

# THE FREETHINKER.

EDITED BY G. W. FOOTE.

Sub Editor—J. M. Wheeler.

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

COMIC BIBLE SKETCH.—No. LXV.



OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN.

*Father Noah, being sick of water, "drank of the wine and was drunken."—GENESIS ix., 21.*

"Mr. Foote is anxious to have it impressed on you that he is not a licentious writer, and that this word does not fairly apply to his publications. You will have the documents before you, and you must judge for yourselves. I should say that he is right. He may be blasphemous, but he certainly is not licentious in the ordinary sense of the word; and you do not find him pandering to the bad passions of mankind."—LORD COLERIDGE.

## PEOPLE'S FEELINGS.

It is a strange thing, or rather it would be a strange thing if we did not know them so well, that Christians, of all people in the world, should demand protection for their "feelings." They have always shown themselves utterly unscrupulous in their dealings with unbelievers. They have burnt them at the stake, broken them on the wheel, disjuncted them on the rack, starved and maddened them in dungeons, and practised upon them every hellish device of cruelty that the human mind is capable of conceiving. No wretch, however malignant, could possibly add to their list of tortures. They exhausted imagination for ever in that line of invention, and left nothing but imitation to the bigots of succeeding ages. During this century, it is true, they have been somewhat milder in their persecutions, but this is simply because they have been shorn of their power by the growing spirit of humanity. They more often bark than bite at present; yet you can easily see by their lolling tongues and slavering mouths that they are as rabid and venomous as ever. When they cannot kill Freethinkers, they imprison them; when they cannot imprison them, they rob them of their political rights or steal away their children; and when they cannot do this, they cover them with abuse and defamation. There is not a Freethought leader dead,

or a Freethought leader living, who has not been represented by these professors of the gospel of charity as a criminal ten times worse than any thief or murderer within the walks of their own gaols.

These are the sweet innocents who want their "feelings" protected against the "outrage" of "licentious" Freethinkers. They burnt us, but we must not denounce them; they slander us, but we must not defy them; they persecute us, and we must not laugh at them. When I was in Holloway Gaol I heard the chaplain call Freethinkers all the names his poor fancy could invent. He spoke of them as "wretched unbelievers," "miserable sceptics," "shameless blasphemers," and "poor, ignorant, despicable infidels." Yet this sky-pilot actually thought I deserved my twelve months' imprisonment for "outraging his feelings" in a paper he never even saw until after I was sent to gaol.

There lies the damning proof of their shameful bigotry. They are not compelled to listen to a Freethought lecture. They need not read a line in any Freethought paper. If they object to "blasphemy" they have the remedy in their own hands; they can stay away from our halls and decline to buy our papers. But that does not satisfy them. They claim that no word shall be spoken that they dislike in halls they never enter, or written in papers they never read. The impudence of this demand would be absolutely astounding if it did not come from the professors of the most impudent creed on earth.

Mr. Justice Stephen, in his recent article on the Blasphemy Laws, strongly protests against this arrogant unfairness. He writes:—

"There is one reflexion which seems to me to prove with conclusive force that the law upon this subject can be explained and justified only on what I regard as its true

principle—the principle of persecution. It is that if the law were really impartial, and punished blasphemy only because it offends the feelings of believers, it ought also to punish such preaching as offends the feelings of unbelievers. All the more earnest and enthusiastic forms of religion are extremely offensive to those who do not believe them. Why should not people who are not Christians be protected against the rough, coarse, ignorant ferocity with which they are often told that they and theirs are on the way to hell-fire for ever and ever? Such a doctrine, though necessary to be known, if true, is, if false, revolting and mischievous to the last degree. If the law in no degree recognised these doctrines as true, if it were as neutral as the Indian Penal Code is between Hindoos and Mahometans, it would have to apply to the Salvation Army the same rule as it applies to the *Freethinker* and its contributors."

We might go still farther than Sir James Stephen. The Salvation Army do not confine themselves to their own halls as we do. They parade the public thoroughfares with flaunting banners; they send out bands in which each man plays more or less his own tune; they make the most horrible discord to the terror of all decent people whose ears are not as long as theirs. They may shout what they like in the streets, and we may not say what we like in our own premises. They may inform every passer-by, through a big poster, that he is going straight to hell; and we may not, in our own papers, laugh at the idea of there being such a place to go to. In short, as the case stands, a Christian may steal a whole sheep, and a Freethinker may not look over the hedge.

Even Lord Coleridge, despite all his efforts to be impartial, gave way to this prejudice. He said that a man "must not make himself a nuisance." That is precisely what the Salvationists do and we do not, unless it is a nuisance to express your thoughts to people who choose to listen, without obtruding them on people who wish to avoid them. Still more curious was his lordship's remark that a Blasphemy Law might be a good thing for the blasphemer to save him from the fury of the mob. As a matter of fact, we can protect ourselves in that respect; if the policeman keeps his hands off us, we can easily deal with the loose fry of faith. They have long ceased to interfere with us, finding that they can neither disturb our meetings nor our temper. But even if they were otherwise disposed, we ought not to be punished for their brutality. Lord Coleridge's own illustration disproves his argument. He instances the case of Joseph Priestley, whose house was wrecked by a Church-and-State mob at the end of last century. Priestley obtained compensation at law, and surely Lord Coleridge does not hold that he ought to have been imprisoned to prevent the mob from committing a crime.

Take another illustration. An eccentric gentleman once waited on Mr. Bradlaugh with a carving knife, and stated that the Lord had incited him to kill somebody. Ought Mr. Bradlaugh to be imprisoned, or his unpleasant visitor? Suppose a Freethinker visited a Christian with a carving knife, would there be any difference of opinion as to who should be restrained?

Unfortunately there are a few Freethinkers who have not yet got rid of their old prejudices. They are almost as bad as Christians themselves in their talk about "outrage." Let them learn that the advocacy of Freethought is not to be determined by the wishes of its enemies. We do not propose to consult them in the smallest degree. While we asperse no man's private character, we intend to maintain the principle that ideas are no man's property. We have a right to hate them or love them, accept them or reject them, promote them or attack them, just as they happen to affect us. And people who fancy they have a sort of vested interest in ideas, no matter whether they are true or false, must be taught the error of their assumption. Compromise and respectability are the bane of modern thought; they blunt our emotions and emasculate our intelligence. Let every lover of Truth, every striver for Freedom, every worker for Progress, speak out his absolute thought, careless of all consequence. He will find that Sincerity is the most useful, as it is the most noble policy, and he will feel a most calm courage lifting him far above all the cowardly reticences and timid futilities of meaner men.

