-long confinement than to tolerate a public executioner—a recognised man-strangler; but in less highly organised communities it was as necessary to remove the murderer as it once was to exterminate the wolf in these countries.

For my own part, I wonder more at the numerous points of agreement of the Genesis legends with the doctrine of evolution than with its want of scientific accuracy. The nebular hypothesis—the earth, shapeless and empty; the evolution of all animals by the natural action of the water and earth, the lower kinds being the earlier; the dawn of

reason, with its accompanying shame of indecency, and the commencement of flesh eating and labor, with anxiety and fear of death, and so many other points, are wonderful traditions from the cosmogonists of a remote age. That they are intermingled with anthropomorphic personation of natural forces as deities is not to be wondered at.

No doubt there is great need for exposing the evil done in this day by upholding as divine the collection of heterogeneous writings known as the holy writings, scriptures, bible; but a more strategic mode of attack would have many advantages to recommend it.

The exponents of the bible—those who give to its language a specific interpretation, and who are alive and kicking and can be kicked in return—always in the most logical and amicable spirit—these are the powers against which Freethought can best and most advantageously be directed. Their name is legion, so we cannot lack opportunity, and Mr. Symes has in his armory many a shaft to pierce the corroding armor of the divines.

J. GREEVES FISHER.

### A SONG OF A PRELATE.

RESPECTED SIR,—Your paper safe to hand,  
Wherein I note your correspondent's verses;  
An imbecile so very naïf and bland,  
Who with such glee his daily life rehearces—  
There's no gainsaying—  
Must be a very Balaam's ass for braying.

His most outrageous conduct seems to me  
Quintessence of our cleric indiscreetness:  
To thus expose, for scorners' eyes to see,  
Our holy calling in such full completeness.  
Our shams denuding  
Of all and aught that made them so deluding.

We holy men, of course, are prone to err—  
The flesh is weak and carnal pleasure nice is;  
We are but mortal, hence we much prefer  
To fast and vigil some few venial vices  
On Sunday staying,  
And leather lunged against them loud inveighing.

Morality is, well, "a heavenly link,"  
So Gilbert somewhere says. I don't dispute it;  
And we celestial pilots claim to wink  
Where, when, and how the spirit moves to suit it.  
With gentle squeezes  
The smooth-hand clergyman both soothes and pleases.

What time the female breast is filled with woe,  
To whom doth she revert in time of sorrow?  
Who calms her mind, and stays the tears which flow,  
And points towards a brighter, glad to-morrow?  
We priest patrollers  
Stand proudly forth, the ladies' chief consolers.

Proximity to Beauty when she weeps  
Would melt a heart of hardest, coldest granite;  
When Beauty's head confiding, coyly creeps  
To pillow on your saintly breast, why man, it  
Need scarce be mentioned—  
We sometimes slip, however well intentioned.

We whisper words of comfort in their ears,  
And kneel, perchance, in close and sweet communion.  
Our office is to soothe the sinner's fears,  
Our friendship with them but platonic union.  
To smooth-tongued scandal  
Our saintly sable skirts afford no handle.

Ah me! when I was young, some years ago—  
Not only young, but most exceeding frisky—  
I loved my ghostly counsel to bestow—  
Though, sooth to say, 'twas sometimes rather risky.  
Indignant spouses  
Would rage and storm to find me in their houses.

But stay! I fear I've wandered from my text,  
Which was your corresponding vicar's verses.  
I crave your pardon, though myself am vexed  
To find this not apparently much worse is.  
But this is private,  
Your eye alone this missive's meant to drive at.

Should I perceive my confidence misplaced,  
And these remarks *sub rosa* plainly printed,  
Need I observe my rank would be disgraced,  
Ay! if such peccadilloes e'en were hinted.  
Great heavens! what "horror"  
Would dawn abroad o'er Christendom "to-morrow."

The mischief's done. No more will I indite.  
Your secrecy, remember; I entreat it!  
Yea, though Gehenna strove in deep despite  
To wrench it from you, don't, sir, I repeat it.  
Or else you'll dish up  
Lawnsleeves and mitre, all of—Yours,

A BISHOP.

### JUMPING COMMENTS UPON THE BIBLE.

[Continued from p. 339.]

