

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. IV.—No. 8.]

FEBRUARY 24, 1884.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]

MR. FOOTE'S RELEASE.

WE hope to see as large a gathering as possible both at Holloway Gaol and at the breakfast to Mr. Foote on the morning of Monday, February 25th.

According to the prison arrangements, we believe that Mr. Foote will be liberated soon after 8 o'clock in the morning. Brakes will start from nearly all the London Secular and Radical Societies to Holloway. Mr. Foote will proceed to the Hall of Science, where a breakfast will be provided. Tickets, price 2s. each, can be had from R. O. Smith at the Hall of Science.

A banquet will be held, and the testimonial presented to Messrs. Foote and Ramsey on Wednesday, March 12, Mr. Bradlaugh in the chair.

Mr. Foote will lecture at the Hall of Science on Wednesday, Feb. 27 (two days after his release), on "Modern Martyrdom; or, Twelve Months in a Christian Gaol." Mr. Bradlaugh will preside.

TO THE READERS OF THE FREETHINKER.

ON Monday, March 5, 1883, the three latest martyrs for Freethought were sentenced to three, nine and twelve months' imprisonment respectively. The name of the judge, Justice North, who sentenced them will go down to posterity in company with that of Jeffries. It will be said of him that he only failed to rival the infamy of the latter from want of opportunity and ability. From Sunday, March 18, 1883, up to the present issue, the *Freethinker* has been under my direction. To be able to take my part in the fight by editing the paper attacked has been a pride to me. No one is more conscious than I of the shortcomings in the work. But I hope, I believe, that they are forgiven in view of the difficulty of the situation, and will be forgotten in the joy that comes on Monday next, when the founder and editor of this paper, the man who has suffered most for its sake, is in our midst once more. In our delight at his release, we shall bear in mind with gratitude and with grief all that our brave friends, W. J. Ramsey and H. A. Kemp, suffered. The Freethought world, under all skies, hails these three as its chiefest martyrs to-day.

The martyrs will be champions. Each that has been thus evilly-entreated by the representatives of the accursed creed will, after this silent breathing-space in prison, attack Christianity with renewed and embittered vigor. We also, writers and readers of the *Freethinker*, lovers of the great cause, will fight the more strenuously for their torture. The warfare will be more bitter than of old. We can never forget that the creed we attack is answerable for this last phase of persecution as for the imprisonments, the rackings, the burnings of hundreds and thousands of men, women, and children in past centuries. If at times, during these last twelve months we have fought sad at heart, and our eyes dimmed with tears, the battle has, at least, not been stayed. And now that our men are free, there will be

no more tears, save for joy that we have them with us once again, and every brain will be the keener, every blow we strike the more powerful as we think of what they have borne for us.

The believers in the horrible creed of Christianity tell us that they love the founder of their religion in that he suffered and died for them. As long as they name him god, there is nothing either creditable or lovable in his sacrifice for them. But our friends, with only their human strength to sustain them, have borne so much for us. They have died, as far as certain dead months of their lives have been concerned, for us. The three, the nine, the twelve months have been as a part taken out of the life of each. Let us remember! Then we shall strive by our affection to them, by our sympathy with them, our encouragement of them in their work to make some amends for that dead time through which they have passed for us and for Freethought.

To the friends of the *Freethinker* who have supported it so nobly during the absence of its chief I offer in my own name and in his, for the last time, my heartfelt thanks. To the writers who have, without any recompense whatever, save the knowledge of good deeds done, helped me during this past year, also my deepest gratitude. To the Committee (Mrs. Besant, Messrs. Herbert, Hilditch, Grout, Standing, and R. O. Smith), and, let me say, to the printer of this journal my thanks are also due. And to my friend J. M. Wheeler, who, during the last few weeks, has taken from my shoulders much of the work that I had to bear at first without his invaluable help, I can say no words that are sufficiently worthy.

As Interim Editor, dear friends, good-bye. All good go with you and with the *Freethinker*.

EDWARD B. AVELING.

NEW TESTAMENT FRAUDS.

It would take far greater space than can be afforded for an article in the *Freethinker* did we attempt to point out all the spurious passages and other marks of corruption which are to be found between the covers of what Christians believe to be the revealed word of god. We shall therefore confine ourselves to a few points which bear directly upon important Christian dogmas.

Let it be noted at the outset that the usual title-page, "Translated out of the original tongues," itself conveys a falsity. The translators of the authorised version knew no more of the originals than those of the revised version. All the evidence of the fathers shows that Matthew's gospel was written in Hebrew, yet our version is translated from the Greek. The early Christians took such precious care of their sacred books that no manuscripts are known of earlier date than the fourth century, and these of so unreliable a character that an edition from any one manuscript would considerably astonish readers of the authorised version.

Most notable among the texts which are known to have been interpolated is the celebrated passage of the three witnesses (1 John v., 7-8): "For there are three that bear record [in heaven, the father, the word, and the holy ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth], the spirit, the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one." This audacious Trinitarian forgery is omitted without any marginal reference in the

revised version. The words enclosed in brackets are allowed to be spurious by every scholar of note. They do not appear in any Greek manuscript earlier than the fifteenth century, nor in any Latin manuscript earlier than the ninth century. It is not cited by any of the Greek ecclesiastical writers, though, to prove the doctrine of the trinity, they have quoted the words both before and after this text, which was first cited by Vigilius Tapsensis, a Latin writer of no credit in the latter end of the fifth century, and by him it is supposed to have been forged. The Rev. T. S. Green, M.A., an orthodox authority, says in his "Developed Criticism on the Text of the New Testament," p. 184: "It is not too much to say that if a critic could be supposed to be debarred from all documentary evidence on either side in the present case, except those few MSS. which exhibit the verse and the only version which has it—namely, the common text of the Vulgate, the circumstances which even thus would come under his notice would form a sufficient ground for its condemnation as a spurious accretion." Porson, who may be asserted to have for ever settled the question of the unauthenticity of this passage, in his "Letters to Dr. Travis," observes that: "If, in spite of all these objections, it be still genuine, no part of scripture can be proved either spurious or genuine." Yet nothing is more common than to hear bible-bangers adduce this passage in proof that god consists of three persons.

