

# 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.

Vol. III.—No. 46.]

NOVEMBER 18, 1883.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.

## LUTHER AND THE NEW REFORMATION.

Few characters have been the subject of more dispute than that of the man the commemoration of whose four hundredth anniversary has been occupying the attention of the Protestant world. Declared by his opponents to have been begotten of an incubus, to have committed all sorts of scandalous crimes, and finally to have been strangled by his master, the devil, Luther is, on the other hand, the idol of the Protestant, and his name is ever inscribed first among the heroes of the Reformation. I do not propose to dwell on the numerous qualifications with which the extravagant panegyrics, uttered at Exeter Hall upon "the Saxon monk who shook the world," should be received. He had the faults of his good qualities. His unquestionable intrepidity and vitality led him into violent and unprofitable theological controversies. His independence of character assumed the form of arrogance. Asserting the duty of personal conviction and the right of free inquiry, he would, nevertheless, persecute Jews, Papists, and the followers of Zwinglius.

Rejecting spiritual slavery, he was Conservative in politics, and said god sent tyrants to be submitted to like fathers in the correction of children. He was coarse, far coarser than the Freethinkers, whose caricatures of mythological beings have subjected them to penalties from which he escaped. He did not scruple to call Copernicus a fool, Leo a pig, and Erasmus a viper. His violence shocked even his friends. Muncer said if there were two popes, Luther would be the worse. Melancthon said he had the wrath of Achilles and the passion of Hercules. He shared in the usual errors of his time. A firm believer in sorcery, he tells himself of his many encounters with the devil; and the splashes from an inkstand with which he saluted his black visitor on one occasion are still shown, and doubtless often renewed, at Wartburg. Notwithstanding his errors, his services in bravely standing out against the corruptions and encroachments of the Papacy, entitle him to the recognition of all who see in priestcraft the foe of human progress.

Amid the cackle of the churches about Luther, as the founder of Protestantism, with its inestimable gift of the precious bible, there is some danger of his true service being overlooked. Doubtless, by putting the bible into the common German tongue, he greatly aided that intellectual movement which the spread of printing, the revival of pagan literature, and the *Renaissance* of art had fostered. But his great achievement was the assertion and establishment of the right of conscience and private judgment as opposed to the dogma of an infallible Church. When before the emperor at Worms he took his stand on this principle, his voice was a trumpet-note which called together all the forces of freedom.

Mr. Spurgeon, speaking to the Protestant young men at Exeter Hall, wished them to remark Luther's hearty reverence for the holy scriptures. He did not inform them that the Saxon reformer rejected St. John's Apocalyptic nightmare as unauthentic; and that, finding St. James in blank contradiction to St. Paul on the subject of works *versus* faith—the one saying that by works a man is justified, and the other declaring the reverse—he set aside the brother of the lord for the tent-maker of Tarsus, terming the epistle

of St. James "*ein recht strohende epistel*" (a downright epistle of straw).

The precious book, however, became the stumbling-block of the Reformation. Protestantism stultified its principle of private judgment in making an alleged infallible book take the place of an alleged infallible church. The church is older than the bible, but man is older, and is the maker of both. The Protestant bible, indeed, rests upon the Catholic church. Neither reason nor conscience would decide for excluding the ethical book of Ecclesiasticus and putting in the book of Esther, which has no relation either to morals or religion. Protestants must go to the Catholic fathers for such evidence as there is of the authenticity of their revelation. Moreover, the bible is open to all the same objections of self-contradiction, and of being in opposition to reason and science as is the church itself. The adoption of the bible as the standard of Protestantism was the result of a compromise. It was thought to provide an answer to the objection that those who rejected the authority of the pope were without any sufficient rule of faith. They forgot that an infallible book needs an infallible interpreter. Once admit the principle of private interpretation, and at once you make the bible a nose of wax, as Luther well termed it.

Hence the numerous sects into which Protestantism has split, and which are of themselves a sufficient proof that no divine religious system has ever been bestowed on man. It is true that every bible-banger, of whatever persuasion, thinks he is carrying out the Reformation principle of free judgment; for of course it must argue wilful blindness to exercise it upon the same book as himself, and not arrive at the same conclusions. But in the eye of common sense the person who is prepared to believe in creation from nothing, in the making of woman from a man's rib, the temptation by a serpent, and the thousand-and-one Oriental fables of the Jew-book, need not stick at the doctrine of transubstantiation.

The œsophagus that can swallow Jonah and the whale needs no distention to admit the pope. An immaculate virgin mother is no more absurd than a crucified god, and the priestly forgiveness of sins is as reasonable as redemption through the blood of an innocent person. The bible is with most Protestants as much an idol as any saint—ay, even as any fetish of South Africa.

Such compromises as the Protestant position in regard to the bible are only good for a time. It is a noteworthy fact that the Reformation never extended much beyond the bounds it assumed in Luther's own century. He lived to witness its greatest triumphs. He was the sower and he was also the reaper. There are many desertions from the Roman faith in Catholic countries, but the converts do not become Protestants, but Freethinkers. Geneva, the city of Calvin and a chief centre of the anti-papal reformation, has become a hot-bed of agnosticism. The time is approaching when all such compromises must melt away. The New Reformation makes clear the issue between Reason and Authority. Those who rely on faith will in the long run find their safest position in the mother church of Rome. Those who are prepared for the bracing air of freedom will examine and reject the so-called divine words of an undateable book as readily as those of a living man. The only temple that can be erected on the foundation of private judgment is a Freethought one.

J. M. WHEELER.

## JUMPING COMMENTS UPON THE BIBLE.

[Concluded from p. 354.]

THE story of Jacob and his married life had better be left where it is—in the bible, one of the few places really fit for it. Comment is both unnecessary and impossible.