ABRAM is called the Friend of God (2 Chron. xx., 7; Isaiah xii., 8; James ii., 23.) There is not much in the bible to warrant or suggest the relationship; besides, it is ridiculous, if god be infinite. The Mahommedans have a very good story on the subject, much better than any in the bible. In a time of dearth, say they, Abram sent to a friend in Egypt for meal. The friend refused, for he knew that Abram would give it away instead of keeping it for his own family. His servants being ashamed to be seen returning with empty sacks, filled them, for appearance sake, with a very fine sand, closely resembling flour. They told Abram, but not Sarah, of their failure to get meal, and the old man was so overcome that he soon fell asleep. Sarah, finding the sacks full of flour, as she supposed, set to make some cakes; and the smell of the new bread awoke her husband, who demanded wherever she had obtained the meal. "Why, your friend in Egypt sent it," replied she. "Nay," said he, "it is not my friend in Egypt who sent it, but my friend god almighty."

Now such a story is far more to Abram's credit as a believer than almost any in the bible; and if it were inserted to the exclusion of several others, the bible would gain by it—though the new editors might be damned for improving god's word. I sometimes think I will bring out a bible of my own, retaining all the good in the old one (not very much), and improving it by a few genuine new revelations. I am quite qualified, having as much holy ghost as any man that ever lived.

And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abraham; and lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him (Gen. xv., 12). Read the context. Abram killed a heifer, a she-goat, a ram, a turtle-dove and a young pigeon, and divided them all in pieces, except the birds. And when it was dark he saw a fiery furnace, and a lamp that went between the pieces. The cresset was, I presume, god the father; the lamp, the son—the holy ghost not then being born, perhaps.

The Mahommedan account of this transaction has the merit of making a complete story of it, which the bible does not. They say Abram was in doubt or perplexity respecting the mode in which god would raise the dead. Abram, at the command of god, took an eagle (some say, dove), a peacock, a raven and a cock, cut them up and pounded their flesh, bones and feathers all up together in one mass, merely keeping their heads intact. Then he called them all by their names, and the parts came together again, and the birds resumed life as if nothing had happened. That is as true as any miracle you ever heard or read of; and I do not for a moment doubt that a sausage maker could obtain like results any day, if he only had faith enough. For fear of revelations of too startling a nature, however, it may be as well not to suggest that to the fraternity.

Genesis xvi. and xvii. have not much quotable matter in them. Verse 17 of the latter tells us how Abram (in this chapter his name grows one syllable longer) laughed when god told him he and Sarah should have a son when their respective ages were 100 and 90. In this matter all the world now joins with the saint to laugh at god's amusing promises!

And god went up from Abraham (Gen xvii., 22.) This must have been a very small god. The infinite one cannot move; he fills all space, and has no room to move in. He is an absolute solid, and that is the only quality he has—a perfect block, but he does not know it. If Christians only read and studied the bible, instead of wilfully perverting some of its words to fit them into others, and all its teachings to fit them to their own views, how soon they would discover how ridiculous the old book is, and how opposed to their creeds. I suppose their god has given them the spirit of slumber to prevent their understanding the defects of his word.

And he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him; and he ran to meet them from the

tent door, and bowed himself towards the ground, etc. (Gen. xviii., 2). This story of Abraham feeding god with veal and bread (mustard, pepper, salt and other condiments not mentioned) is a puzzle to the orthodox. They believe their god to be almighty, and yet cannot understand how he could make himself so very small; nor do they quite understand how he managed to eat and digest Abraham's calf. It is a bit puzzling, even to me, though I have the gift of the holy ghost to guide me into all truth. However, let us hope god's teeth were sound, that his liver was in good order; though I fear me, that badly-cooked veal sadly disagreed with him, for immediately after his hasty dinner he went and destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah with fire! No man could do that—no god could—whose digestion was good. Good digestion when it waits on appetite, brings us into harmony with all around, and we almost love our enemies—at least, those that are too weak to be able to harm us. If god had enjoyed his dinner and readily digested it, Sodom and Gomorrah would not have been so ruthlessly destroyed.

**MORAL.**—When you invite god almighty to dine with you, be sure you get good meat, well killed, well cooked, and well served; for if he does not digest it well and readily, he may, under the influence of the internal burden and torment, go and burn up a few more cities. Better never invite him than produce such frightful results.