G. W. FOOTE.

THE *Religious Herald* of Richmond, Virginia, denounces the London *Baptist* for appropriating two or three of its editorials, which it asserts this pious pirate has served up in its editorial columns as its own.

#### A FEW NOTES ON EASTER.

ACCORDING to Bede, and the best modern authorities, the word Easter is derived from Eostre, the Saxon goddess of spring, whose festival our forefathers celebrated at this season. Throughout the pagan world the revivification of vegetation was celebrated with festivals, which symbolised the reproductive powers of nature. The time when the sun passing over the vernal equinox proclaims himself redeemer of the world from winter is naturally that of the feast of passover. At this season the Egyptians held a feast to Isis, and the palm was carried about as the symbol of reproductive power and triumph long ere Palm Sunday was supposed to signify the entrance of Christ into Jerusalem. The widespread custom of sending Easter eggs is a survival plainly indicating the original Pagan signification of the festival, for we can hardly suppose our dear Christian friends will venture to connect the eggs with the rooster who announced Peter's denial.

The hot cross buns of Good Friday symbolise the conquering sun at the crossing of the vernal equinox. In the early days of Christianity in Britain both ecclesiastics and laics used to play at ball in the churches at Eastertide. Chambers' "Book of Days" tells us how bishops and deans took the ball into the church, and at the commencement of the antiphone began to dance, throwing the ball to the choristers, after which they had refreshments, a gammon of bacon (eaten in abhorrence of the Jews) being the standard dish. The Easter cakes, which in olden times the clergy presented to their parishioners, were also survivals of the solar worship, a sign of which so evidently remains in all our churches having their altars built to the east.

Early in the history of the Christian Church we hear of two different divisions of the original Salvation Army who remained for centuries at loggerheads about the time when Easter should be kept. This, like all other Christian controversies, was carried on with great bitterness. The Eastern churches comprising many Judaizing Christians, kept the 14th of Nisan, the Jewish passover, but the Western Church, composed mainly of Gentiles, on account of the connexion of the resurrection with the day of the sun, kept always the first day of the week. At the end of the second century Pope Victor wrote an imperious letter to the Eastern Church, commanding them to conform to the Western practice. They refused, and were stigmatised as heretics. Epiphanius tells us: "Some began the festival before the week, some after the week, some at the beginning, some at the middle, some at the end, thus creating a wonderful laborious confusion." At the council of Nice, under Constantine, it was fixed as now, on the first Sunday after the full moon happens upon or next after the vernal equinox; and as the Egyptians excelled in astronomy, the Bishop of Alexandria was appointed to give notice of Easter Day to the Pope and other patriarchs. This, however, did not ensure uniformity. We learn from St. Ambrose (Epist. 23) that in 387 the churches of Gaul kept March 21, while those of Italy postponed it till April 18, and those of Egypt a week later still, to April 25. Similar discrepancies are mentioned by Gregory of Tours in the year 577; nor did they disappear till the eighth century.

The fact of Easter being a movable feast sufficiently proves its astronomical origin, and the differences among early Christians show their ignorance of the date when their god-man is alleged to have burst the bonds of death. They have never even fixed the year of that extraordinary occurrence with any certainty. While the Gospels make Jesus prophecy that he would spend three days and three nights in the heart of the earth, the narratives only make him to have only spent one day and two nights. According to the three synoptics, the crucifixion took place on a Friday, the first day of the passover, but according to the established principle of the Jewish calendar, the first day of the passover never can fall on the Friday. Moreover, to make the crucifixion happen on the Passover is as improbable as to allege that an Irish Fenian was hanged on a Sunday. At that time there were no courts sitting, and certainly no execution could be permitted according to Jewish law. It is most unlikely that the Roman governor of Judea would so offend Jewish prejudice as to permit an execution at the time of the Paschal feast.

That the Western Church in early times celebrated the last supper on the one day and the resurrection on the next, seems to indicate that the Christian festival sprung from the old pagan offerings of bread and wine to the sun-god being

mixed up with the Jewish sacrifice of the paschal lamb, and this may have led to the legend of the Lamb of God having been put to death at the time of the Passover.

J. M. WHEELER.

### THE PARSONS AND THE POOR.

"The poor ye have always with you," quoth Christ. And the parsons we have also always with us and against us. As long as the one class exists, the other will be waxing fat and kicking. The parsons have been holding meetings on the condition of the poor, and have assigned every reason, and suggested every remedy but the right ones. Delegates from various religious bodies have conferred. "Bodies" is a good word. We generally use it for the dead. The daily papers, with unconscious irony, put the case very plainly when they speak of the committee as representing Christian churches and philanthropic societies. The conjunction is disjunctive.

The chairman, Sir William McArthur, of the assembly of delegates of the moribund remarked that the holding of such a conference was an exceedingly happy thought. He did not add that the necessity for it was of the same order of thought. The churches had done what was in their power, but their powers were limited. But the powers of the God whom they represent are boundless. Cry aloud, delegates! Spare not! And hear your brute deity reply in the groans of starving men and women and the tears of hopeless children. Sir William McArthur hopes for an educated and religious England. He might as well hope for a green plant to grow in the dark. And it is really suicidal for Sir William to hope for better education in this country. Surely he wants to retain his seat for Lambeth.

One good thing he did say. Upwards of a million persons in London never enter a place of worship. There is some hope for an educated England after all.

Then the Rev. S. Booth, no relative of the arch-impostor, remarked that the gospel would be followed by temperance and chastity. He did not take as his illustrations Noah and David.