The way in which Jacob contrived to grow rich at Laban's expense was clever, ay, miraculous—which shows that god was with the rogue all the way through. Honest men never get or need his assistance. To judge from what the bible teaches, especially in connexion with Jacob, Moses, Joshua and Elijah, Jehovah was the patron god of cut-throats, swindlers and thieves.

And Jacob stole away unawares to Laban the Syrian (Gen. xxxi., 20).—Exactly so. Moses did the same from Egypt; and delivered the Israelites from slavery under pretence of going out for a holiday—that is, to worship. But god was with them.

And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day (Gen. xxxii., 24).—The context shows that the man was a god, whom Jacob saw "face to face." The struggle between the almighty and his servant Jacob, at that time nearly one hundred years old, if bible chronology can be trusted, was a very severe and protracted one; and for a long period it was doubtful which would win.

Genesis xxxiv. must be passed over with the remark that Jacob's sons were chips of the old block in cunning, as may be seen in their murder and plunder of Hamor and his son. Jacob chid them, it is true, but only because he feared the revenge of his neighbors. Saints usually love the lord their god, *alias* themselves, with all their heart, and so have no love left for other people.

And Jacob hid them under the oak which was by Shechem (Gen. xxxv., 4).—Jacob had been in Canaan now for a long period, and yet had not paid his vow to god; and the latter reminded him that the debt was still standing, ordering him to the place where he had seen the ladder reaching up into heaven. So he packed up to go to Bethel to worship, and he told his household to put away the *other* gods they had. Those were handed over to Jacob, and he merely buried them along with certain jewels and trinkets under the tree. This was a mere compromise; the other gods were only put out of the way while Jehovah was being attended to—just as people to-day go to churches and chapels, where they pretend to worship god; though they are merely enduring the "service" until they can rush back again to the pleasures and riches they left behind them.

Jacob built his altar to god and offered sacrifice; but he did not give the tenth of all he had, as he promised when he had nothing at all to give. Of course not. Whoever thinks of keeping his word with Jehovah? With whom does Jehovah keep his pledges?

And these were the kings that reigned in the land of Edom, before there reigned any kings over the children of Israel (Gen. xxxvi., 31).—This is genuine revelation, and shows us that Moses did not write Genesis. It must have been written after Saul and David, for kings of Israel are mentioned as having reigned at the time the writer lived. We know not who did write Genesis. We know Moses did not; unless his book has been largely interpolated and corrupted. Though it matters not the least who wrote it; one man is as likely to be inspired as any other.

Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children (Gen. xxxvii., 3).—Gods and saints usually have favorites; and nothing better exhibits their weakness. Jacob loved Joseph, made a regular guy of him with a harlequin's coat; he became a spy upon his brothers, and reported what he saw to his father. His brothers hated him, and sold him; and that was as good as he deserved. Joseph in Egypt turned out a full-blown professor of dreams, as his brothers had sneeringly called him (xxxvii., 19); married the daughter of a priest of On, or Heliopolis, a heathen; became grand vizier of Pharaoh (a purely fabulous title, by the way), gathered up the corn during the years of plenty, sold it out during the famine for the peoples' money, cattle, land, and *themselves*, thus making all the people absolute slaves to the king. No doubt the writer thought he was sketching a splendid and saintly character; in truth, he has presented us with one of the very worst tools of despotism. He never interfered with the lands of the priesthood (a priest wrote the story); their organisation was too powerful, and Joseph

was too closely allied to that guild to interfere with their possessions.

And Joseph fell upon his father's face, and wept upon him, and kissed him (Gen. 1., 1).—Joseph was very affectionate. For many years he enjoyed himself in Egypt without ever inquiring for his friends, and would probably never have sought them again if the famine had not thrown them in his way; yet he makes an awful fuss when he finds them, and now when his father was dead!

My jumping, capering comments have now run quite through the book of Genesis. As I am soon leaving England, I must here pause to consider whether it is worth while to enter upon Exodus. At best I could write no more than five weekly sections ere departing for Australia, and those would be quite inadequate to clear up and set out in their true light the wonders of the second book of the bible.

Here, too, I may just remark that many people will regard my comments as altogether inadequate, and even positively faulty in all respects. Well! I have written as I thought best under the circumstances, and for the end I had in view; as I have consulted my own whims and fancies in writing, I should be sorry not to allow the reader the same liberty. My comments, faulty as they may be, are quite worthy of the bible, regarded as a *divine revelation*; considered as an antiquity, no comment can be too good for it. My object is not to damage the bible, but to render it impossible for men to damage themselves by worshipping it or its worn-out god. Still I must say, my comment is more honest and straightforward than any orthodox comment ever written upon the bible; for I have not perverted a single text to support foregone conclusions; while orthodox commentaries consist of little else than perversions of that nature.

JOS. SYMES.

## CANTICLE XXI. BY BALAAM'S ASS.

I to the mills will bend my steps,  
From whence doth come my flour;  
I'll pay the miller all his debts—  
He waits me every hour.  
My foot I did let slide, but not  
Upon digested meat.  
I owed ten pounds just to a groat.  
The miller I did cheat.  
I was a zealous Christian then;  
My charity I'd show.  
Into the Church the ten pounds went  
With measured beat and slow.  
The church grew rich; the miller poor—  
Myself no difference found.  
The church said: God tenfold will give  
For this gift of £10.  
I to the mills; compelled to go  
The money to replace.  
God never gave a single cent.  
I bore the whole disgrace,  
Dupes like myself of priest and god  
In such a cause advance;  
Pay twice your bills to church and mills,  
While priest and god may dance.

XPERIENCE.

DOWN Hammersmith way a young parson took for his text, "Quit ye like men." Our Hammersmithians rose and quitted the sacred edifice for their gin and bitters.

A YOUNG man, who was once a Sunday-school teacher, was enjoying a sixpenny fish dinner at one of the city restaurants, when he noticed the frequent calls for soles, fried, boiled, and otherwise. Then he quoth to one of the fair waitresses—"Why, you are like General Booth!" She artlessly queried—"Why?" He heartlessly responded—"Because you are doing a good trade in soles."