My own view of the story is this, that three young fellows, good looking and well dressed, who knew that poor old Abraham was near-sighted and immensely credulous, played pranks with him, one of them pretending to be god the father, and the other two the son and holy ghost. When they appeared before him and audaciously began to play their rôle, Abraham, too conceited to doubt if god would visit him, too delighted at the honor to be at all suspicious, assisted the young fellows to gammon him. They found the old man dying for an heir, and promised him one, at which Sarah laughed till her aged sides shook again. (It was the custom with saints in those days to laugh at god; familiarity bred contempt. For fear of like treatment from saints, he never appears now-a-days.) Those young fellows by bribes and flattery, enlisted Sarah in the plot and instructed her in the part she was to play. At the time appointed they secretly sent a new-born babe, which Sarah, to content the poor old man, told him was her own. Thus the divine promise of Isaac was fulfilled; thus prophets and apostles were sold; and thus the Jewish and the Christian communities became the victims of a practical joke, and the world's laughing-stock unto this day! This view of the case makes everything plain; the orthodox opinion leads only to a cluster of absurdities.

The story of Sodom reflects little credit upon any of the parties concerned in it. The Sodomites were bad enough; Lot was worse; and god worst of all. To commit wholesale and indiscriminate murder is certainly the worst of crimes. And stories of brutal punishment only brutalise those who read and approve them. When I believed the bible I was barbarian enough to approve of capital punishment and even hell torments; in growing out of superstition I grew more humane.

JOS. SYMES.

## ACID DROPS.

J. NEEDHAM reminds us of a saying of Diogenes, who asked as to what kind of beast was the worst, replied: "Of wild beasts, the back-biter; of tame, the flatterer." He wants to know if the half-hearted Freethinker comes under the latter head.

THE question whether part of every parish church should be devoted to "god's (canine) creatures," and called the aisle of dogs, was not discussed at the Church Congress, possibly because it was thought that the established religion is already possessed of a sufficiently cat-and-dog spirit.

WE understand that respect for the feelings of those of its members who belong to the hated and hateful profession has induced the Psychological Research Society to abandon its inquiries about the holy ghost, and what the newspapers would call its "alleged appearances."

OUR irreverent young man finds there is no truth in the rumor that elegant extracts from the sermons of such divines as the Rev. Mr. Whitmore, and passages from back numbers of Publican Booth's *War Cry*, as choice as the nature of the preachers and the publication will allow, be the principal feature in yet another scrap-book called *Beastly*

*Bits*, of which the proprietors were reported to be Sir Henry Tyler and Mr. "Justice" North. As all the "Bits" papers are intended for family reading, biblical extracts would have been inadmissible.

THE Rev. Richard Hibbs has been wailing in the *Daily Chronicle* and other papers. He tried to promulgate his horrible doctrines in Regent's Park, where he "had invariably found a sufficient number of god-fearing people to put to silence unbelievers in the bible." But on the occasion of his last visit there were happily "hosts of blasphemers" present. "Scoffers are now in the majority," cries poor Mr. Hibbs. They are, they are! Hence he proposes that half-a-dozen clergymen "of the muscular order" should visit the park. Clergymen! If the suggestion is carried out let our friends attend, not to deny these evil men a fair hearing, but ask them courteously one or two home-questions, and to place before the public the truth as opposed to the degrading falsehoods preached by men like Mr. Hibbs.

BUTCHER VARLEY lectured at Vernon Chapel, King's Cross Road, last Monday, on the "Obligations of Chastity." Men only were admitted. Some impudent individual pasted on the bill, just underneath the title of the lecture, the following words: "With special reference to the clergyman on Clapham Common."

THE most recent prominent case of mania due to the vile Christian religion is that of poor Herbert Freund, who periodically appears in St. Paul's and the prisoner's dock. He is now to be detained in a lunatic asylum.

THE Rev. S. Charlesworth deserves our pity and our stern condemnation. We pity him for the loss of his daughter. We condemn him because he still clings to the wicked creed whose first principle his unhappy daughter follows in leaving him for the Publican and his crew. Not his screw, for the Publican knows she is wealthy, and instead of his paying her, she will ultimately pay him.

IS it not a sad sight to see the chairman of the London School Board, Mr. S. N. Buxton, recommending the clergy to avail themselves of godly laymen? It makes the heart ache to see the chairman of the Board for educating little children mixed up in any way with the clergy and with godliness.

POOR Thomas Hughes, Q.C., who has never done anything since he wrote "Tom Brown's School Days," read a paper at the Chester Diocesan Conference, in which he went for the Athanasian creed and said: "The Church's attitude towards physical science and its professors seemed to him to be driving the cleverest of our children into infidelity." No wonder the paper was coldly received.

## TAKE AWAY THE CROSS OF CHRIST.

THE winter is coming, the cold and cruel winter. In a few short weeks, in 10 000 wretched homes in this very city, men, women and little children will shiver and weep because coal is dear and wages are low.