"And without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness [god] was manifest in the flesh" (1 Timothy iii., 16), is a passage which was more easily forged for the same purpose, the forgery consisting simply of the substitution of *Theos* for *os*. The revised version reads, "*He who*" was manifest in the flesh, and states in the margin, "The word *God* in place of *He who*, rests on no sufficient ancient evidence. Some ancient authorities read *which*." It should be noted, as showing the uncertainty of patristic evidence, that the commentary of Chrysostom, which in this passage reads *Theos*, has certainly also been tampered with.

Another passage manipulated by the supporters of the divinity of Jesus was Acts xx., 28: "To feed the church of *god*, which he hath purchased with his own blood." Giving blood to a spirit was a small matter to the worthies who touched up our Testament. The larger number of authorities read *the lord*, and if the present reading had been in existence at the time of the disputes between the Arians and the Trinitarians, its employment as a dogmatic weapon ought to be of no infrequent occurrence in the writings of that age; whereas, the contrary is the case.

We will only instance one other spurious passage, and this of considerably more importance than those above-mentioned, inasmuch as it consists of an entire paragraph, calculated to serve the purposes of the early Church. We allude, of course, to the ending of Mark's gospel, chapter xiv., 9-20. This is given in a detached form in the revised version with the marginal remark: "The two oldest Greek manuscripts, and some authorities omit from verse 9 to the end. Some other authorities have a different ending to the gospel." Eusebius in the fourth century said that the accurate copies close with the eighth verse, and Jerome affirms that the paragraph is wanting in nearly all the Greek MSS. If this was so in his time, it is not so now, for the greater number of old manuscripts prove their own untrustworthiness by containing it. A critical examination of the passage has shown many respects in which the Greek of these verses differs from the rest of Mark. One point which the general reader will observe is the odd appending of the words, "out of whom he had cast seven devils," to the mention of Mary Magdalene, who had been mentioned three times just before without any such addition.

It should be noted that, rejecting these verses, Mark omits both the miraculous birth and the ascension of Jesus. The interpolation was evidently introduced into some copies at an early period, for Irenæus, in the latter part of the second century, cites the nineteenth verse. This bears out the noteworthy remark of Dr. Scrivener, that "the worst corruptions to which the New Testament has been subjected originated within a hundred years after it was composed"—a statement confirmed by the equally high authority of Dr. Constantine Tischendorf, who observes, in his introduction to the Tauchnitz edition of the New Testament: "I have no doubt that very shortly after the books of the New Testament were written, and before they were protected by

the authority of the Church, many arbitrary alterations and additions were made in them." It follows, since the earliest manuscripts do not date before the fourth century—and these are almost as untrustworthy as the later ones, that we are without any sufficient guarantee for any portion of the New Testament.

J. M. WHEELER.

SAINTS AND SINNERS.—IV.

SAINT ISAAC.

WHEN we parted company with Abraham in our last chapter, the old gentleman was still in the land of the living. He had just given evidence of his extreme wickedness and great faith by an expressed willingness to murder his own child to satisfy the cruel caprice of a barbarous deity. Only one further important deed remains to be recorded respecting father Abraham before concluding this brief account of his career. He could not die comfortably without first taking steps to ensure the marriage of his son, "Saint Isaac," with a woman of his own country, for if there was one thing more than another upon which Abraham had made a strong resolution, it was that his dear boy should not become attached to any "of the daughters of the Canaanites." Consequently before giving up the ghost, Abraham despatched a servant off with young Isaac into the city of Nahor, with special instructions to introduce him to the daughter of some good man with a view to matrimony. Faithfully the servant carried out his master's instructions, and soon we find the youthful Jewish saint wooing Rebekah, daughter of Bethuel, by the side of a well.

Getting an introduction to his sweetheart's brother, Laban, Isaac soon found himself comfortably lodged in Bethuel's house, and the courtship—Rebekah being fair, and Isaac being simple—proceeded as merrily as a marriage-bell; the servant enlivening the proceedings by explaining in narrative form the reason of his mission.

When an engagement between Isaac and the fair damsel had been fully agreed upon, and solemnly sworn to—as there was no law providing for breach of promise in those days—Abraham's servant, accompanied by Isaac, Rebekah and her nurse, returned homewards—Isaac arriving, it would seem, not only in time to celebrate his own marriage, but to congratulate his father on his second matrimonial venture, and embrace his new mother Keturah.

Soon after this we are assured that Abraham "gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years; and was gathered to his people" (Genesis xxv., 8).

For some little time after his marriage, Isaac was not blessed with children, but when at last the young ones came they made their appearance rapidly enough. Jacob followed Esau in rapid succession, helping himself into the world by the assistance of Esau's heel. And perhaps it will be convenient while I am recording the virtues of Isaac to treat also of the lives and characters of "Saint Jacob," and the Sinner Esau, his sons, with whose history Isaac's is inextricably bound up.

Now Jacob and Esau were born to Rebekah, who had been barren for nineteen years, on account of Jacob's frequent wrestling with the lord in prayer, and before the youngsters were born, the lord, who is no respecter of persons, decreed that "the elder should serve the younger" (Genesis xxv., 23).

When the boys had grown, Esau developed into "a cunning hunter, a man of the field;" but "Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in tents."

Isaac, it appears, took a liking to Esau, but apparently for a very peculiar reason, which was, as we are informed, "because he did eat of his venison;" but Rebekah loved Jacob, and as no reason is assigned for her loving the younger better than the elder boy, we must suppose that she did so because Isaac showed a partiality for his son and heir—or rather, his hairy son—Esau, if we may say so without vulgarity.

One day Esau had been working laboriously at his occupation, and came fainting from the fields. Meeting his brother, he besought of him to feed him with pottage, lest he die. Jacob, taking a mean advantage of his brother's critical condition, entered into a one-sided bargain with him, by which he induced him to sell his birthright for a mess of pottage.

* "A Plain Introduction to the Criticism of the New Testament," p. 511; 1883.