THE Testimonial Fund for Messrs. Foote and Ramsey amounts to £156 11s.

ON Sunday afternoon St. George's Hall was crammed with an audience in attendance upon Dr. Edward B. Aveling's lecture on the "Pedigree of Man."

G. R. SIMS is writing in the *Daily News* a series of articles on "Horrible London." They are notable as calling attention to the deplorable condition of the poor, as being destitute of reference to god, and as plainly hinting at the advisability of teaching parents conjugal prudence.

## A DEGRADING RELIGION.—IV.

## PUNISHMENT WITH A VENGEANCE.

BESIDES the impracticable and decidedly hurtful doctrines I have already enumerated, there are others belonging to the Christian creed which no man in his senses would ever attempt to put into practice.

The young man who asked Jesus, What he should do to be saved, himself illustrated the impracticability of Christ's teachings. All the commandments he affirmed he had kept with rigorous self-control from his youth up. He had refrained from stealing, from murder, from lying, slandering and all uncharitableness; had honored his father and mother with a fidelity becoming a dutiful son. This was insufficient to win the admiration of Jesus, and deserve salvation.

"One thing thou lackest," says the Nazarene. "Sell all thou hast and give to the poor and follow me." Crest-fallen and disgusted, the young man appears to have turned from Jesus, probably to find some other religious teacher whose doctrines were more compatible with reason and justice. Surely it cannot be a high recommendation for any religion that believers must render themselves veritable beggars before they can accept it.

This is one of the criteria by which we are to know true Christians—that they are ever ready to "sell all they have and give to the poor;" and, like their master, "have not where to lay their head," in order to demonstrate their sincerity.

And judged by this standard what a sham Christianity really is in this country. Are there any Christians at all? Lord Shaftesbury, good man though he undoubtedly is, cannot be numbered among the Christians. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth," is a command which has no weight with him. "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven" (Mark x., 25). "Blessed be ye that hunger now for ye shall be filled" (Luke vi., 21). What do rich Christians who are clothed in fine linen and fare sumptuously every day, care for blessedness such as this?

And neither can we honestly say that those large-hearted clergymen who are helping on the time when we shall all be intellectually free—are true Christians, for do not they trample under foot the degrading teaching that a follower of Christ must on no account have "fellowship with unbelievers"?

And is it fair, is it honest, that men who repudiate with scorn every unreasonable teaching of Jesus, and who in their daily lives do not emulate his noble characteristics—is it manly, I ask, that such as these should "profess and call themselves Christians" and be accepted as good sheep in the Christian flock?

But let us, before concluding, look at the dreadful teaching of Jesus in respect to future rewards and punishments. A man is not to be punished according to his deeds, which would be bad enough in all conscience, seeing that most men suffer for their misdeeds in this world, whether there is another or not. According to Paul, "belief" will save a man without works, but works without belief will be considered as worse than useless.

What will it avail a man that he has rescued thousands of his fellow creatures from a life of ignorance or misery; that he has fought and spent his life's blood in a revolution to free the slave; that he has been tortured on the rack, or consumed at the stake for teaching science; that he has struggled against fearful odds for social, political or religious reform. If he has not believed in Jesus it were better for him that he had never been born, for he is doomed to suffer agony through all eternity.

What an infamy! A human judge would not act with such mercilessness, and shall it be said that the infinite god of the universe, who will preside at the great trial on the "day of judgment," will act with less kindness and humanity than the creatures of his manufacture?

A man who tells a lie—one little lie—who tells a plain-faced maiden that she is the prettiest girl in the world when he knows she is not—will be punished with the same severity as a villain who perhaps has poisoned the minds of hundreds, robbed his own countrymen, or been instrumental in the slaughtering of thousands of inoffensive black-a'-moors.

Is a man who is destitute and who steals a loaf of bread to feed his starving wife and children, as great a criminal as one who deliberately, to serve his own selfish purpose, cuts a human being's throat? I think not.

Heaven and hell. There are only these two places to go to, and all who are not sent to the former must of necessity be consigned to the latter, unless a few more establishments are opened for the purpose. Think of it, Christian! Was I not right when I said that Christianity was a "Degrading Religion"?

But some say that the doctrine of hell-fire was not taught by Jesus. Who then manufactured it? Priests! Ah, priest-made religions are always humiliating. But why did the church teach this horrible doctrine through centuries of ignorance until Freethinkers pointed out its wickedness? Why have the clergy frightened thousands into a declaration of belief in Christianity by a threat of eternal damnation, if Jesus never taught the terrible doctrine?

And are we now to be told that we are not to be damned, but merely condemned? What for? For disbelief? I cannot help it. God has no right to punish me for being true to myself. If god gave me brains with which to think, why did he not render me incapable of disbelief in that which is so necessary for my salvation? Salvation! did I say? If damned only means condemned, how do we know that being saved means any more than being exempt from damnation? Take away hell-fire, and away go also the harps and heavenly mansions!

It will not do to discharge the devil in this summary fashion without also considering what we shall do with god. But we may rest in peace. Of one thing we may all be sure, and that is that in time the vast majority of mankind will reject Christ also, and improve upon his "Degrading Religion."