Within three days' sail of New York lie millions of tons of Nova Scotia coal, worth at the mines \$1.25. This coal could be landed and sold in New York at a profit at \$2.50. It is a coal that throws out a great and immediate heat, requiring little kindling. Why are the people deprived of this boon of nature so lavishly placed at their feet?

Next Sabbath the church bells will ring out on the startled morning air. Thousands decked in their best will wend their way to the chapels erected to the one, the living god. In the pulpits will stand the anointed, the elect of Israel. "God is good, amen and amen."

We are a Christian people; our rulers are Christian and devout; it is going to cost \$50,000 to raise the steeple on one Broadway church; some of our preachers are paid \$25,000 a year; but ten days ago I went to church at San Rafael (a fashionable watering place near San Francisco), and a contribution box for the "benighted heathen" could not be passed round because, actually, there was not a man in the church besides the minister and myself.

Drive in your carriages through the streets of New York, capitalists and monopolists! Dine and wine, ye who make men shiver and women weep! Wax fat and sleek and prosper while the cheek of innocent childhood and helpless babyhood pale, and plaintive voices cry for bread; but take away from the sight of desperate men the cross of the Christ you profess to worship. Let there be no more mocking of their woe. Gold is god—who requires no temple, no incense, no paid prelates, no church-bell pealing—for the great, the good, the ruler and ruled worship without persuasion, and the altar fires are fed with human hearts, and woman's honor, and all that is noble in man.—*New York Truth.*

## SPECIAL NOTICE.

Dr. Edward B. Aveling (interim editor of the *Freethinker*) will lecture twice on Sunday, Nov. 4, at the Balls Pond Secular Hall, Newington Green Road. Morning—"Origin of Species." Evening—"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. Beadle, Henry M. Beade, George Light, W. T. Ford, H. L. Perham, C. B., W. H. Bedford, Inquirer, W. Balcombe, Silo, J. K. Harris, H. G. Swift, D. Early, Arthur Spencer, James Tuttell.

CHARLES M. JONES.—Glad you are going to help Mrs. S.

AFUS.—Possible, if carefully condensed.

G. TAYLOR.—If we published all the crimes of the clergy, we should want a blue book every week.

A. BEADE.—Thanks for contributions and suggestions.

W. C., of Sunderland, offers £1 to an Election Fund. From the week of G. W. Foote's imprisonment he has recommended the *Freethinker* to friends. Several now take it, and one, in conjunction with him, takes twelve copies weekly, that are distributed broadcast.

W. H. SALTER.—We are glad to have your testimony to the high-toned morality of your secular friends. It is interesting to find that your fellow workmen regard a professing Christian as a suspicious character.

CASSIOPEIA.—The age of the earth is not known. The fact that its antiquity is not understood and quite unthinkable, though æons of æons are testified both in astronomy and geology. To your second question—No. To your third, probably—Yes.

EVO.—You should buy Dr. Edward Aveling's "Religious Views of Charles Darwin." Price 1d.

MARK NIXON has promised 10s. in the event of Mr. Foote contesting Derby. Mr. and Mrs. Norrish promise 2s. 6d. each. "A Friend" also promises £1.

C. TEPAL.—We have no room for Guide Notices, but are always willing to notify anything special.

WANTED, Nos. 1 and 2, Vol. I., of the *Freethinker*. Sixpence each will be given. Address, A. J. V., 28 Stonecutter Street.

MR. HARTMANN'S *Freethinkers* are this week sent to Mr. A. Brooke, 4 Wilcox Yard, Eppingham Street, Rotherham. Friends in that town desirous of spreading Freethought, are requested to communicate with Mr. Brooke.

JOE GUY.—They can be had of Mr. Forder, 28 Stonecutter Street.

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 Nelson Street Board Schools a debate was opened on Sunday morning, Oct. 14, and resumed and concluded on the 21st; subject—"Is the Bible Inspired?" The negative was carried by an overwhelming majority. We have a splendid proof of the advance of scepticism when Board Schools can be obtained for such debates on such a day as Sunday, with such results.

At an aggregate meeting of the four Radical clubs of the borough of Chelsea, representing upwards of 2,000 members, held at the Eleusis Club on Thursday, Oct. 25, Mr. Hatt in the chair, the following resolution, proposed by Mr. Luscombe and seconded by Mr. Beesley, was carried: "That this meeting is of opinion that the present Liberal Government has cast upon itself an indelible stigma by its refusal to interfere with the carrying out of the unjust sentences passed by Judge North on Messrs. Foote and Ramsey, despite the protests from eminent religious, scientific, and other sections of the community; and appeals to all Radical and Liberal organisations throughout the country to instruct their members to agitate for the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws."