But the lord loved Jacob, and no doubt admired this, his first great commercial speculation; but any ordinary sinner would regard it as a cruel, mean, and contemptible trick, deserving of the severest condemnation.

On account of a famine being in the land presided over by the all-wise god, Isaac took his departure to Gerar; and here occurred a faithful imitation of his father's conduct towards Pharaoh. Seeing that Rebekah was still a fair damsel of only sixty summers, Isaac piously informed the "men of the place" that she was his sister. Whereupon Abimelech, King of the Philistines, was immediately infatuated by her, and sought to excite her tender affections towards himself.

Looking out of a window, to his amazement, Abimelech beheld Isaac "sporting with Rebekah," and being a 'cute monarch, he reasoned within himself in the following strain: "This cannot be his [Isaac's] sister; if it were he never would sport about with her in that fashion; now if it were his country cousin, or his young wife, I could understand such conduct; but to say it is his sister will not do at all."

So Abimelech called to Isaac, and made him acknowledge the falseness of his statement, and very properly censured him for exposing Rebekah and the amorous young men of the city, to such strong temptations. As for the lord, he had no word of blame for Saint Isaac, but blessed and prospered him in all his undertakings.

At the age of forty Esau took unto himself, for comfort's sake, a couple of wives. But these ladies were the cause of great grief of mind to Isaac by their mother-in-law Rebekah, who, doubtless, objected to her son rushing into matrimony at such an early age, and just, perhaps, when his earnings were a very appreciable augmentation of the family income.

But now Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim, and he felt the unwelcome approach of the reaper Death. Calling his eldest son to him, he bade him "take his bow, and go into the field and take some venison," and make some savory meat, such as he loved, that he might bless him before he died.

Rebekah, hearing Isaac's command, secretly informed Jacob, with whose aid she ingeniously devised a scheme to deceive her dying husband. What saintly conduct! How unlike the ordinary everyday mother and wife!

Rebekah bade Jacob go to the flock, procure two kids of goats, and from these she resolved to make "savory meat," such as her husband loved. This, however, did not complete her plan. Jacob was to take the meat to his father, and, having prepared himself by covering his neck and hands with the goat-skins, declare that he was Esau, the firstborn, and thus, by a trick, get the blessing—whatever that was worth—intended for his brother.

With a lie upon his lips, Jacob stole into the presence of his blind old father before Esau had returned from hunting; and declaring that he was his "very son, Esau," procured the much-needed blessing, and departed, being too much of a coward to face his brother and boldly tell him what he had done.

When Esau returned he hurriedly converted the venison into "savory meat," and brought it to his father, and when his dying parent told him that some cunning person had been, and, representing himself as Esau, had procured the blessing, Esau fell on his knees and cried with a bitter cry: "Bless me, even me, O my father."

In all this the lord was with Jacob, and prospered him and blessed him, but methinks that honest folks would sooner be despised and rejected with Esau, than prospered and blessed with Jacob.

On hearing from his father it was Jacob who had defrauded him out of his blessing, Esau shrewdly remarked: "Is he not rightly named Jacob?—which in Hebrew means deceiver—for," said he, "he has supplanted me these two times; he took away my birthright, and behold now he has taken away my blessing."

Any ordinary father would have revoked a blessing fraudulently obtained, and pronounced a fresh one upon the head of him to whom it was due, but Saint Isaac stolidly refused to bless him. He told him that he had made Jacob lord over Esau, and made all his brethren his servants. Smarting under this cruel injustice, Esau rose and departed from his father's presence, swearing eternal hatred and speedy vengeance upon his brother's head.

Warned by his mother that Esau intended to kill him, Jacob fled and made his way to Padan-aram; and as it is necessary to give some account, however brief, of this journey and the events that occurred on the road, and what Jacob

did on arriving at his destination, we take leave of this ancient saint for awhile in the midst of his walking tour, and propose to catch him on the journey in the next chapter.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

WHY SHOULD I BE DAMNED?

(Concluded from page 52.)

THE doctrine of eternal damnation depicts not only the cruelty, but the folly of the regulation god of Christianity, the good, old-fashioned, hell-fire deity, who is trotted out for Sunday exercise in all the temples of superstition, which are consecrated to the anti-secular uses of our modern survivals of mediæval devil-worship. The doctrine begins by exhibiting the deity as evil and desperately wicked, and ends by proving him to be desperately absurd. For, in the first place, it is admitted that this fire-and-brimstone-loving god permits the roaring lion of human wickedness to go roaming about unmuzzled up and down the world seeking whomsoever he may devour; that he leaves crime generally, if not always, unpunished here below, though the awful spectacle of the divine retribution, following promptly on the footsteps of evil, would doubtless have a magical effect in deterring mankind from walking in the delusively-pleasant paths of sin; and that he defers the day of the divine wrath and of the sinner's mourning till an unspecified date, on which the affairs of humanity are to be wound up in the final dissolution of all things excepting heaven and hell and the equally miserable denizens of both localities. In the second place, god, some time about this mysterious date, is to perform a universal miracle of unprecedented magnitude; that is to say, in the twinkling of an eye he is to raise from the dead the bodies of all the living of all the ages of men that have acted a part, however great or insignificant, upon the stage of this world, in order to pronounce eternal doom, for weal or woe, upon them. In the third place, god will hurl the wicked into hell, and torment them for ever and ever. Their condition will be one of everlasting despair; no hope of the relaxation, much less of the relinquishment, of their tortures will ever gleam in upon their gloomy minds; no possibility of self-purification from the former moral uncleanness; not even the satisfaction of knowing the sufferings they endure will serve in any degree to undo their past wrongs which they are now expiating; but only the awful thought for ever haunting their minds that god exults over their shrieks and agonies; that, amidst the psalm-singing of his saints in glory—whose glory these poor wretches will witness, whilst their woes will be witnessed by the joyous throng of the sycophantic courtiers of heaven—the god of all mercy and goodness is looking down with un pitying eye upon his agonised victims, whom he torments with no object or to no purpose save that of inflicting misery. Thus, judged by the criterion of utility, the damnation of mankind is a piece of criminal folly. It presents to us a god who performs useless but mighty miracles, which procure results most infinitesimal from the moral point of view. For the fires of hell will not purify the world, because when damnation shall begin the world will be swept away into oblivion; nor will they remedy one of the present or past wrongs of humanity. Hell is a senseless institution; it cannot reform the damned, and is useless either to reform or to restrain the saved; it deters from nothing bad, it encourages nothing good. The brand of absurdity is thus writ bold and large upon this hideous doctrine, which embodies the sum of all that is vindictive and villainous. The doctrine of hell and its revengeful deity are consequently morally indefensible and intellectually contemptible, for wickedness and absurdity are their chief characteristics.