The way in which gross ignorance goes of necessity hand in hand with religion amongst the laboring classes is painfully illustrated by the statements of two women quoted by the Rev. Archibald Brown. One was the mother of eight children, who made match-boxes at 2½d. a gross. Her explanation of her poverty was that she had married an ungodly man. Another woman who had buried eight children opined that God knew that was the best thing that could happen. These poor creatures, God-blind, are not taught by the parsons that the explanation of their poverty is the present relation between capital and labor, and the domination of the accursed creed. Nor are they taught that a better thing than the death of eight little ones would have been their non-birth. Note that in each of these cases the poverty-stricken wretch has eight children. No man dare say that in the limitation of the family is there any salvation for society as a whole. But such limitation can at least lessen the misery of the individual.

One delegate spoke out in most uncompromising fashion. "The Church was alone to blame for the present state of things." He was honest if inaccurate. The Church is to blame, but not wholly; our commercial as well as our ethical system is at fault. But how impossible it is to expect the religious people to be a service in the great changes and the stormy times coming is shown by the fact that when at the very conference now under discussion one speaker boldly dealt with the questions on capital and labor, the Earl of Shaftesbury, then presiding, objected to such matters being discussed.

Of course, several of the speakers were strong on the drink question. The religious person seems entirely to confuse cause and effect here. The drinking habits of some poorer folks are the result, not the reason, of the conditions in which they live.

The Rev. Dr. Allon, a man of culture and of reading, showed little evidence of either in the uttering of the wearisome falsehood that social and moral improvements were due to Christianity. The Rev. John Bond let the cat out of the bag as to the average nature of the Christian agents and evidence men. "Many had undertaken this work merely because they had failed in every other line of life."

Once more was shown by the whole of the miserable farce that the poor can expect nothing but insult and a

disguised cruelty from religious bodies. Let the poor reject the philanthropy they proffer. It is only a bribe. The "whirligig of time brings in its revenges," and one of these days, in place of the religious bodies sitting on the poor, the tables will be turned, and the poor will sit on the religious bodies.

EDWARD AVELING.

### ACID DROPS.

THE *Spiritual Record* for April remarks that, "Here is a curious dilemma. If you deny spiritual manifestations that are said to have occurred two or three thousand years ago, you can be sent a year to prison, deprived of all civil employment, and made incapable of holding any office or appointment, under the Act of William III. On the other hand, if you assert your knowledge of facts, now of daily occurrence all about us, you do it at the peril of being shut up in a lunatic asylum, under more recent legislation."

A CITY merchant recently had his attention drawn to a schoolbook from which his daughter, twelve years of age, had to learn lessons by heart. It was "A Short View of the whole Scripture History," by Isaaq Watts, D.D., and is published by Milner and Co., Paternoster Row. Among the lessons are given the obscene stories of Lot and his daughters, of Abraham selling his wife to Abimelech and taking his servant-maid Hagar for his concubine, of David and Bethsheba, etc. The gentleman took the book away and has written a letter to the school-mistress which she certainly will not publish.

IN view of Bible obscenities, it is suggested that the letters "D.D." must represent Dirt Distributor.

SOME time ago Messrs. Cassell and Co. were so dissatisfied with the works of the Holy Ghost, that they issued a child's Bible, from which all the foul language of the word of God was carefully eliminated. By making the mark of an hiatus, however, readers were pointed out the passages which they could read at large in the authorised version. This was almost as bad as the edition of the classics, which put all the dirty passages in the appendix.

A STANDARD-BEAKER in the 94th corps of the Salvation Army at Leamington, one David Winters, has left his wife and eloped with a girl of seventeen, also in the army. The deserted Mrs. Winters says she had noticed no other familiarity beyond what is known as "the salvation embrace," a custom which recommends the army to the hearts of many longing fair ones. The pious salvationist informed his co-religionists that he was going to take a holiday, and prayers were offered at the barracks for his safe return. He, however, made more substantial preparations for his journey by selling all his goods and thus leaving his wife destitute. This, however, he compensated for by leaving her a letter plentifully besprinkled with pious expressions and commending her to the care of the Lord.

A CORRESPONDENT gives us an account of a fishmonger's wife in Sittingbourne, Kent, who went to the Salvation Army, leaving her three small children at home, saying she left them in God's care. Whether the caretaker was asleep, or as Elijah said of Baal, peradventure on a journey, it happened that while the mother was telling what great things God had done for her, a messenger came with the news that her house was on fire and two of the little children had been suffocated. That pious mother went home and actually lifted up her voice and thanked God because, through her neglect, her babes had been killed.

How these Christians love one another! The *Church Times* says: "The Dean of Canterbury, whose ingenuity in starting mischievous projects is remarkable, has set on foot a movement for helping to erect a monument in Paris to Admiral Coligny. What on earth English Churchmen can have to do with the leader of the French Huguenots we cannot conceive. The sect was not a nice one, and the less we concern ourselves with them the better."

ANOTHER burial scandal is reported by a Berks newspaper. The friends of a dead child at Maidenhead, desiring her to be buried by a Baptist minister, upon proceeding to the churchyard where the parents had a grave, found the gates closed. A panel of the fence was removed, and the parties proceeded to the grave without further molestation.

A SUNDAY-SCHOOL teacher named Edward Harrison has been arrested for burglary at Driffield, Yorkshire.

BLESSED be ye poor. That's the text. Now for the sermon. The Rev. J. W. Conant, of Surbiton, who died in February, has left personal estate amounting to over £200,000. If the gospel be true, such a load as that is enough to weigh the

poor soul down to the lowest circle of hell. But perhaps the gospel isn't true, and J. W. Conant knew it. Let us hope so.

THE Rev. V. Ward, in the *Christian Chronicle* of April 3, says: "One of the artifices of the Devil and his agents is to imitate the works of Christ; he said to Eve, if she would take his advice, 'Ye shall be as gods' (Gen. iii., 5). The Egyptian magicians also imitated the miraculous power granted to Moses by God (Exodus vii., 11). He still leads men who do not trust in Christ to imitate Christian graces. Judas was his workmanship (Luke xxii., 3). None could detect this but Christ (Matthew xxvi., 21-24)." According to this good Christian doctrine God has left his world in a pretty nice mess. We wonder if the Christian papers, and their accounts of the work of Christ, is the real article or an imitation by the enemy which none but Christ himself can detect.