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

ARTHUR SPENCER writes to say that he takes four copies of this paper weekly, and two of *Progress* each month, and tries

to influence all he can to do the same or more. He says that he never lies down at night without thinking of him whom the Christians have buried. But there is to be a resurrection.

WILLIAM WISE informs us that our suspicions of a "goak" in regard to the letters in the Herts paper on "Physical Changes" are wholly unfounded. The two Burtons are different persons. The Rev. G. Sayers referred to in a recent number of this paper, visited Bishop Stortford and lectured at the Great Hall. He said he loved the white men because they went over into his country and saved his fellow men. He defrauded a photographer of £12.

THE Rev. James Maurice Wilson, Master of Clifton College, preaching in the University pulpit, said that a wave of spiritual feeling and religious instinct was stimulating the breasts of men, and its creed was the fatherhood of god and the brotherhood of man. If such things as working-men's clubs, Artisan Dwellings Act, popular concerts, and such movements, tended to realise in its true meaning the fatherhood of god and the brotherhood of man, let them have them. Poetry and science were true religion. The former was true religion, for it was nature, and nature was god's. Science was true religion because it led to discovery, and the discovery of man was the revelation of god." Let Mr. Wilson get rid of the idea of the fatherhood of god and cling only to that of the brotherhood of man, and the true religion will come on earth at last.

THE *National Reformer* says:—"We shall be glad if friends who have promised, or who intend sending subscriptions to the Symes' Testimonial, will kindly remit as early as possible. Those having lists are requested to return such lists without delay. It is desirable the list should be closed by Dec. 1, as Mr. Symes will leave about the end of the third week in December." Subscriptions to be sent to Mr. Bradlaugh, 20 Circus Road, St. John's Wood.

ON November 6 (next Tuesday), Miss Helen Taylor will lecture at South Place Chapel on "The Present Condition of France."

WE issue from our office this week an amusing pamphlet, entitled, "The Holy Ghost's Arithmetic." It contains some very useful figures, and the calculations will upset those of the Christians.

THE November number of *Progress* is, save for the temporary absence of Norman Britton, up to the standard reached by its predecessors. J. L. Joynes has a trenchant exposure of Mr. Fawcett's feeble criticism, or no criticism, of Henry George and Professor Wallace. Ernest Radford attacks that policy of outspokenness of which our journal may lay claim to be an exponent, and his article may call forth in ensuing numbers a vigorous reply. There are four pieces of verse, most of which are of more than average excellence; while a sonnet by L. L. is especially charming. Gertrude Layard writes of Madagascar. C. T. Bingham and Dr. Edward Aveling contribute scientific articles.

A YOUNG Freethinker in May last asked for a copy of the *Freethinker* in Windsor, and failed to obtain it. Now the newsagent of whom he inquired has a standing order of eleven Freethought papers weekly.

THE evening at South Place was an undoubted success as far as numbers went. Mrs. Theodore Wright's two readings went splendidly, and Adeline Holyoake's playing moved and charmed. For the rest, considerations of a personal pronoun nature (1st singular) forbid anything more than the recordal of applause, laughter, and recalls. Not the least interesting occurrence on that night was the presence among the audience of the Rev. T. W. Aveling.

AT Milton Hall, on Friday, November 9, Dr. Edward Aveling gives another evening, assisted by Miss Ellen Burnelle and E. Belfort Bax. Tickets, 2s. 6d., 1s., and 6d., can be obtained at 13 Newman Street, or of Mr. Prout, 8 Hampstead Street, Fitzroy Square.

## "HE WILL GUIDE YOU INTO ALL TRUTH."

ONE great difficulty which I experienced in my Christian life was to recognise unmistakably the voice of god in the secret of my heart. The heart of man is the battle-ground of at least three contending forces: supernal, natural and infernal. My friends and preachers assured me that if I would attend to the "still small voice," my path in religious and in earthly matters would be unerringly indicated by the heavenly monitor, and I should hear "a voice behind me saying, 'This is the way, walk thou in it.'" To none who pray for him is the holy spirit denied, and so I prayed often