As a being susceptible of pain and pleasure, I have the right to demand of god (if there be one) that, if after death he would have me live again for ever, he should let me put on an immortality not of misery, but of joy, or give me a reasonable mixture of both. If I am unworthy of eternal joy, I am not deserving of eternal woe. If I may not receive an immortality of happiness, and can only live again in undying misery, be it mine to slumber for ever on the bed of annihilation. To revive my cold ashes for the purpose of eternally tormenting me, is mean and cowardly cruelty. If god is unwilling to do good to me, how paltry of him to do me an eternal and unnecessary injury! Fill to the brim the cup of my wickedness, the crimes, however numerous, of my short life, cannot merit that. On their

account I should be for ever racked in hell by a vindictive god, who would awaken me from the sound sleep of death for the sole purpose of wreaking eternal spite upon me. Why should I be damned to no useful purpose, either to myself nor to humanity, and only to satisfy god's greedy thirst for my misery?

WILLIAM HEAFORD.

ACID DROPS.

LAST Sunday, being Hospital Sunday in Manchester, the Bishop of that city preached a sermon at Christ Church, Salford, one part of which was characterised by equal impudence and ignorance. He said when one was asked what services Christianity had rendered the world, he would point to hospitals. "They were unknown before the Christian era; no heathen potentate, no heathen state ever thought of setting up hospitals." This is a specimen of the reckless assertions current among Christians, despite the fact that rock inscriptions in India prove that the great Buddhist potentate, Asoka, erected hospitals both for men and for animals in the third century before the Christian era. There were even in Egypt public dispensaries long prior to that.

If it be said Christianity introduced hospitals into the Roman world, the answer is, this was not before the fourth century. In the palmy days of Rome there was something better than hospitals—public baths, to provide for the health of the people by the prevention of disease. It was long before Christians copied that; indeed, it may be said that Christianity, with its contempt for the human body, has done more to foster disease than to prevent it.

BISHOP FRASER remarks that "the gifts of healing were named by the apostle Saint James as among the choicest gifts of the spirit." He forgot to add that Saint James (who the early Christian father, Hegesippus, expressly informs us "never took a bath") gives directions what to do in the case of sickness—"Let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the lord. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick" (chap. v., 14-15). For believing in, and acting up to, these simple directions, numerous "peculiar people" have been imprisoned and subject to other penalties for manslaughter.

ANOTHER instance of the Bishop's "cheek" is his mentioning anæsthetics as "part of those gifts of healing which Christ had bestowed upon the world," thus ascribing to Jesus what is really to the credit of such men as Sir James Young Simpson. The gifts Christ spoke of were plain enough. He is reported to have said: "These signs shall follow them that believe. They shall speak with tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover" (Mark xvi., 18). When have these results ever ensued? Either there must be no believers nowadays, or if these predictions were really made, they were certainly made by a mistaken and not by a divine being.

LET it be remembered that such anæsthetics as chloroform were strongly denounced by ministers and others upon their first introduction as an attempt to set aside the pain which the deity had imposed on child-birth, etc.

A WRITER in the *Christian World*, on the subject of "Methodism and Dogma," who tries to make out that the Methodists are getting enlightened, states that every candidate for the Methodist ministry has to declare his adhesion to the belief in a material hell with material fire. Yet he affirms that hundreds to-day have renounced that dogma. What hypocrites they must be, then, to profess belief in a doctrine they have outgrown!

DURING the present month two inquests have been held in Cork Gaol on the bodies of two youths who were tortured to death on Sir R. Cross' plank bed. One was a youth of 20, who was sentenced under the "Crimes" Act to eighteen months' imprisonment for posting an agrarian placard. In the other case the surgeon of the gaol stated that a month before the inquest the victim was "a fine, smart fellow." Our friends have been spared this infliction, but it has been thanks to the humanity of the doctor, and not to their Christian judge and persecutors.

DESPITE their frequent refutation, tales of the recantation of the author of the "Age of Reason" form a part of the stock-in-trade of the clerical opponents of Free thought. The *Truthseeker* of Feb. 2 contains a letter from H. Willis, an old man of eighty-four, who was well acquainted with Paine's contemporaries. He says of Paine's death-bed:—"When Elias and Willett Hicks called to see him on the day he died, Elias said: 'Thomas, had thee not better say that thee might

have been mistaken in thy opinion as to the divinity of Jesus, and by this retraction disarm thy enemies who may slander thy character?' He extended his hand, and said: 'Dear friends, I have nothing to retract. I have endeavored to do my duty to humanity and my adopted country.' Willett Hicks told this in my hearing in 1831 in Philadelphia." It will be remembered that Mary Hinsdale, a servant of Mr. Willett Hicks, was the originator of the lie which was long ago nailed down by William Cobbett, who saw the woman and exposed her shuffling evasion and falsehood. Christian lies have a power of resurrection and of showing themselves, far exceeding that attributed the Christian savior.

AN esteemed Cowes correspondent corroborates the statement in regard to the Rev. J. D. Middleton in last week's "Acid Drops," and further assures us that this is the second clergyman found guilty of this abominable crime in the Isle of Wight, the other being a vicar of Godshill, the Rev. — Pound.

Two Somersetshire sky-pilots have become bankrupt. One the Rev. F. C. Skey, vicar of Weare, whose living, according to the Clergy List is worth £502 per annum in addition to a rent-free parsonage. The other is the Rev. J. J. Knox Fletcher, of Brockley. His living is only worth £150 per annum, with rent-free parsonage, but the population of his parish is only ninety-eight. He offers his creditors 2s. 6d. in the pound.