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

## MORE BIBLE ARITHMETIC.

I WRITE this article in order to complain of a flagrant con-  
nivance at deception on the part of a Freethinker who has  
audited the books of a disreputable firm. The said Free-  
thinker is no other than "Mozark Zaz," and my statement  
can be verified by anyone who will carefully examine the  
books of Holy Ghost, Jehovah, and Son. They will see  
that "Mozark Zaz" has dealt far too leniently with them.  
Perhaps it was out of consideration for the effete condition  
of the heads of the firm, and the taking into account the  
rapid loss of connexion sustained by them of late years,  
which has induced my friend "Mo," with the characteristic  
kindness of a Freethinker, to sit thus lightly in judgment on  
them. But I am inclined to deal more harshly with this  
eminently "shadowy" firm; and as in the proper order of  
things there should be two auditors, I will constitute myself  
auditor number two. I remember that one of the members  
of this firm had the egoism to confidently inform us that  
the very hairs of our head are numbered; and though  
possibly at that time bald-headed men might have pre-  
ponderated, still I am of opinion that when a person  
arrogates to himself such an assumption of arithmetical  
precision as this, his performances in this particular branch  
at least should be open to the severest criticism. A week  
ago, I heard a young friend of mine, aged nine years,  
utter a most trenchant truth. His teacher had been  
expatiating on the virtues of Bishop Colenso, and he came  
to me brimful of Colenso, and asked me, with a face alight  
with joy at the thought of being able to puzzle me, "Do  
you know why god allowed him to die?" I frankly con-  
fessed my ignorance. "Because," said he, "god had need  
of him." I mentally ejaculated, "Yea verily, for out of the  
mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast ordained truth."  
But though the lord sorely needs him, the examination of  
the Pentateuch has spoilt his chance of a harp.

But to the books. I will pass over the complete ani-  
hilation of the Amalekites by Saul and Samuel, and  
twice afterwards by David, because this faculty of spon-  
taneous generation is not peculiar to the Amalekites, but is  
possessed by the Midianites (Num. xxxiii., and Judges vi.),  
and also by the Egyptian cattle. Turn to 2 Sam. xxxiv., 13,  
and you find god offers David seven years of famine, while  
in 1 Chron. xxi., 12, he is not so generous, and only offers  
three years; but as David accepted neither it did not much  
matter. In the same chapters, verses 24 and 25 respectively,  
we find, first, that David paid fifty shekels of silver for the

threshing-place; but, secondly, we find that it was *six hundred shekels of gold*. With regard to Ahaziah, "Mo" mentions the fact of this remarkable youth being 42 when his father was 40; but if you turn to 2 Kings viii., you will find his father was 40, when he was only 22. But this is still curious, for he was the youngest son, as the Arabians had slain *all the eldest*. Problem—If the youngest son, who had several brothers, was only 18 years younger than his father, how old was his father when he married? Further, verse 18 says that the daughter of Ahab was his wife; while verse 26 says it was the daughter of Omri, Ahab's father.

In 1 Kings iv. we read that Solomon had 40,000 stalls of horses, while in 2 Chron. ix. he has only 4,000. In 2 Sam. x. David slays 700 chariot men and 40,000 horse-men of the Syrians; in 1 Chron. xix. it is 7,000 men and 40,000 footmen. The translators have made a futile attempt to better this. In 1 Chron. xxii., 14, we read that David prepares 100,000 talents of gold and 1,000,000 of silver; but in chapter xxix. these become 5,000 talents of gold and 7,000 of silver. I will mention the fact of Goliath being killed by David twice (1 Sam. xvii., 50, 51), and once afterwards by Elhanan (2 Sam. xxi., 19).

And now I will pass on to the New Testament. Matthew says, chapter i., 17, from the captivity to the birth of Christ are 14 generations, whereas by the present system of arithmetic there are only 12. Matthew tells us of 2 men possessed of devils, whilst Mark and Luke say there was but 1. Mark and Luke say that 1 man (Bartimeus) was cured by Christ; Matthew makes it 2. Matthew says the 2 thieves reviled Christ; Luke says only 1. I defy anyone to give a clear description of the resurrection. Was it 2, 3, or 4, or more women who came? Were there 2, 1, or more, of the angels? Was it Peter or John who got there and went into the sepulchre first? I think I and my friend "Mo" have pretty well audited these books. It now only remains to submit the statement to a general meeting, after which Jehovah and Co. can file a petition for liquidation. We will let them off all payment, for the comfort of being eternally rid of them.

B. T. HALL.

## ACID DROPS.

In a breach of promise case last week, a Mr. Holloway, coffee-house keeper, stated that the father of plaintiff tried to induce him to buy an ancient coin—the only one of its kind in existence—for £800. It was said to be one of the pieces of silver for which Jesus was sold.

UNDER the heading of "Prophetic Notes," the *Christian Herald* refers to the recent explosion on the Underground Railway as having been predicted in Revelations xvi., 12-14. Could the force of folly go further?

THE multiplying power of a lie is enormous. The Rev. P. W. Herford (of Gatley) has improved on coward Whitmore's lies about sixteen converted infidels, by stating at the recent Chester Diocesan Conference, as reported in the *Guardian*, that out of thirty infidel lecturers known to him in his neighborhood, no less than sixteen had left the ranks and become Christians. Such a statement would be termed a barefaced falsehood if it came from the mouth of a layman. As it is, we recognise the peculiar clerical conscience which says anything for the glory of the lord and the benefit of the trade.

At the same conference Canon Smith had the audacity to declare that the infidel party was not numerically or intellectually strong. Probably the canon thinks all the modern lights of science and literature are sound Christians. The Rev. A. J. Harrison, the lecturer for the northern branch of the Christian Evidence Society, who may be expected to know a little more of the subject, read a paper before the Manchester Diocesan Conference, in which he stated that "sceptics were generally intelligent men, and that sceptical ideas spread with great rapidity through all classes. He thought that there could be no question that infidelity was largely on the increase." The Bishop of Manchester also expresses his alarm at the infidelity prevailing among the better educated classes, particularly among the younger members.

MR. F. ROWLAND YOUNG, lecturing at Reading on "The Phenomena of Modern Unbelief," declared that "multitudes of educated, honest, reverent, earnest and good-living men and women were to be found in society, who had come to relegate the supernature, the miraculous, and especially the resurrection of our lord, to what Matthew Arnold called 'the region of fairy land.' It was also now more and more believed

that prayer was irreverent, unnecessary and misleading, and that the prayer test with respect to the two separate wards in a given hospital, which it was suggested should be tried some years ago, was a fair and valid test."