and earnestly. But, pray as I might, I never could obtain a clear indication of my path. I myself on some occasions endeavored to tell to others "what a savior I had found;" but apart from the merely logical process whereby I had become convinced that the bargain of my redemption was satisfactorily negotiated, which I could readily describe and illustrate—apart I say from this process of natural reasoning I could not discern the promptings of the divine spirit. And I found that some of those I knew (or knew of) embraced various more or less heterodox opinions, and yet they also sought the leadings of the holy spirit. In these cases—as I was informed—they were misled by the Devil. Hence I was left somewhat uncertain lest I myself had not in another direction followed his deluding deception. Hence unsettlement of mind—that free activity of the reasoning powers so dreaded by all true believers—began to take possession of my heart. What fear and trembling had to be undergone before full emancipation from the sway of superstition was experienced. Darwin's epoch-making book had been for years before the public, but I had not met with it, and in fact, had some fear lest it was a "dangerous" work. I was, however, induced to read it by the recommendation of a very devout gentleman, who has been able to accept it without perceiving how antagonistic it is to his faith. Its effect on my mind was far different. To my surprise I found its logic irresistible, and from that hour to this my course has been a continual progress in the direction of giving up such beliefs as were out of harmony with (not revelation, but) evolution.

We cannot pretend to solve the problem of the universe, and it is well that this is needless. But we know enough on the negative side to be convinced that this is the only life of which we are sure, and that our duty to our neighbor is our highest law. And further, that our knowledge of this duty is not increased by any voice from heaven, but must be learnt on earth. And yet more, that the interests of man do not coincide with the glory of any god ever yet alleged to have revealed himself to the "sons of men."

J. G. F.

#### "PUNCH" ON OUR PICTURES.

As Mr. Punch saw fit recently to sneer at the *Freethinker*, when Mr. Prebendary Row in his running a-muck at us happened to refer to our contemporary, the interim editor of the *Freethinker* wrote the following letter to the editor of *Punch*. Mr. Burnand has not had the courtesy to reply:—

"Sir,—As the editor of the *Freethinker* during such time as my friend G. W. Foote remains in prison, you will pardon my expression of regret that to the misrepresentation to which we are exposed is now added an attack upon the part of Mr. Punch. That Prebendary Row had no right to drag in the name of your paper in his attack upon ours, I am as conscious as I am of the fact that his attack upon the latter is unjustifiable. But I regret that you insert in the pages of your periodical words that make me inclined to think that you have never seen ours. 'Coarsely executed' our pictures may be and, compared with yours, are. We are poor. 'Grossly blasphemous' in the sense wherein you use the words they are not. I venture to say that had you seen the illustrations in "La Bible Amusante," with comments in that language, with which your familiarity is as great as your knowledge of your own, you would not have used the harsh phrase, or permitted its use, that appears in your issue of September 29.—Faithfully yours, EDWARD B. AVELING."

#### THE END OF A MIRACLE.

At the village of Bois d'Haine, in Belgium, there is a poor girl on the point of death, of whose strange malady the Catholic clergy have for a long time made a profitable exhibition, whilst retributive nature has made the priests themselves her dupes. It is always of value to recall the history of these celebrated frauds.

Hysterical and pious Louise Lateau aspired to notoriety. The fame gained by Mdlle. La Merlière, the virgin of Salette, and of Madame P—, the virgin of Lourdes, troubled her sleep. She wished to be greater than the holy women who are worshipped only by proxy. She succeeded in becoming herself an object of worship.

One fine day she showed her family, her friends, and her priest—all foolish and credulous people—bleeding marks on her hands, feet and side, at the precise spots where the savior of mankind was wounded by the nails and by the spear.

Soon after she began to fast, taking only on Friday evenings some slight refreshment. These Fridays were marked

by strange phenomena. The sainted girl fell into a trance, became insensible, passed the day lying on her back, her eyes convulsively upturned, her arms stiff and extended as if stretched on a cross, while the stigmata reappeared and bled.

This lasted for several years. Every Friday crowds of people hurried to Bois d'Haine, the clergy, with crosses and banners raised aloft, preceding them to the miraculous abode.

The sainted girl went through her exhibition with constant success, with unbroken regularity. Then came collections, the sale of trinkets, the building of churches, wonderful recoveries, miracles, votive offerings. In a word, all the ordinary accompaniments of such childish displays.

It was not that the unbelieving did not murmur. The fanatics set them at defiance, till at length the Academy of Medicine at Brussels nominated a committee to inquire into the truth of the alleged facts. Then, notwithstanding the cunning of the patient, the result of the inquiry was only what might have been expected. They remarked that this miraculous girl carried the wound on the wrong side, just as it was represented in a lithographed picture hung up in her room. Nothing, however, came of this, and crowds continued to gather at Bois d'Haine.