THE Rev. James Sutherland, of the Free Church, Turriff, Aberdeenshire, has been making a stir in the north by lecturing on the Antiquity of Man, in a manner which Mr. Watt, a solicitor, also of the Free Church, describes as a direct attack upon the inspiration of scripture. Mr. Sutherland was frank enough to admit that "it is impossible to reconcile the statements of the Mosaic Genesis with what we know from our reading of the book of nature; and the attempted reconciliations on the part of theologians always end in disaster and soon pass into oblivion." Mr. Sutherland contends that the bible is only inspired to teach what we could not otherwise know. If so, we suppose we must accept its inspiration in regard to the making of worlds from nothing and woman from man's rib, for certainly we could not otherwise learn of such wondrous facts as these.

"HELEN WILMANS," says the *Winsted Press* "has discovered a use for ministers. She would send them to the Fiji islanders." "Make them sleek and fat," she says, "on the good things of this world before they go, and when there they may serve a better purpose than they ever served here, by successfully administering to appetites that are not imaginary." But who will take the job of fattening the raw-boned and dyspeptic country parsons of New England? Helen, the days of miracles are past. It can't be done.

THE POST-OFFICE AND THE PROSECUTION.

I HAVE received the following in answer to my letter to the Postmaster-General, respecting the postman's evidence:

General Post Office, February 14.

"Dear Sir,—In reply to your further letter, the Postmaster-General fears that you have not correctly apprehended the nature of the irregular proceeding for which Alford has been cautioned. He desires me to say that the caution was given him, not as you seem to suppose, for making a deliberate misstatement, but because, without the direction of his superior officer in the post-office, at the suggestion of the police-officer, he made a memorandum of the delivery of Mr. Foote's letters.

"Mr. Fawcett does not see any ground for a prosecution for perjury against Alford, but if you are otherwise advised it is of course open to you to take such proceedings.—I am, dear sir, yours faithfully,
F. J. DAYHAST."

Are we to understand from this that Mr. Fawcett is anxious to have it understood that he does not consider it reprehensible to commit perjury against a Freethinker? He "sees no grounds" for prosecuting the man for perjury, and yet is himself the one who accuses the man of so doing. If the Postmaster-General's first letter be true, then the man has committed perjury. If there are "no grounds" for prosecuting him, then the Postmaster-General's first letter is not true.

The matter is a public one—the postman is a Government servant; so is the postmaster, by whom he swore he was instructed. If he lied in the witness-box, then surely it is the duty of the department to protect its officials against such perjury.

I shall now bring the matter before the Public Prosecutor, to see if he will be as ready to prosecute perjurers as he is to help "notorious guinea-pigs" in prosecuting Freethinkers.

W. J. RAMSEY.

SPECIAL NOTICES.

Our next number will contain an address from Mr. Foote to the readers of the "Freethinker." Also a Verbatim Report of the proceedings in connexion with his Liberation from Holloway Gaol.

Literary communications to be addressed to the Editor of the "Freethinker," 28 Stonecutter Street, London, E.C.

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

February 27, Hall of Science. March 2, Claremont Hall; 5, Hackney; 9, Milton Hall; 12, Hall of Science; 16, Manchester; 23, Plymouth. April 3, 6, 10, 13, 17, 24, Hall of Science. May 4 and 11, Hall of Science.

[No further engagements can be made until Mr. Foote's release, as he is doubtful of his strength after so long a confinement. Mr. Foote will give further notice himself in the *Freethinker* of March 2.]

DR. E. B. AVELING'S LECTURES.

Dr. Edward B. Aveling (interim editor of the *Freethinker*) lectures on Sunday, Feb. 24, at Milton Hall, Hawley Crescent, Kentish Town Road. Morning (11.30), "Origin of Man: his Mind and Morals." Evening (7) at Claremont Hall, Penton Street, Pentonville Road, N., "Darwinism and Religion." On Thursdays, Feb. 21, 28, Hall of Science, at 8.30; "Tennyson's Poetry."

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*, 28 Stonecutter Street, London.

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.—H. McKeuzie, "The Revelations of Common Sense," by Antipodes; C., L. Hill.

A PLOUGH-BOY.—Thanks for your interesting letter and jokes. We have heard no confirmation of the story about tailed men in Paraguay.

ELIXIR.—Sorry we have not space to give your communication in full.

C. BUCK.—Frances Wright d'Arusmont, the Freethought lecturer and author of "A Few Days in Athens," etc, was born in Dundee, September 6, 1795. She died in Cincinnati, Ohio, December 14, 1852.

A YOUNG FREETHINKER.—The best way you can help the cause is by speaking out boldly yourself, and by circulating the *Freethinker* and other Freethought literature.

H. CONOLLY.—"La Bible dans l'Inde," by M. Louis Jacolliot, is unreliable. See Max Müller's essay on "Mistakes in Comparative Theology."

B. D.—Certainly as many as possible of Mr. Foote's friends should welcome him on Monday.

A. WARBY.—The case of the Rev. T. J. Yards has already been referred to in our columns.

H. WILLET.—The old Syriac version of the New Testament omits the second epistle of Peter with the second and third of St. John and the epistle of St. Jude.

It is particularly requested that all orders for literature should be sent to Mr. W. J. Ramsey, 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.

On Sunday evening, Feb. 24, Dr. Edward Aveling lectures at Claremont Hall on "Darwinism and Religion." The change of front of the clergy on this question will be demonstrated.

A LETTER from Mr. Thomas Crosby, one of the committee of Mr. Howard, of Stockton, arrives too late for insertion

this week. It will appear in our next issue, together with an article by Dr. Edward Aveling on the Howard *fiasco*.

On Sunday, March 2, Mr. Foote lectures at Claremont Hall. In the morning his subject will be "Modern Martyrdom;" in the evening, "The Gospel of Holloway Gaol."

On Sunday morning, 11.30, at Milton Hall, Hawley Crescent, Kentish Town Road, Dr. Edward Aveling will lecture on "The Origin of Man: his mind and morals;" and the evening lecture will be delivered by Mrs. Besant,— "Progress and Poverty: is Mr. George right?"