THE Free Church of Scotland has been fluttered by a proposal to establish a chair of natural science in connexion with their Glasgow college. This idea would never have emanated from any of the Church but that a lay member has offered to put down £5,000 for the purpose. Of course any professor appointed would have to subscribe to the Westminster Confession, which declares that the world was created or made in six days. The Rev. John McEwan denounces the proposition, fearing lest Darwinism should be taught to theological students in such a way as to prove subversive of Biblical doctrine, and yet not to conflict with these statements of the confession of faith. If the money is taken it will be curious to notice what eminent scientist will subscribe to the Westminster confession, and be ready to base his teaching in the first place on the shorter catechism and on Nature in the second place.

THERE is a wretched little advertising rag published in the Kingsland Road by a person named Brabner, who states that 5,000 copies are distributed every week *gratis*, as though anybody could ever suppose that there was a single man outside a lunatic asylum stupid enough to pay for it. Brabner generally prints on the first page a pious lucubration from his own head, or another's just as wooden. Last week he came out strong with an article on "Voltaire the Atheist." The only man who, to our knowledge, ever bore that name was a Deist, and actually penned more than one paper to prove the existence of God. We therefore supposed that Brabner had discovered a new Voltaire; but a second glance showed us that he was simply publishing for perhaps the fifty thousandth time the old filthy lies told of the deathbed of the greatest wit after Rabelais that France has produced. This touting sheet of Brabner's is called the *Ventilator*. It would certainly be well if some physiological expert could discover a method of ventilating the brains of fools at large, and clearing out all their tumid mists of impudent ignorance.

BRABNER thinks blasphemers should be imprisoned for outraging the feelings of true believers. Here is a specimen of his own urbanity: "The more prominent present-day avowed Atheists are but mere collectors and diffusers of worn-out nastiness [does anybody understand this, even Brabner himself], and resemble, according to their several abilities, the pimples, boils, carbuncles, and festering sores, of a diseased and corrupting body." There's sweetness and light for you.

THE Rev. Dr. McCann has been delivering some lectures on Secularism and the Bible at Maidstone. The platform on each occasion appears to have been crowded with sky-pilots of various denominations; and as, with the exception of a few reserved seats, the admission was free, the Maidstone Christians flocked in to spend a cheerful hour on the cheap. Dr. McCann is no fool, and we must therefore presume that the nonsense he talked was deliberately adapted to the taste of his hearers. Here is a very fine sample: "Usefulness might be a test of morality, but it was not morality; nitric acid was a test of gold, but it was not gold." When we add that this extraordinary rubbish was greeted with loud cheers, our readers will be able to form some idea of the level of intelligence reached by true believers after eighteen centuries experience of divine wisdom. Last Tuesday evening Mr. Foote lectured at Maidstone to a large and enthusiastic audience on "Bible Truth, as illustrated by my twelve months' imprisonment for disputing it." The Maidstone Society is getting on famously, and containing as it does some very sturdy Freethinkers, it is likely to keep the district in a state of wholesome excitement.

"REASON" writes an excellent letter to the *Hastings Times*, respecting the threat in a local Tory organ to prosecute Freethinkers there for distributing "infidel" tracts. The editor of the *News* is a true Christian. His first impulse when he finds a man differing in opinion from him is to knock him down; but as he possesses as much discretion as valor, he thinks twice and prefers to do it by proxy. He shouts Blasphemy! and trusts to the pious mob for the rest.

THE late Duke of Albany's obsequies—the English nation's obsequiousness.

AN Irish friend of ours says that the fuss about the Duke of Albany is—"All barney."

THE *Church Review* took the occasion of the fuss attending the Duke of Albany's funeral to deplore "the decreasing attention given to the death of the redeemer of the world." Christians who believe that the maker of the universe lost his life in Jerusalem some eighteen hundred and fifty years ago, for the most part celebrate the occasion with a joyous holiday.

GOOD Friday is still kept up in the true spirit of austerity by the Church of the Penitentes in Santo Domingo, Mexico. This fanatical order of Catholics strip their bodies to the waist, and, having provided themselves with scourges, beat themselves and each other over the shoulders and back until the flesh is terribly lacerated. This is done walking in procession, one of their number voluntarily loading and bearing a heavy wooden cross bound to his back, under which he staggers nearly bent double, his flesh lacerated by the scourges of his followers. Many have died of exhaustion under this penance. If the victim lives to reach the church, the cross is suspended therein, with the bleeding sufferer still bound to it, where he remains until he faints under the loss of blood. This barbarous survival is a striking illustration of the faith that has "sought to merit heaven by making earth a hell."

*Tit-Bits* for April 8 contains a special note, stating that poor ignorant persons are continually writing to that paper asking for advice in cases where they have been what is called "witched." It says "that such ignorance as this can exist in Christian England is astounding." Not at all, witchcraft is recognised in both Old and New Testament, and, as John Wesley said, to deny witchcraft is to deny the Bible. *Tit-Bits* says "the letters chiefly come from Somersetshire and neighborhood," a strongly Conservative county, where Mr. Bradlaugh recently got so warm a reception. *Tit-Bits* asks the ministers of Somersetshire to preach "with a view to expel the darkness which exists in their neighborhood." We should think the superstition a sufficient proof of the influence of the black-coats, and should rely more on the efficacy of a few Freethinkers than of all the parson-power of all the parishes.

DURING the great Advent revival some years ago, the time for the ascension of the believers in that religion was set for a certain day in the spring. The greater part of the inhabitants of a little village in Maine had made all preparations to be taken bodily up to heaven; they had disposed of all their worldly goods by gifts to neighbors and friends that were unbelievers, and assembled the night before, dressed in flowing robes, on a hill known as "Scoodic mountain," so as to be the first to be taken. The elder, tired with watching, and also a greater part of his followers, fell into a sound sleep. Thinking to protect the elder from the cold blasts of the exposed place, several friends piled limbs of trees and brush around him. Along towards morning, just before light, some one, thinking to have a fire to keep warm, set fire to the elder's protection. The flames quickly surrounded him, and, awakened by the sparks and flames from a sound sleep, he shouted, "In hell, just as I expected!"

THE foot and mouth disease has nothing to do with the ceremony of kissing the Pope's toe.