A hysterical subject at the Salpêtrière Asylum, expert in the art of inducing in herself convulsions and trance, heard of the famous Belgian. She became jealous, fled from the hospital, and managed somehow to get to Bois d'Haine on a Friday. Here, in the presence of the scared multitude and indignant clergy, she went through, with various additions, all the miraculous performances of her rival. The gendarmes were, however, quickly called out, and this poor woman placed under medical care.

This exhibition of Louise Lateau was a fine business. In the interesting quarrel between M. Dumont and M. du Rousseau, the two bishops of Tournay (a quarrel, by the way, which came to rather an unexpected end in a police-court), the retaining possession of the girl has been an important point.

But everything must come to an end—even religious frauds. One day there came to Bois d'Haine a sister of Louise Lateau—a good girl, frank and of rude appearance. She became angry, and exposed the whole fraud to both believers and priests, to deceivers and deceived. She put her sister to shame, denouncing as imposture the sickness, and all the consequences that had followed from the farce.

And now was manifested an extremely curious phenomenon common among hysterical females. After the charm of deceiving people, nothing seems to give them so much pleasure as mocking those whom they have deceived. Thus this saint acted. She recounted how she had scratched the palms of her hands and the soles of her feet to give the appearance of the sacred wounds and to cause them to bleed at the appointed time. She told how she had risen at night, traversed the garden, and taken food brought secretly to her by a servant—an accomplice.

Of what took place afterwards I am ignorant. Rumor says that Louise Lateau, having made her *amende honorable* to the world, went back to her parents.

All things are possible to diseases of this kind, but superstition cannot be overcome. The revelation made in 1848, before the Grenoble Club, by Mdlle. La Merlière at the exhibition, of the fantastic costume she wore at the apparitions of Salette, has not discouraged human folly.

But what can we think of a religion, the dogmas and morals of which have a greatness of their own, when it has sunk to so low a depth of corruption as to allow its priests and prelates to recognise and encourage such follies? And how much will remain of it when we have had ten years of regular training in physical and natural science in our primary schools?

PAUL BERT.

(From "La Petite République Française.")

#### A THEOLOGICAL CONUNDRUM.

To suppress or gag the Bishop of Peterborough is a feat not yet accomplished. The Church of England was almost wrecked by the controversy which raged around the "eastward position." The issue was whether the clergyman in celebrating the lord's supper should stand with his face to the south or to the east. Grave questions of doctrine were said to depend on the issue, and those who adopted the "eastward position" were reviled as Romanisers; albeit their ranks included such prelates as Bishop Wilberforce, the present Bishop of Oxford, and the Bishop of Bath and Wells. The fact was that obsolete rubrics seemed to order two different attitudes at the same time; and a little cool common-sense on each side might have calmed the controversy. But this was not forthcoming. The Law Courts were invoked; clergymen were condemned; appeals were argued; but the result was *nil*. The decisions were said to conflict, and the inculpated clergy refused submission. *Prima facie*, the rebels seemed right. A rubric directed that the minister should stand "before the table," but this position was un-

popular, and, as it was alleged, "popish;" and it was ruled that the rubric meant something else.

The new Archbishop of Canterbury takes the *prima facie* views; Archbishop Tait held the opposite opinion. To outsiders the controversy seems childish; to those concerned it was a question of conscience. A little judicious ridicule from the Bishop of Peterborough took the sting out of the question once for all. The Irish peasantry love to swear euphemistically, and "By the piper that played before Moses," is a very popular oath among them. The story goes that, as the bishops gravely debated the problem how to explain to ordinary minds that "before the table" meant "not before the table," Dr. Magee's mirth was kindled, and he wrote: "As to the phrase, 'The piper that played before Moses,' doubts have arisen. Some believe its meaning to be that the piper played *before* Moses, *i.e.* at a time anterior to his birth. Others hold that the piper played *before* Moses, in the sense of preceding the great lawgiver when he danced; while others teach that the piper played (*coram* Mose) before, or in the presence of Moses when 'the son of Amran' dined. All these are wrong. The phrase is to be understood as implying that the piper played 'at the north end of Moses, looking south.'" This document, it is said, was passed up to Archbishop Tait, who was not pleased with it; but to rebuke Dr. Magee was unsafe, and to argue the question gravely, impossible; for "unquenchable laughter" filled the minds of the prelates who had perused the paper.—*Society.*

### "PRAY WITHOUT CEASING."

COME, be not down-hearted and filled with despair,  
But down on your knees all you Christians in prayer.  
Should Jahveh be silent, don't get in a huff;  
He's certain to hear if you pray long enough.