WITH respect to the doctrine of eternal punishments, Mr. Young stated that it was patent to those who, having eyes and ears, would use them, that that doctrine was very seldom taught now as compared with the frequency with which it was forced upon our attention in days gone by. The late Dr. Richard Winter Hamilton, of Leeds, once said that if a Congregationalist minister was known to reject the doctrine of eternal punishments he would be instantly expelled from the body. He (Mr. Young) could only say that if such a step were taken to-day hundreds of ministers in that body must be expelled; and not in that body only, but in all the other sections of the Christian Church, save the Roman Catholic one, ministerial expulsions must take place. The forms in which the doctrine of our lord's atoning sacrifices were now held and accepted as orthodox, were in strong contrast with those forms of the same doctrine which were held even twenty-five years ago; while many who had a great respect for Christianity believed and taught that just as Judaism was superseded by Christ's religion, so Christ's religion would be superseded by something better and higher than itself.

SPEAKING at Chippenham, Alderman Fowler said, "He hoped he would discharge his duties as Lord Mayor to the glory of god and the good of his church." On this utterance the *Weekly Dispatch* has the following verses, written by G. Leslie Mackenzie:—

"The world will remember  
The month of November,  
Of eighteen and eighty and three,  
For Alderman Fowler—  
Political howler,  
Pragmatical prowler,  
And orthodox jowler—  
Said, 'God's great protector I'll be.'

'To bar the disruption  
Of civic corruption,'  
Said Fowler, 'the cat I will bell;  
And, like a true Tory,  
I'll garble the story,  
And work *con amore*  
For your and god's glory  
'Gainst Bradlaugh, Reformers and hell.'

The church and god's glory  
By this pious Tory  
Shall therefore much magnified be;  
The great Corporation  
Shall yet save the nation  
From sin and starvation  
And future damnation  
Through Alderman Fowler, M.P.

THERE have been some lively scenes in Strood, Kent, occasioned by the use of the cross, garments and processions by the Rev. J. H. Drew, vicar of St. Mary's, in opposition, it is said, to the wishes of ninety per cent. of the parishioners. At a meeting held for the purpose of restoring amity in church matters, Mr. Drew was considerably hauled over the coals, and the proceedings terminated by the turning off of the gas and the simultaneous explosion of fireworks in the room.

OUTSIDE the Congregational Chapel nearly at the top of the Bethnal Green Road, may be seen an announcement of a sermon and lecture by Thomas Cooper, commencing with these words—"Honest sceptics take notice." Could anything be more insulting to the inquiring mind? The Christians complain of Freethinkers shocking their feelings, but think little of the feelings of their opponents.

FROM the first it seems to have been made easy to do the wrong thing. The road out of Eden was MacAdamised.

CAPTAIN DYAS sends us a funny little story related of the syndic or mayor of a town in Val d'Aosta. Val d'Aosta, though in Italy (Piedmont), is inhabited by a mixed race, speaking a barbarous dialect. At the late census the syndic was ordered to send in a return of all the idiots (*crétins*) living in his commune; but the worthy magistrate must have been but a poor linguist, since he confounded the word *crétin* with *Chrétien*, and was not a little indignant that it should be supposed there were any heretics residing within its limits—Val d'Aosta being one of the most orthodox parts of Italy. He therefore wrote in his census return: "Nous sommes tous crétins ici." (We are all idiots here.) "In my humble opinion," says the captain, "he was quite right; for though I am aware that one can be a *crétin* and not a Christian, I cannot understand for the life of me how anyone can sincerely believe the dogmas of Christianity and not be a *crétin*."

## SPECIAL NOTICE.

In consequence of the great demand for the "Freethinker" of October 28th, containing the Cartoon of "Publican" Booth, which is out of print, it has been determined to issue the Cartoon separately on fine-quality paper, at the price of One Halfpenny. It is now Ready.

## DR. E. B. AVELING'S LECTURE.

Dr. Edward B. Aveling (interim editor of the *Freethinker*) will lecture on Sunday, November 18, at 7 (for the National Sunday League), at Portland Hall. Subject—"Oliver Cromwell."

## CORRESPONDENTS.

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

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.—F. Binns, C. B. B., S. J. Belchambers, J. E. Dare, G. B. Joseph Bates.

R. WELCH.—Cuttings are always useful. Newspapers should be marked.

H. G. S.—We are overwhelmed with verse. Thanks for jokes.

DAVID R. BOW.—Many thanks. Shall be glad of more.

H. S. COSE.—The Rev. W. Gilbert is the name of the chaplain of Wandsworth Gaol, who persisted in reading Christian formulæ in the ears of a dying Freethinker.

R. ROGERS.—The Positivists meet at Newton Hall, Fleur de Lis Court, Fetter Lane, where Prof. Beesley is lecturing on "Comte and the Conservatives." They have also a place of meeting in Chapel Street, Lamb's Conduit Street, W.C., where Dr. Congreve presides.

M. ROCHMANM.—Glad to have the pamphlet.

CORRESPONDENT.—An astronomer predicted that a comet would appear on Wednesday, October 14, 1712, and the world destroyed by fire on the Friday following. A number of clergymen were ferried over to Lambeth to request that proper prayers might be prepared, there being none suitable in the church service.

MR. HARTMANN'S *Freethinkers* are this week sent to Mr. Tunstall, 8 Edward Street, Spennymoor. Mr. Tunstall will be glad to supply all Freethought literature in that town and for three miles round.

J. T., STOCKTON.—We cannot advertise any works of yours. We wish to keep up the tone of our paper.

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.