THE new Congregationalist creed, dealt with so trenchantly by Col. Ingersoll in his new lecture on "The Dying Creed," recalls to the *Universalist* the story of the colored theologian who told his flock: "Bred'ren, dar am two roads; one leads to hell and de odder to everlasting damnation." A listening brother called out: "If dat's de case, dis nigger takes to de woods."

"WHEN the Angels call me Home" is a ballad recently published by a young man. Those who have heard it say he cannot be called any too soon.

A WOMAN is struck in the right eye, knocked down, her head dashed on the pavement, her side kicked, and two ribs bent in. The kicker and rib-bender has to pay a sovereign. Sir William Harcourt thinks that this is a case which ought not to occupy the time of the House. Mr. Macfarlane proposes after this to include women in the schedule of the bill for the prevention of cruelty to animals. We propose that the same course should be taken in respect to the Home Secretary in connexion with the Contagious Diseases (Animals) Act.

THE Salvationists are getting in a bad way. Their last demonstration in St. James's Hall was a ghastly failure, and they only collected £14 instead of the £500 they expected.

## SPECIAL NOTICES.

## MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, April 13, Hall of Science, Old Street, London, E.C. Morning at 11.15—"Mr. Gladstone's Innings;" evening at 7—"Prison Thoughts on the Bible." Wednesday, 16th, Camberwell Branch of the N. S. S.

April 19, Newcastle-on-Tyne; 20, South Shields; 21, Newcastle-on-Tyne; 22, Edinburgh; 23, Edinburgh; 24, Hall of Science; 27, Portsmouth; 28, Ball's Pond. May 1, Hall of Science, London; 4, Hall of Science, London; 11, Hall of Science, London; 13, St. James's Hall—Demonstration against the Blasphemy Laws; 18, Claremont Hall, London; 24, Armley; 25, Leeds; 26, Bradford. June 1, Plymouth Conference; 8, Claremont Hall, London; 15, Manchester. July 6, Claremont Hall, London; 13, Claremont Hall, London; 20, Milton Hall, London; 27, Milton Hall, London. August 3, Hall of Science, London; 10, Hall of Science, London; 17, Claremont Hall, London; 24, Milton Hall, London; 31, Milton Hall, London. Sept. 7, Hall of Science, London; 14, Hall of Science, London.

## 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*, 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.

DR. EDWARD AVELING'S ENGAGEMENTS.—April 20, Birmingham; 27, Liverpool. May 4, 11, 18, Milton Hall; 25, Hall of Science. June 8, 15, 22, 29, Milton Hall.

RECEIVED.—St. O., D. Early, A Constant Reader, C. B. Fideles pro Grege, H Harland, Gibeon.

A WORKMAN.—We have no intention of increasing the price of the *Freethinker*, only by and bye of increasing its size.

C. B.—We thank you for the suggestions, one of which, at least, we shall probably make use of.

J. HANSON.—Received with thanks. See "Sugar Plums."

RECRUIT.—We do not know of any such verse. The nearest approach to it is Deuteronomy xxiii., 1.

C. PRICE.—Thanks. We intend to publish a series of papers in the *Freethinker* on London preachers, which will doubtless please thousands of others as well as yourself.

W. H. MORRISH.—We are glad to hear that "the circulation of the *Freethinker* increases in Bristol week by week." The remarkable and ever-increasing success of this journal is a final answer to those who object to its policy. As a matter of fact, our circulation, we believe, exceeds that of all the other Freethought journals in England put together.—Many thanks for the cutting.—Why can't you get a hall for lectures at Bristol? Is it absolutely impossible?

W. HEAFORD.—Received with thanks. Mr. Foote wishes to communicate with you. Please write.

S. J. BELLCHAMBERS.—Received with thanks. One sentence from your letter we take the liberty of quoting for the benefit of others: "I was before a bit of a Freethinker, but the Christmas Number, for which you were imprisoned, thoroughly converted me."

S. P. NORMAN.—We really cannot undertake to find out for you the maiden name of Baron Huddleston's mother.

A YOUNG FREETHINKER points out that the *Freethinker* and its cause would be improved if made the medium of advertisements for servants and workmen, as this would give empy oyes a chance to express their opinions whereas in many cases they have to keep their opinions to themselves or lose their employment.—We can supply Hone's Apocryphal New Testament for 2s. 6d. There is an Old Testament Apocrypha published at 1s. 6d.

SECULAR.—The title of Hockel's book is "Populare Gesammelto Vortrage." Any scientific work can be seen at the British Museum Library. Dr. William's Library, Grafton Street, and the Guildhall Library are also free.

EZRA KEEN.—Judges xix., 34-36, on p. 83, should be 24-26. P. 101—Deut. cxiii. should be chap. xiii.

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

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.

## PERSONAL.

As some societies are complaining that I have not given them dates for lectures, I think it right to say that I am doing my best, and perhaps even more than my strength justifies. I have been only six weeks out of prison, after twelve months' confinement; and during that brief period, besides editing the *Freethinker* and *Progress*, I have travelled over 1,400 miles, made three long public speeches, and delivered eighteen lectures. This record of work must speak for itself. I am extremely sorry, for instance, that

the Scotch friends in Glasgow, Dundee and Aberdeen have been disappointed, but they will doubtless remember what I have suffered for our cause, and recognise the necessity of economising my strength. I find railway travelling more exhausting than it used to be, and until I completely regain my old energy my friends must kindly show a little of the patience that I had to practise for a longer time and in much harder circumstances.

## SUGAR PLUMS.

THE *English Mechanic* gives an interesting account of the discovery of cave villages made by Mr. J. Stevenson, of the U.S. Geological Survey, in Arizona, where explorations have been carried on for some time, which may throw much light on the antiquity of man in America.

SOME of our London readers may be pleased to know that a first-class loan exhibition of pictures is open on Sunday afternoons at the St. Jude Schools, Commercial Street, Whitechapel. There is also a good exhibition of pictures open free on Sunday at 143 Upper Kennington Lane.

LORD COLERIDGE administered a cutting rebuke to the rampant snobbery of Englishmen last week. Someone "in authority" had suggested that the Court of Queen's Bench should be closed on the day of the Duke of Albany's burial, and Lord Coleridge, in declining to do this, sensibly observed that the best way to show respect to her Majesty was to administer justice to her subjects.