Let not his indifference your hopes ever blight,  
But pray without ceasing from morning till night.  
Stay not to have breakfast, to dine or to sup—  
Your god is asleep and requires waking up.

You cannot an answer expect in a day;  
God's home is in heaven—so far, far away.  
Have patience then. Do not give up in disgust.  
Remember that "pray without ceasing" you must.

Whatever you ask for, believing you'll get—  
Though the one ask for sunshine, another for wet.  
Yes, all you desire, god will grant you, dear friends;  
For prayer is the means to most opposite ends.

Then if you are hungry and have nought to eat—  
Go, pray to your god, and he'll send you some meat.  
Don't try to get work, but go down on your knees—  
Your prayer he will hear, your wants he'll appease.

The aid of a doctor seek not any more  
If you should be ill and nigh to death's door.  
Oh waste not your money in doctor or pill,  
But pray to your god, and he'll cure you for *nil*.

S. J. BELLCHAMBERS.

## REVIEWS.

*Poems.* By LARA. Stewart and Co.—A collection of some thirty or forty poems, not without merit. The versification is always flowing, and if the writer never rises much above mediocrity, he never sinks far below it. Occasionally there is a considerable amount of power, notably in the lines headed "Ichabod, March 5, 1883":—

"Write that above your doors, O fools and blind!  
The days are past when matter governed mind.  
Priests of a dotting god and slaves of slaves,  
Whose shackled hands dig one another's graves!  
Twelve months in prison!

Lo! the sentence falls.  
While hiss and scoffing fill the judgment halls.  
Where are the hands which once for this foul creed,  
'Mid flame and torture made an atheist bleed?  
Dead—like the powers your father used so well  
To send souls heavenward through the flames of hell.  
And you, poor palsied demons—you ere long,  
With them thrice damned shall swell Gehenna's throng.  
Your god is dead; your heaven a hope bewrayed;  
Your hell a byword, and your creed a trade.  
Your vengeance—what?

A mere polluting touch—  
A cripple striking with a broken crutch!"

Our Corner is as usual an excellent sixpennyworth. Even in these days of sixpenny magazines, this little periodical holds its own. Marking out a path of its own, and dealing only with things human and of earth, it has also a distinctive style of its own, and we hope an ever-growing public of its own.

## PROFANE JOKES.

ROMANS vi., 26: "The spirit also helpeth our infirmities." "That's so," says our irreverent young man. "I always take whiskey when I've a cold on."

FAITH is sometimes personified as a drenched female clinging to a sea-washed rock; but a better personification would be a bald-headed man buying a bottle of patent hair-restorer.

A SCOTTISH minister was one day engaged in visiting some members of his congregation, and he came to the door of a house where his gentle tapping could not be heard for the noise of contention within. After waiting a little he opened the door and entered, saying: "I should be much obliged if you would tell me who is the head of this house?" "Weel, sir," said the husband and father, "if ye sit down a wee we'll maybe be able to tell ye, for we're just trying to settle that point."

NEW reading by our irreverent young man: "I was an idiot and ye took me in." Motto to the Church or for a lunatic asylum. He says they're synonymous.

ZOOLOGICAL proof that Publican Booth is a dangerous animal. He's safe in Jesus, isn't he? And Jesus is the lamb, isn't he? And a lamb is a sheep's kin, isn't it? And a sheepskin is a sheep's clothing, isn't it? And there are wolves in sheep's clothing, aren't there?

THE MOORE AND BURGESS TROUPE.—*Middle-Man*: "Bones, I've heard that you are a Brahman." *Bones*: "No, I'm not a barman; I'm a Moore-man." *Middle-Man*: "I'm glad to hear that you are not an infidel." *Bones*: "Infidel! Oh dear, no. I'm a *Christy'un*."

CLERGYMAN (holding high-hat): "You see this hat, children?"

—"Yes, sir."

"Is there anything in it?"—"No, sir."

*N.B.*—The hat was not in use.

*Clergyman*: "You see this button, children?"—"Yes, sir."

"Can you see it now?" (placing button under hat on table.)

—"No, sir."

"Is it there?"—"Yes, sir."

"Now, boys and girls, that is faith. Can any boy or girl tell me what faith is?"—"A brass button under a hat, sir."

AFTER an Indian proselyte had received the sacrament, the priest asked him whether he did not feel a mental refreshment from the sacramental cup. "Yes," said the Indian; "but I like rum better."

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