At the Town Hall, Shoreditch, on Thursday, Nov. 8, Mr Fawcett addressed his constituents. On being asked a question about the blasphemy laws, he said that while of opinion that the sentence passed on Messrs. Foote and Ramsey was most unduly severe, he would not say offhand whether he would vote for the entire repeal of the blasphemy laws.

FRIENDS in South London who intend greeting Mr. W. J. Ramsey on his release from Holloway Gaol, on Saturday, November 24, can, by at once applying to Mr. Errington, 78 Webber Street, Blackfriars Road, book seats in a brake which will start (about 7.15 a.m.) from this address for Holloway Gaol, thence to the Hall of Science. The charge will be one shilling.

ON Nov. 25th, Mr. Ramsey will preside at the lectures by Mr. Symes at the Hall of Science, where we are sure he will receive the heartiest greetings from his numerous friends.

FREETHINKERS are mostly of slender purse and have many demands upon them, but we trust they will not be lacking in the matter of the testimonial to Mr. Symes. Ever since his renunciation of the Wesleyan ministry Mr. Symes has been most zealous and energetic in propagating Freethought throughout the country. All Freethinkers who wish him success in his new field of labor should make a point of contributing a trifle. Friends should 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. and Mrs. Symes will leave for Australia about the third week in December. Subscriptions to be sent to Mr. Bradlaugh, 20 Circus Road, St. John's Wood.

MR. A. B. Moss is anxious that our readers should know that "The Mirror of Freethought," advertised in our last page, consists of a number of his popular pamphlets bound together in neat form. Doubtless many who have read the pamphlets may be glad to have them in volume form.

THE South London Secularists having experienced some difficulty in obtaining a suitable hall, have started a Building Society with 1000 shares at one pound each. They expect to purchase a suitable piece of freehold land near Kennington Park. At a crowded meeting at the "Angel," Lambeth Walk, last Sunday, over 150 shares were taken up. All Freethinkers and Radicals living in the neighborhood are requested to communicate with the secretary, Mr. R. Hochfeld, 31 King Edward Street, Lambeth Road, who will send prospectus on receipt of stamped and directed envelope.

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*.

## THE CHALLENGE OF THE CHURCHES.

To the earnest and ardent Secularist, the reports of diocesan conferences and denominational congresses afford most welcome reading. At once they bear unsolicited, and therefore most gratifying, testimony to the success of our past efforts, and incite us to further conflict. To judge from their reported utterances the smug interpreters of the divine will are one and all in mortal terror that, whatever the amount standing to their credit in the heavenly treasury, their earthly incomes are in imminent peril of becoming vanishing quantities. At variance on many topics, there is yet a remarkable agreement in their recognition of the "rising tide of infidelity threatening to sweep over the land." The hysterical terror and impotent hatred with which the tide is regarded are scarcely more ludicrous than the helpless imbecility of the proposals for staying its remorseless and resistless advance. The printing and publishing of penny tracts will prove as powerful an instrument as the special prayers and revival meetings, and each is so contemptible a policy that we can afford to disregard them both.

Nevertheless, knowing the cunning with which the church's policy has been guided in past ages, and conversant with the duplicity of all her utterances, it is matter of no surprise to us to find that, unable to meet and attack us in front she seeks by a dexterous change of front to defeat us by a flank movement. Knowing only too well the hidden purport of the suggestion, and grasping only too clearly all that it implies, we commend to the earnest and thoughtful attention of the secular party the suggestion made first at the Reading Congress, and since then embodied into a resolution at divers diocesan conferences, "that the Government grant to voluntary schools be raised to such an amount as will render it possible for any efficient school to be maintained by it, together with the pence paid by the children, without any necessity for voluntary subscriptions." Put into plain English this means that the work done in voluntary schools—that is in schools in which distinctly sectarian religious teaching is given—shall be paid for at a higher rate than work done in the Board-schools, that is in schools from which all religious teaching will shortly disappear.

We trust we have made the significance of this plain to Secularists. It is a case merely of putting two and two together. Finding that it is fast losing its hold on the people's mind—its heart it never had—the church seeks to prop up its decaying power and waning influence by surreptitiously appropriating the people's money. Under this parade of "unequal competition" we detect a policy designed to strengthen the church's power, and lengthen its existence. The name of "Justice" is invoked to delude the people into an unconscious support of that which has been openly abandoned.

This, then, is the new conflict to which the church invites us. As aggressive Secularists we joyfully welcome the combat. We cordially thank the gentlemen of the

conferences for so clearly showing their hand; and knowing now what we have to fight, we enter on the struggle confident that victory will rest with us, and another damaging defeat be inflicted on that Christianity whose whole existence has been a blight and curse to humanity.

CHARON.

### "WHATEVER IS, IS RIGHT!"

"WHATEVER is, is right!" The deeds of war  
Ravage a land once peaceful, fair and bright.  
Men fight to die—brave hearts shall beat no more  
That once throbbed high with love.—"Whatever is, is right!"

A mother bends above her dying child—  
Her pride, her hope, a happy home's delight.  
"Save him, O god!" she cries in accents wild.  
God lifts no hand to save.—"Whatever is, is right!"

A cloud hangs hovering o'er the sunny south,  
Darkness comes down—deeper than blackest night;  
Earth yawns, and swallows in her mighty mouth  
Thousands of human forms.—"Whatever is, is right!"

A monarch sits upon his jewelled throne.  
Who is yon slave who shudders at his sight?  
He strove to make the love of freedom known—  
"Off with the rebel's head!"—"Whatever is, is right!"

The rich man lounges on his costly seat,  
And careless sees the signs of wealthy might;  
And starving 'neath his window, in the street  
The poor lie down to die!—"Whatever is, is right!"

Bearing a hundred men and women brave—  
Who leave their own land for a clime more bright—  
The mighty ship goes down into the wave  
With all her precious freight!—"Whatever is, is right!"