DESPITE the heavy rain, there was a very good audience at the London Hall of Science last Sunday evening, to hear Mr. Foote's lecture on "Three Judges on Blasphemy." The lecturer was tremendously applauded at the conclusion of his address, when he renewed his challenge to the bigots, and expressed his determination to strike more fiercely than ever at the "accursed creed." Mr. W. J. Ramsey occupied the chair.

In order that the Hall of Science audience may have an opportunity of attending the debate on Socialism between Mr. Bradlaugh and Mr. Hyndman, Mr. Foote's third lecture on Oliver Cromwell will be delivered on Thursday, April 24, instead of the 17th. On the latter evening only the Club premises will be open. Mr. Foote's first Cromwell lecture drew an audience larger than usual, and no doubt the series will prove still more attractive.

COL. INGERSOLL'S new lecture, delivered at Chicago to three thousand people on March 19th, has just been published at our office under the title of "The Dying Creed." It contains no repetitions, like most of the other lectures published in England. Nothing in it has appeared before, and it includes some of the best stories and keen points we have ever seen. There will be a great rush for this lecture as soon as it is known. It is issued in pamphlet form, thirty-two pages in a colored wrapper, at the price of twopence.

WE have received the following further subscriptions towards the St. James's Hall Demonstration against the Blasphemy Laws:—T. D. James, 1s.; J. M. Wheeler, 2s. 6d.; E. Price, 6d.; Recruit, 1s.; L. Smith, 6d.; D. Carpenter, 5s.; Mossley Branch N. S. S., 2s. 6d.; W. Campbell, 6d.; T. Jackson, 1s.; L. Carver, 6d.; Clara Milman, 1s. 6d. We beg to press this matter on our readers' attention. The expenses of the Demonstration will be heavy, and the Society for the Repeal of the Blasphemy Laws, under whose auspices it will be held, is not at present overburdened with funds. Some of our wealthier friends should take the hint.

THE application of Mr. Thomlinson, secretary of the St. Pancras branch of the National Reform Union, for the use of the St. Pancras Vestry Hall for a public meeting to advocate the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws was refused by a majority of 45 against 19, the good men and true who supported Messrs. N. Robinson, J. Hoppey, and A. Hilditch in their efforts on behalf of free speech, being Messrs. Beere, Bolton, Bower, Bryant, Buchanan, Cooper, Deverell, Grey, Lambie, Lucas, Osmond, Perkins, Pratt and Read. All the other vestrymen were either absent or opposed the application.

THE *Jewish World* of April 4 has a long and sensible article on the Blasphemy Laws. It says "the incarceration of Messrs. Foote and Ramsey will, by all friends to justice and liberty of thought, remain a memorable landmark in the history of prosecution for opinion's sake, as these men, convicted of uttering a blaspheming libel on the State religion, will have proved the *Deus ex* for wiping out a great blot from the Statute Book of this realm."

*Lucifer*, of Valley Falls, Kansas, gives a kindly notice of Mr. Foote's release and reception by his friends.

WE are pleased to notice that Mrs. Sowden lectures next Sunday for the Crystal Palace Branch of the N. S. S. on the subject of "Christianity and Buddhism Compared."

FROM the recent life of F. D. Maurice, by his son, it appears that the breadth of this popular preacher was inherited from his father, who was a Unitarian. Maurice was much pained by Bishop Colenso's exposure of the Pentateuch. "I asked him," he says in a letter to the Llewelyn Davies, "whether he did not think Samuel must have been a horrid scoundrel if he forged a story about the 'I Am,' speaking to Moses, and to my unspeakable surprise and terror he said, 'No; many good men had done such things. He might not mean more than Milton meant.'" Maurice told Colenso it was his duty to resign his bishopric and Colenso retorted, "Oh you know if it comes to that, there are plenty of people who say that you have no business to hold your living."

THAT persevering benefactor of humanity M. Schœlcher has given to the Library de L'Ecole des Beaux Arts his unique collection of engravings, which comprises specimens of every style and school since the earliest infancy of engravers, and which contains 9,000 pictures, and is valued at 200,000 francs. This is the second gift of the kind M. Schœlcher has made to the Fine Arts School. Quite lately he made over all his beautiful bronzes to the city of Paris. This good and great old man is a strange, many-sided being, loving enthusiastically every art, at home in them all, and yet living like an ascetic. He collects industriously to enrich museums. He has the tastes of the most delicate Epicurean, with the heart of a Vincent de Paul, and his fierce zeal and unyielding tenacity in rooting out abuses and trying to right wrong. As he discards all known theological dogmas, he is entirely actuated by his own conceptions of morality and sympathies. He wants to do good, and not to save himself or win fame. He is a veteran of 1830 and 1848, and is quite as ready as General Gordon to lay down his life for any cause he takes up. The negroes in the French colonies owe their emancipation to M. Schœlcher.—*Daily News*.

## SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES.

(Continued from p. 106.)

*Then the Devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him* (v. 11).—How many, Matthew? What are angels? You might have described them for us. Did you see them? Have they wings? Why did they not come sooner, and drive that horrid Devil away from Jesus? And—pray inform us—did the almighty son of Mary and God feel so exhausted with the encounter with the Devil that he needed the ministering angels as soon as it was over? Who attended to the Devil's wants at the close of the conflict? He did all the work; he bore Jesus through the air to the temple and the high mountain. The vigorous exercise seems not to have hurt him; the finite Devil came through the conflict without perspiring; the almighty and infinite God was obliged to get a warm bath, and be fed upon Liebig's extract and port wine after it! How long it took to restore the omnipotent to his accustomed health does not appear, nor what pecuniary outlay it involved. We are really much obliged to those angels, for if they had not been there, the immortal creator of all things might have died!

In the same chapter the romancing evangelist tells how this poor, weak Jesus, who needed the ministrations of angels, went about Galilee healing all manner of diseases, and even casting out devils! Imagine, my reader, how the clergy to-day, not to mention newspapers, would treat a poor fellow who went about casting out devils! Alas! for mankind, that is a lost art, like "touching for the evil" by a consecrated monarch. One after another the time-honored superstitions which once grew so thickly in the ecclesiastical gardens are drooping and dying, and soon the churches themselves will have none remaining. Like the aborigines of Tasmania, they cannot endure the proximity of civilisation, and can only die when the light is too strong. It is only in the churches where the "dim religious light," hardly distinguishable from total darkness, prevails that Bible superstitions now can drag out a wretched existence.