JUSTICE STEPHEN having decided that cremation is not illegal, providing its carrying out causes no nuisance, we would commend this method to the Funeral Reform Society as a less expensive and a more effectual sanitary measure than the present fashion, which came in vogue with the Christian superstition of the resurrection of the body.

MRS. SOWDEN, who on Sunday made her *debut* in London as lecturer at Henley Hall, Battersea, where she has for some time conducted a Sunday-school, promises to be an acquisition to the Freethought platform. Her subject was the by no means easy one of Buddhism, in the exposition of which she showed full acquaintance with the best authorities upon that most interesting of religions. The lady did not fail to make a strong point in favor of Buddhism by comparing the teachings of Gautama in the Sigalavada Sutta in respect to the duties of husbands to wives with the injunctions of Paul.

THE *Boston Investigator* counts fourteen Freethought journals published in the United States of America in addition to itself.

It is to be hoped the lawn-sleeves will soon be released from their too onerous duties of legislating, for, as well as overseeing the souls of, the nation. Mr. Willis, Q.C., has given notice that he will move the House of Commons to declare "That the legislative power of bishops in the House of Peers in Parliament is prejudicial to their spiritual functions, injurious to the commonwealth, and fit to be taken away by Bill." These are the words of a resolution passed by the Long Parliament in 1641, and duly followed up within a few months by an Act giving it effect.

For the fourth time Northampton has elected Mr. Bradlaugh as its representative in the misnamed peoples' House of Commons, and this time by a majority three times larger than on the last election. Mr. Bradlaugh polled a larger number of votes than on any previous occasion. His constituents have thus in the most emphatic way protested against his illegal exclusion. What will Sir Stafford Northcote and his scratch majority of law-breakers do now? They have done their best to humiliate Parliament, but their own humiliation will not be complete until, as in the case of Wilkes, they have to rescind their own unconstitutional resolutions.

THE West Hartlepool Branch of the N. S. S., Citizen Club, Charles Street, meet on February 25, at 7.30 p.m., to commemorate the release from prison of Mr. Foote. Short speeches will be delivered by several gentlemen. All friends are cordially invited.

WASH YOUR FEET.

"Ye ought also to wash one another's feet. I have given you an example that ye should do as I have done to you."—JOHN xiii., 15.

CHRISTIANS have here given to them in their holy book a direct command to wash one another's feet. It is useless for them to quibble about the matter and try to wriggle out of it by asserting that the practice was only to be observed in Eastern countries, or in places where sandals were worn. There is the direct command, intended, without the shadow of a doubt, to be established as an ordinance amongst believers.

It is clear that Jesus Christ washed his disciples' feet as an example to be literally and permanently imitated, not only by them, but also by his followers generally. His utterances on this subject admit of no other rendering. No amount of word-twisting—better known, perhaps, to the pious as "revised interpretation"—can alter the plain meaning of these plain words.

Why do not Christians of the present day obey this command? They regularly read and have expounded to them this passage of their so-called "holy scriptures." Sunday after Sunday this command has been droned into their ears; yet, though during six days of the week they are 'oute business people, well acquainted with the meaning of plain words—on Sundays, when this command is under notice, what do we find? Is it too much to say that the subject is

coolly winked at and—shelved? The pious people put themselves through a sort of mental deception performance, or allow themselves to be put through it, which is even still more degrading, and persuade themselves that there is a great deal of "beauty" in the above and kindred passages. And—except perhaps in those cases where they hold all-night meetings with closed doors and the rate of illegitimate births at once alarmingly increases—pious Christian folk are content to admit the "beauteous" character of such wretched trash, and while inwardly assuring themselves that they are devout and earnest "believers" after god's own heart, and walking in his ways—many of which were intensely disgusting—they take exceedingly good care not to wash their neighbors' feet.

And as the orthodox for some occult reason do not enlighten us as to why they refrain from washing one another's feet, it is right that the Freethinker should proceed to investigate the matter on his own behalf. And he has not far to seek; nor is his search a difficult one—for any ordinary man possessed of common sense and able to use his mental faculties without undue leaning to one side or the other, can see that Christ's example and teaching are at utter variance with nineteenth-century manners and customs! The practice of washing your neighbor's feet is an operation just a little too barbarous to be performed in this age of civilisation and progress.

But in what a dilemma its non-observance lands the orthodox. They do not follow the example because they well know it to be an example unfit to be followed. And by so doing they practically admit that the teachings of their fetish in this respect are wrong, and that he, they, or it [which ever you please—if you happen to be a Christian you "pay your money and take your choice"] made a stupid blunder in attempting to force such an ordinance upon him.

On this subject it has been asked by Freethinkers, and may well be asked again, how it was that the omniscience of this god did not teach him that as nobody would either follow his example or obey his precept, to give these directions answered no good purpose? Freethinkers may question; they will never obtain from the Christian side a satisfactory answer—for however much "true believers" may invariably admit the shortcomings, the inconsistencies, the contradictory character of their religion, outwardly they are prepared, with unbounded impudence, to assert that feet-washing as a pious custom went out with sandals, and not because such a practice now-a-days, if it were attempted, would be at once howled down as objectionable.

It is when man begins to think for himself and to refuse to allow others—at considerable profit to themselves—to enslave his reasoning powers, that he casts aside, once and for ever, all the wretched mummeries, the superstitious incantations, the stupid and crassly-ignorant ordinances of a dying creed, which is being smothered out of existence by the sure and rapid spread of education and Freethought.

H. C.

THE DYING INFIDEL.

I AM dying, Christian, dying,
And my life-light fades away,
To the tint of chilling shadows
With which night entombs the day.
Let me ask of you a favor,
As I go the way of earth—
Go to pay the debt of Nature
That each one incurs at birth.

With me still are my convictions,
As in life I held them dear,
And I should be worse than coward
If I cringed or faltered here.
Thus in life's expiring streamlet,
As it wastes adown the hill,
I will perish—(Ha! you tremble)—
Die an unbeliever still!