Did he who spoke the words—the poet great,  
Whose every sentence shines in living light—  
Did he, for ever striving with his fate,  
Believe his own wild lie?—"Whatever is, is right!"

Not till the king is gone, the slave is free;  
Not till man learns to conquer nature's might;  
Not till his genius shall control the sea,  
Nor then can it be said—"Whatever is, is right!"

Not till the thought of god shall be no more;  
Not till man's mind accepts truth's radiant light;  
Not till man sees there is no need of war,  
Not till *then* can man say—"Whatever is, is right!"

FRANK E. HIGGINS.

### SUNDAY LECTURE SOCIETY.

On Sunday, November 4, Professor W. A. Hunter lectured at St. George's Hall, Langham Place, W., on "Blasphemy." The lecturer commenced by stating that five years ago no one would have supposed that any person in this country would have been sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment for being the author of a "blasphemous book," any more than that a heretic would be burned at the stake. Such an occurrence had, however, taken place, and the question had consequently arisen, as to whether the time had not arrived for the abolition of the laws under which such a thing was possible. After describing the various statutes which had been passed from time to time, and the common law on the subject, Professor Hunter proceeded to contend that they were not at all consistent with the free and unfettered discussion, to which every person should have the right, of the momentous questions opened up by the Christian or any other religion. He said that if a man attempted to refute the established truths of science—to say that the laws of gravitation were a chimera, or that the earth was as flat as a pancake, he was only smiled at, and was not subjected to intolerance and persecution. In religious matters, however, a very different state of things prevailed, and yet Christianity depended upon a series of events which were alleged to have happened nearly 2,000 years ago. He asked what sort of verdicts would most likely be given if a Roman Catholic were tried by Orangemen, an Orangeman by Roman Catholics, a bishop by Freethinkers, or Freethinkers by a dozen bishops? It had been said that recent prosecutions had been only to ensure decency of controversy; but he maintained that that object would be best accomplished by leaving the matter to the good sense of the public. His idea was that the publication of the paper in question was calculated to do Freethought more harm than good, as the way to induce Christians to listen to arguments against their belief was by being conciliatory, and not by abusing them. The prosecution of the editor had, however, done much for the Freethought cause, as he had been converted into a martyr, and would, on his forthcoming

discharge from prison, cause the largest halls in the country to be filled by people anxious to hear him, who would not but for the prosecution have attended.

## CORRESPONDENCE.

### FREETHINKERS AND HOSPITALS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

DEAR SIR,—As a specimen of (to me) the latest phase of Christian religious impertinence, I send you the enclosed official paper, given to me at the Middlesex Hospital under circumstances stated in my letter of reply, a copy of which I herewith send you, to use as you think fit; and should there be any further correspondence in the matter, I will also communicate it to you. While writing on this subject, I may say that I consider it high time that Freethinkers made themselves heard within our public hospitals in the form of governors; or for party purposes so much as the object of introducing, gradually, humane reforms for the benefit of suffering humanity, and to some extent keeping Christian cant at bay. In furtherance of this, allow me to suggest a fund, to which I promise £1 ls., to enable competent men of our party to undertake this work. The subscription for life governorship is about £21.—I remain, faithfully yours,  
October 6, 1883. CHARLES W. AUSTIN.

[The printed notice enclosed states that George Austin, being discharged from the Middlesex Hospital, desires to return humble and hearty thanks to almighty god for the benefits received there. It then gives some scriptural texts with the note "N.B."—It is expected you will take this paper and deliver it to the clerk of some place of worship on Sunday next, to offer up your thanks for your recovery or for the relief afforded you.]

"Sir,—On Monday last one of my children, George Austin, aged eight, while returning from school, met with the misfortune of being run over by a horse and carriage. In the excitement of the moment, he was taken without my knowledge to the Middlesex Hospital—I say without my knowledge, because I have an aversion to hospitals as at present governed—and had I known of the accident at the time it occurred, I should have had him brought home, especially as I am in a position to pay for any medical aid my family may require.

He remained in the hospital about forty-eight hours, when, learning for certain that he was in no way seriously hurt, I brought him home. When leaving the hospital a paper was put into my hands—which appears to be the general rule on such occasions—requesting that I should attend some place of worship to thank almighty god for his recovery, etc. Before I attempt to criticise this piece of sacerdotal cant and impertinence, permit me to express my gratitude to the doctors or anyone else who may have rendered me any real service in this matter. But I am sorry to find such an institution as the Middlesex Hospital prostituting itself to the interests of a tottering creed, whose wars of bloodshed have caused more broken limbs than all the hospitals of London, a hundredfold, would ever cure, however much they may be supported by the benevolence of civilisation, or aided by the true redeemer of mankind—science. Indeed, Christianity must be on its last legs when, to keep it going, it has to be thrust down people's throats in this manner. Perhaps you may think me rather harsh in my reply, but then I must remind you that to comply with this request I should make myself one of the veriest of hypocrites, which I have no ambition to do; or I must pass the matter over in silence, which I do not choose to do; but shall prefer to treat it as it deserves, and make what capital I can out of such a piece of religious humbug. You need not think that I am poorly informed concerning divinity. In fact, I know quite as much about god as does your chaplain or any other sane person, and that is—nothing at all. What they fancy they believe is quite another matter. I can assure you that Christian charity is not appreciated by the deserving poor. Really, it has become a byword among men, and is frequently used as an illustration of keen temperature, *i.e.*, 'As cold as charity.' If there was any true benevolence in Christian charity it would not condescend to the mean practice I have objected to. It is, however, refreshing to remember that it is reserved for agnostics and atheists possessed of true secular generosity, to convert our public hospitals into homes of genuine benevolence for the afflicted poor, untrammelled by any proselytising influences. As an illustration of Christian kindness, allow me to point out that they consider four out of 168 hours sufficient time for patients' friends to see their afflicted loved ones. Shame!