CHAPTER V.—Only a few points here can be touched. The beatitudes (vs. 3-12) are out of date, most of them. Nobody now wants to be "poor in spirit," to "mourn," etc.; and the churches rejoice in persecution only when they can inflict it upon their enemies.

*Ye are the salt of the earth* (v. 13).—Poor earth! Poor earth! The disciples and Christ, too, lost their savor long,

long ago; the whole of Christianity is "good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men"; and nobody treads it down with greater contempt than its professed friends.

*Ye are the light of the world* (v. 14).—Long since the only candle the churches had was put under the bushel of worldliness and went out. No spark of light ever emerges from Christianity, except the few reflected rays of the world's light which its blackness cannot absorb.

*Swear not at all* (v. 34).—You waste your breath, Jesus; your professed followers will swear and forswear, spite of you; and they grossly insult all who wish to obey you.

*Resist not evil* (v. 39).—Evil is the only thing we should resist, and it should be resisted always and everywhere. It is perfectly idle, I tell you, Jesus, to preach meekness, the duty of giving and lending, etc., to the bishops and clergy; as for rich laymen they rarely read what you say. If you have nothing more suitable to the temper of your professed followers than this sermon on the mount, you have visited the earth to little purpose, and may as well go back to heaven again by the first vehicle you can find. They will crucify you if you stay here.

CHAPTER VI.—*Do not sound a trumpet before thee as the hypocrites do* (v. 2).—They still do it, Jesus, just as if you had ordered them to.

*When thou prayest enter into thy closet* (v. 6).—It's no use, Jesus; they pray in public, and even publish their prayers; whether they ever prayed in private is matter of doubt.

*Moreover, when ye fast* (v. 16);—Fast! what is that? The world to day, and the churches, must get an antiquarian to tell them what it means. The word, I believe, refers to some ancient practice amongst Jews and others; but its meaning has been long lost in obscurity.

*Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth* (v. 19)—that, Jesus, is what all thy followers do, when they have the power. Why, just lately one of thy disciples suffered martyrdom in Madagascar (that is a large island in the Indian Ocean, off—Oh! I forgot, it is no use to mention geography to you, Jesus), and has received a money compensation for it. I may perhaps be allowed to express the conviction that if you were to return to earth just now the Christians would very soon convert you to their own ways, and you would lay up treasures on earth as fast as you were able.

*Take no thought for the morrow* (v. 34).—The only classes who obey this are imbeciles, idiots and confirmed paupers. They are more than enough.

CHAPTER VII.—*Judge not* (v. 1).—It is the universal practice to-day.

The heavenly father mentioned in this sermon and elsewhere has not been heard of for many ages; he has been dead so long that even his memory is almost forgotten.

*Enter ye in at the straight gate*, etc., etc. (v. 13).—The bishops have completely inverted all that about the narrow way, etc. Narrow ways are out of date, except where modern improvements have not been introduced; respectable people now affect the widest road they can find; for it leadeth to life; the narrow ones, where the air is poisoned, lead only to misery and death.

*Beware of false prophets* (v. 15).—So we are; they are all so. We scorn them all now, whether they come in their own coats or those of sheep.

*By their fruits ye shall know them* (v. 20).—Quite so. Judged by this test, Christianity is the worst system of dogmas and practices ever known, and the world is waking up to the fact.

*And great was the fall of it* (v. 27).—Ah! Jesus, the truth is the other way. Those who hear thy foolish sayings and build upon them will lose their pains; the world's welfare lies in fields thy poor philosophy never recognised. Hadst thou but set thyself to learn what Plato, Aristotle, Euclid, and others had to teach, thy earthly course would have been less egotistical, less bitter, and thy example and influence might have benefited instead of cursing mankind. As it is, good men cannot bless thy memory; well had it been for man hadst thou never been born—if, indeed, thou art anything but a name.

JOSEPH SYMES.

(To be continued.)

ONE of our irreverent composers, fond of initials, puts the redeemer's name J. Christ.

### THE FALL OF CHRISTIANITY.

"The nations have heard of thy shame, and thy cry hath filled the land, for the mighty man hath stumbled against the mighty, and they are fallen both together."—1 Jeremiah xlvii, 12.

WE live in a momentous time. We are the actual beholders of the tumbling ruins of worn-out creeds. The foundations of Christianity have been swept away by the onward rush of scientific discovery. Past generations looked up to and revered her. Our descendants will gaze down upon her crumbled to dust at their feet. It is our lot to see her fragments whizzing past us in their downward course.

The words of the mourning prophet which I have quoted above may be fairly addressed to her in her present state. Men's minds were covered with a thick cloud of ignorance, and their eyes were directed to her as the "light that was to lighten the world." She gave them blind faith, and sealed up their eyelids that no ray of knowledge might penetrate. They hungered and thirsted, and sought in her the bread of life and fountains of water. She fed them with the cold stone of promises to be fulfilled in some other world, and gave them to drink the bitter water of submission to injustice and wrong. Still through clouds and mist poor humanity groped on in search of truth, and now we are passing by the decaying body of Christian teaching, whose ugly shadow made the darkness darker still. Gazing back upon her retreating form we see the stains of many crimes, we hear the groans of those she made suffer by faggot and stake, by chain and dungeon, and we say to her "the nations have heard of thy shame."

There was mourning on the earth, for there was war, poverty, sickness, misery and death. The strong oppressed the weak, the rich ground down the poor. A simple man, born of an obscure people, tried to raise his countrymen from their fallen state. The powers that were nailed him to a cross, and he died lamenting his desertion by the God in whom he had trusted. His followers deified him, and proclaimed "the Lord hath comforted his people." But they cried peace where there was no peace. Nations flocked to receive the promised comfort, and found thought stifled, speech silenced, knowledge banished, and ignorance ruling over all. Slowly they awoke to their position. With growing courage they dared think, then dared utter their thoughts. Christianity vanquished, slinks away, and from pulpit and from meeting we hear her bewailing her defeat, for her "cry hath filled the land."