Let no preacher's voice upbraid me,
I despise his cant and scorn;
Though I bend to Mother Nature,
Like the ripe and golden corn.
For he wields no sceptre o'er me—
Knows not whence I go or came,
Nor the fate of those before me
Since warm life has quenched its flame.

Should the priests to awe their minions
Swear my life was closed in fear,
And I went a whining coward
To the ghastly, hungry bier,
Tell them that I never faltered,—
Never from my duty ran,
Never bowed the knee to Baal,
But died every inch a man!

What is all thy boasted glory,
Boasted peace and love divine,
When dark hate and lust and murder
Round the cross like ivy twine?
Faith breeds strife, and each religion
Nursed by Christian, Greek, or Jew,
Tramples on a neighbor's feelings—
Never pays "the Devil's due."

I am dying, Christian, dying,
Soon the clods will o'er me rest,
And the grass above me growing—
I shall sleep on Mother's breast,
Sweetly sleep—no doubt for ever—
With no fear of smoking hell
That beclouds thy mental vision;
Christian, once again, farewell!

GOD'S TRUTH ABOUT GOD.

[A Chapter of Contradictions.]

HE is the lord (Mark xii., 29). His name is I Am (Exodus iii., 14); yet his name is Jealous (Exodus xxxiv., 14); yet his name is Jehovah (Exodus vi., 3); yet his name is Jah (Psalm lxxviii., 4).

There is no god with him (Deut. xxxii., 39); yet he says, "Behold, the man has become as one of us" (Gen. iii., 22). There is none else beside him (Deut. iv., 35); yet he says, "Thou shalt worship no other god" (Exodus xxxiv., 14). "There is none else" (Isaiah xlv., 6); yet he says, "The prophet that shall speak in the name of other gods shall die" (Deut. xviii., 20). The god our lord is one lord (Mark xii., 30); yet "He is the god of gods" (Psalm cxxxvi., 2), etc.

He promised man eternal life before man was created (Titus i., 2), and spoke in human language before there was any human being to address (Gen. i., 3). He said, "Let us make man," when there was no one to prevent him (Gen. i., 26). "So he created man" (Gen. i., 27); "and blessed him" (28); gave him every fruit tree for meat (29); and cursed him because he ate of the fruit (Gen. iii., 15-19). God's "work is perfect" (Deut. xxxii., 4); yet by the imperfection of this "one man judgment came upon all men to condemnation" (Romans iv., 19).

"His work is perfect," wherefore it is written, "Who can understand his errors?" (Psalm xix., 12). "Who can make straight that which he hath made crooked?" (Eccles. vii., 17).

There is no respect of persons with the lord (2 Chron. xix., 7); yet he "had respect unto Abel and his offering, but unto Cain and his offering he had not respect" (Gen. v., 4-5); yet he loved Jacob and hated Esau before they were born (Romans ix., 10-13).

God, "that cannot lie" (Titus i., 2), said Adam should die on a certain day (Gen. ii., 17), yet after this day Adam lived over 900 years (Gen. v., 3-4).

God, "that cannot lie," promised to raise up to the Israelites a prophet like unto Moses (Deut. xviii., 15-18). "But there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses" (Deut. xxxv., 10).

God, "that cannot lie," promised to give a certain land unto Abraham and his seed for ever (Gen. xvii., 7), yet never, gave it to him, so that he actually had to buy a burying-place for his wife (Gen. xxiii., 4-20).

God, "that cannot lie," limited man's days to an hundred and twenty years (Gen. vi., 3), yet after this Noah lived 450 years, Shem 600 years, Arphaxad 483 years, Abraham 175 years, etc. (Gen. ix., 23; xi., 10).

"He is a god of truth" (Deut. xxxii., 4), yet says, "If a prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a thing, I, the lord, have deceived that prophet" (Ezekiel xiv., 9).

"Lying lips are an abomination unto the lord" (Proverbs xii., 22). "Now, therefore, behold the lord hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of these thy prophets" (1 Kings xxii., 23).

God, whose "every word is pure" (Prov. xxx., 5), and "who is rich in mercy" (Ephes. ii., 4), "shall send a strong delusion that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned who believed not the truth" (2 Thessal. ii., 11-12).

"He is not a god that hath pleasure in wickedness" (Psalm v., 4), but "hates workers of iniquity" (Psalm v., 5). Yet "he hath made all things for himself, yea, even the wicked for the day of evil" (Prov. xvi., 4). "Shall there be evil in a city, and the lord hath not done it?" (Amos iii., 6).

"Just and right is he" (Deut. xxxii., 4). "Wherefore he gave them statutes that were not good and judgments whereby they should not live" (Ezekiel xx., 25).

"The eyes of the lord are in every place" (Prov. xv., 3), yet he could not see Adam in the garden of Eden, for "he called unto Adam," and asked "Where art thou?" (Gen. iii., 9).

"His eyes are open upon all the ways of men" (Jeremiah xxii., 19), yet he did not know what men were doing in Sodom and Gomorrah, for he says, "I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which has come unto me, and if not, I will know" (Genesis xviii., 20-22).

EDGAR T. BENTON.

(To be continued.)

BRAKES TO HOLLOWAY GAOL.

BRAKES will leave Milton Hall on Monday morning (7.30) for Holloway Gaol, and thence to the Hall of Science.

THE Bermondsey and Rotherhithe brakes will leave the "Colleen Bawn," Southwark Park Road, at 7 a.m. prompt, for Holloway Gaol. Seats can be booked (1s. each) of Mr. W. Curson, 1 St. Helena Place, Rotherhithe.

THE brakes of the Peckham and Dulwich Branch will leave 16 Nutbrook Street, Peckham Rye, at 6.30, for Holloway. All those intending to go from this district are requested to communicate at once with Mr. B. Ellis, at the above address.

THE Battersea Branch brakes will be at Vauxhall Station at 7 a.m. precisely; at Waterloo Station, 7.15. Fare 1s.