"I should like to subscribe to the Middlesex Hospital. Please send me a report so that I may study to what extent I can remit, compatible with a voice in its government. I enclose my card, and remain, your obedient servant,

"C. W. AUSTIN.

"To the Secretary, Middlesex Hospital, October 6, 1883."

## REVIEW.

*The Agnostic Annual*, 1884. London: H. Cattell, and Co., 84 Fleet Street.

It was rather a curious proceeding on the part of the President of the Secular Union which declares among its principles that its attitude "in reference to the many existing phases of religious supernaturalism is that of Agnosticism" to write to various well-known individuals inquiring their views as to what Agnosticism is, and "whether it is destined to supplant religious supernaturalism." But the result is that instead of having a "British Secular Almanack" we have an "Agnostic Annual," with short letters on Agnosticism from various celebrities. Of these the most noticeable is that of Professor Huxley, who claims the invention of the word. He says:

"Agnosticism is of the essence of science, whether ancient or modern. It simply means that a man shall not say that he knows or believes that which he has no scientific grounds for professing to know or believe.

"I have no doubt that scientific criticism will prove destructive to the forms of supernaturalism which enter into the constitution of existing religions. On trial of any so-called miracle the verdict of science is 'Not proven.' But true Agnosticism will not forget that existence, motion, and law-abiding operation in nature are more stupendous miracles than any recounted by the mythologies, and that there may be things, not only in the heavens and earth, but beyond the intelligible universe, which 'are not dreamt of in our philosophy.' The theological 'gnosis' would have us believe that the world is a conjuror's house; the anti-theological 'gnosis' talks as if it were a 'dirt-pie,' made by the two blind children Law, and Force. Agnosticism simply says that we know nothing of what may be beyond phenomena."

Various papers from the contributors to the *Secular Review* help to make up the annual.

## ESSAYS AFTER BACON.

## V.—ON PROGRESS.

It may be that that which is settled and established by custom, even though it be not good, yet at least it is fit; and those things which have gone long together are, as it were, confederate within themselves, whereas new things piece not so well together, for though they help by their utility, yet they may trouble in some sort by their inconformity. Now all this were most true if time stood still, which, however, contrariwise moveth so round and about that a too rigid observance of custom may become as turbulent a thing as an innovation itself, and those who would adhere to old customs may become in their turn the reactionaries or radical agitators after change and attraction of conventional institutions. It is most true, be it observed in this connexion, therefore, that all change or innovation is not necessarily progress or improvement, but sometimes, indeed, retrogression and changing for the worse—or jumping from the pan into the fire. As the scripture saith (even the Devil may quote scripture for his own purpose, so may even I)—but as the scripture saith, it is meet "That we make a stand upon the ancient way, and then look about us, and discover what is the straight and right way, and so to walk in it." The Freethinkers of the past have done this—they looked about them for a straight and right way wherein to walk, and discovered that no man would find out that straight and right way for himself until his mind was unfettered from the bondage of superstition and religious bigotry; they strove for the right to pursue their way in their own paths of freethought and progress without that fear of penalty and pains which the Churches had imposed on heresy, and which the Churches still seek to impose; and so must we, the Freethinkers of the present, who enjoy in some part the extended liberties for which our forerunners strove, still take our stand, not on the ancient path, but on the more modern one of to-day, and look about us for the straight and right way in which to make our progress. But the question of what is progress is indeed not difficult to answer. For is it not a step in advance to induce those to think who previously accepted without inquiring the creeds of the priests; to bring into the fold of thinkers those who had erstwhile been "as swine that wallow in the shambles of faith and of fear"? And is it not progress to confound those rulers who have but held the world in a tether, and to help in bringing about that time when, as a poet has written, "The priests are scattered like chaff, and the rulers broken like reeds"? H. J. BECKWITH.

PROFESSOR TYNDALL says that men and women existed on the earth fifty millions of years before Adam and Eve. The fig-tree is evidently only an innovation after all, and they had sweet things in aprons long before (or short before) the Eden trip.

## PROFANE JOKES.

WHAT noted individual in the bible should have been a balloonist?—Aaron ought.

HE was a parish clerk, and rather short of breath, but he always manfully read the lessons. So there was every excuse for him when the first chapter of the gospel according to St. Matthew fell to his lot, and after announcing that "Abraham begat Isaac, and Isaac begat Jacob, and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren," he added, "and so they go on begetting one another till the sixteenth verse."

ANOTHER parson we know, who used to take his gin and bitters between whiles, told his congregation that "he wash going to preach a(hic)boutsh itsh being eshler for a camel to go through the *knee of an idol* than for rish man," etc.

A HIGH churchman owned some house property. He was likewise a stout Tory. A Radical dissenting mechanic humbly applied for one of these tenements. Vain hope! "You are a Radical, I believe, sir," said the churchman, scarcely able to contain his rage. "Yes, sir." "And—and—a dissenter?" "Yes, sir." "Do you know, sir, who was the first dissenter?" "I can't say exactly as I does." "Then I will tell you, it was the Devil, sir, it was the Devil."

A CHURCH in America lost their pastor, who was noted for being very "powerful in prayer"; and in trying a number of applicants for the vacant berth, the deacons determined that power and length of prayers should decide the toss. Several had a go at it, but did not hold out as long as the old one did; but at length the *sine qua non* leaked out. The next man put his watch in front of him, and spun away for a long time. After going the whole round of the sick and the well, the sinners and the saved, all conditions of men and women, the whole of the kings, emperors, royal families and parliaments of the world, he found he was still a minute short of his predecessors; but, as he halted in despair, a happy thought struck him, and he continued with, "and now, lord, I will tell thee an anecdote." He got the billet.

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Printed and Published by Edward B. Aveling, D.Sc., for the Pro-  
gressive Publishing Company, at 28 Stonecutter Street,  
Farringdon Street, London, E.C.