There were mighty men in days gone by who sitting in the papal chair kept Europe crouching at their feet. There were mightier men who would not crouch, who ventured to let the world know their opinions, and went cheerfully to torture and to death rather than deny what they thought the truth. There are mighty men now, who, each in their own way form their own ideas and proclaim them to the world. Scarcely two can be found to agree together, but they fight and wrangle and argue about matters of which they know and can know nothing, getting deeper and deeper in the mire of bewilderment for "the mighty man hath stumbled against the mighty."

Freethinkers look on and smile, for they see the triumph of their own cause. Each religious disputant, while he fails to prove the truth of his own teachings, helps to expose the errors of the rest. And so darkness is dispelled, for Church and Bible, which alike shut out the bright rays of the sun of science, are falling "both together."

E. J. BOWTELL.

### ANGELIC POSSESSION.

A STRANGE case is reported in the *Jaffa Chronicle* of angelic possession, the only instance, in the belief of that journal, that has occurred in modern times. A short time back a man went to bathe in the pool of Bethesda, and while there an angel came to "trouble the water." After a refreshing swim the bather left the pond and dressed himself; but he soon became aware of a peculiar sensation pervading his whole system. On reaching his home he complained of feeling curiously light. As the disease advanced a tendency to rise into the air manifested itself, and the man indulged in short flights round the room in which he dwelled. The tipping over of washstand and pails during these gyrations became such a nuisance to the lodgers underneath that the police were called in. These functionaries, being unable to grapple with the difficulty, called in the priests, who, considering the case to be one of diabolical possession, applied the customary incantations to exorcise the fiend. But these, as our readers

will surmise, were of little avail against a celestial being. Even the prayer and fasting which conjures forth the most obstinate of the pitchfork tribe were wasted on the feathered one. The truth is the angel was awfully tired of his cramped position, and would gladly have come out of the man; his feathers, however, had become hopelessly entangled with the possessed one's internal arrangements; and, at last, finding all efforts to extricate himself useless, and being dreadfully bored by the exorcism service, he dashed through the window, which had been carelessly left open, and making use of his victim's lateral limbs as wings, soared away into the azure sky and disappeared. Nothing has yet been heard of the man.

PERSONNE.

### REVIEWS.

*Was Jesus an Impostor? A Discussion between Agnes Rollo Wilkie and Arthur B. Moss.* Watts and Co., 84 Fleet Street.—The title of this little volume is a mistake, and evinces a want of historical perspective. Jesus wrote nothing himself; the fabulous portion of the gospels were the accretions of a later age than his; and it is obviously unjust to make him responsible for all the supernatural claims advanced on his behalf by the second and third generation of his worshippers. For the rest, however, this Discussion is well worth reading. The lady has the finer literary faculty, but Mr. Moss has perhaps the advantage with respect to logic. If the disputants start from different first principles, and fight across a chasm, they still say many things from their separate standpoints that are worthy of attention and respect.

*The House of Lords. An Address by Sir JOHN BENNETT.* D. Bogue; London, 1884.—This 32 pp. pamphlet, in a humorously illustrated cover, is a capital pennyworth. Sir John Bennett's historical review of the Upper House is as useful as it is humorous, being supplemented with a list of the votes of the bishops from 1810, when they unanimously voted against the bill to abolish capital punishment for stealing from shops property of the value of five shillings, to their recent unanimous opposition to the Marriage with Deceased Wife's Sister Bill, and a list of the amounts paid to various aristocratic families as pensions.

### CORRESPONDENCE.

#### JESUS CHRIST OF UNKNOWN DESCENT.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

Sir,—Mr. Symes, in your issue of the 30th inst., gives it as his opinion that Jesus Christ is of unknown descent. Perhaps you will permit me to give another view (not mine) on the subject, as we all like to hear both sides of the question before coming to a conclusion. The following extract I have taken from a Bible in my possession (it is over 260 years old), and is as follows: "These incestuous Sons of Lot, Moab and Ammom were great enemies to the Church of God, notwithstanding from the one even Naamah the royal blood of the Kings of Judah descended (2nd ch., 12th and 13th), and by Ruth that King of Kings, even Jesus Christ (Matt. 1st and 5th)." The above is accompanied by a genealogical tree and woodcut, which would be called indecent if printed in the *Freethinker*.—Yours truly, C. H. PORTER.

### PROFANE JOKES.

DID Jesus die "on the cross" or *die-agon-ally*?

KEEPERS of piscatorial restaurants always reckon Saturday to be a *good fry* day.

MANY a youngster at school has received a thrashing for calling Mount Calvary—mounted cavalry. Well it was enough to make one *cross*.

A SUNDAY scholar was asked what Good Friday commemorated. He promptly replied, "Our Lord was Crusoe-fied on that day." The lad was was thinking of Defoe's Friday.

WE have known good Friday to fall on Boxing day when knocked down in a pantomime.

THE late Home Secretary was termed a *hot Cross Bungler*. The present one should be called a *cod plus* sauce.

A MINISTER of the gospel and an infidel travelled across the Desert from San Diego to Yuma. Grub was short, and the water gone, and a hundred miles from the nearest station, Infidel: "You say you were a man of the gospel, and believe in the Bible?" Preacher: "Most certainly." Infidel: "Then you believe God made the world in six days, and reeted on the seventh day?" Preacher: "Of course." Infidel: "Don't you think, then, that he might have put in one more day to big advantage right here?" Answer yet due.

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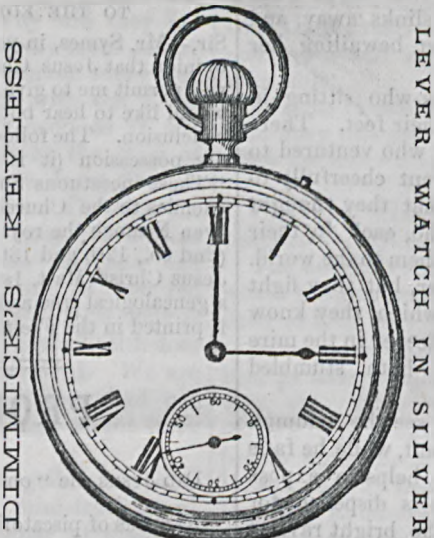
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