THE brakes of the South London branch will start from opposite the Surrey Lodge Coffee Tavern, Kennington Road, at 7 a.m., calling at Waterloo Station, Waterloo Road, and at the "Old Hatch House," Roupell Street, Blackfriars Road. Seats can be booked at the last-named place; also of Mr. V. Roger, 25 Tracey Street, Kennington. Friends coming by the South Western Railway will find these brakes very convenient. From Holloway Gaol the brakes will proceed (in procession with others) to the Hall of Science, returning to Roupell Street, Blackfriars Road. Fare 1s.

THE Finsbury Branch brakes start from the corner of Swinton Street, Gray's Inn Road, at 7.30 precisely. Seats can be booked (1s. each) at Mr. Hilditch's, 7 Cromer Street, King's Cross, not later than 4 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 23.

BRAKES will start from the Hall of Science at 7.30 on the morning of the 25th for Holloway. Fare, 1s. All wishing to go will communicate at once with J. T. Ramsey, 18 Pearson Street, Kingsland Road, E.

THE brakes of the Walworth and Camberwell Branch will start on Monday (at 7 a.m. precisely) from the Castle Hall, Castle Tavern, Camberwell Road, for Holloway Gaol. Fare 1s. Apply at once to Mr. H. Fenemore, at the above address. Also for tickets for the complimentary breakfast.

[As the carriage containing Mr. Foote will go at once to the Hall of Science, it is necessary that friends coming in brakes should take their seats ready to start in procession.]

FREETHOUGHT GLEANINGS.

THE CHRISTIAN SCHEME.—A theology or theosophy manufactured from the refuse and leavings of mythology, and the misinterpretation of ancient thought and its mode of expression, with its doctrine of a human fall that never occurred; the descent, degradation, and depravity that did not follow, and its redemption by the blood of an atonement which consequently could not apply, constitutes the sheerest insanity that mental aberration has hitherto shown. The fetishism of savagery exhibits nothing half so barbarous or so devoid of basis, either scientific or natural.—*Gerald Massey*, "Natural Genesis," vol. ii., p. 161; 1883.

THE VIRGIN MOTHER.—Jesus Christ is said to have had no father. Thousands of other boys have been in the same plight. There is no miracle in that. If the founder of Christianity wished to prove his supernatural origin, he should have "gone the whole hog," and dispensed with a mother too. That would have been a real miracle. But at present his divine paternity is more than dubious. If there is a mother in the case, depend upon it there is a father somewhere. That which is born of the spirit is spirit, not flesh and blood; and the holy ghost is far too shadowy a person to be the father of a lusty boy. We feel sure that Jesus Christ was born like other men, and we decline to believe that god almighty ever stooped to debauch an old man's wife. The whole story is a fable. There never was in this world, and there never will be, such a monstrous absurdity as a virgin mother.—*G. W. Foote*, "Bible Romances," p. 128.

THE CHRISTIAN DOCUMENTS.—Modern theologians industriously collate extant MSS. of the New Testament, with the design of attaining a reliable text; but, as none of these ancient documents are of an earlier date than the fourth century, we are absolutely ignorant of the contents of earlier versions, possibly committed to the flames as heretical when Christianity had corrupted the primitive faith of Galilee.—"The Evolution of Christianity," p. 169; 1883.

OBITUARY.—On Friday last I performed the sad duty of reading a funeral service at the grave of Mrs. Jane Pitt. She and her husband had been many years members of the N. S. S., and had belonged to the Central London Branch since its formation. She took an active interest in all Freethought movements; and died calmly, a firm and consistent Freethinker, as she had lived.—*W. J. RAMSEY*.

PROFANE JOKES.

WHAT did the spider do when it left the ark?—Took a fly and went home again.

WHAT do the ladies go to church for?—To look after the hymns (hims).

WHY are churches like young ladies?—Because there is no living without them.

WHY is a whipped school-boy like Jonah?—Because he is "down in the mouth" and goes to blubber.

WHY are kisses like the creation?—Because they are made of nothing and all very good.

WHAT was Pontius Pilate's wife's name?—Mrs. Pontius Pilate.

WHAT was the first thing Adam planted in the garden of Eden?—His foot.

"MAMMA dear, why do gentlemen kneel down and look into their hats when they come into church?" "To see their maker's name, my dear."

A MINISTER, reproving one of the village urchins for rudeness, finished up with saying he was "Better fed than taught." "Dun yo know how that is, mester? We feed erselves, and yo teach us," replied the youngster.

Two sons of Erin, shovelling sand on a hot day, stopped to rest and exchange views on the labor question. "Pat, this is mighty hard work we're at." "It is indade, Jimmy; but what kind of work is it you'd like if you could get it?" "Well," said the other, leaning reflectively on his shovel and wiping the perspiration with the back of his hand, "for a nice, aisy, clane business, I think I would like to be a bishop."

SUNDAY-SCHOOL TEACHER (to little girl): "If you are a good girl when you die, my dear, you will go to heaven, and, you know, it is all Sundays in heaven." Little girl: "Then I don't want to go to heaven."

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KILBURN BRANCH N. S. S., Kilburn Baths, Goldsmith Place. A Debate will take place on February 24, between Mr. Cuerel and Mr. Bowman Subject—"The Antiquity of Man." Commence at 7.30. Admission, 2d. and 4d.

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 Herds of Humanity, by J. H.
 How we Formed our Zoological Gardens, by C. T. Bingham.
 Patriotism, by H. S. S.
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G. W. FOOTE

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OR,

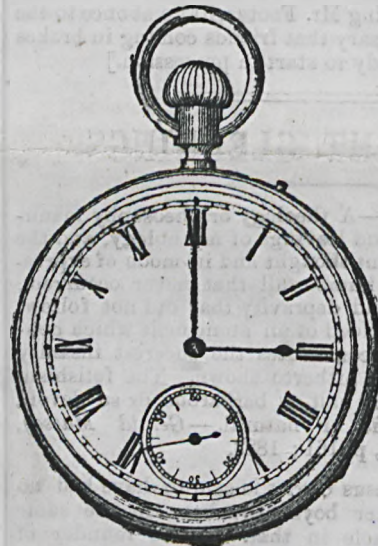
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