

THE FREETHINKER.

EDITED BY G. W. FOOTE.

Sub Editor—J. M. Wheeler.

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COMIC BIBLE SKETCH. — No. LXVIII.



JOB AND HIS FRIENDS.

“Now when Job's three friends heard of all this evil that was come upon him, they came every one from his own place: Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite.”—JOB II., 11.

“On religion in particular, the time appears to me to have come when it is the duty of all who, being qualified in point of knowledge, have on mature consideration satisfied themselves that the current opinions are not only false but hurtful, to make their dissent known.”—JOHN STUART MILL.

FREETHOUGHT AND SOCIALISM.

HE would be a rash man who ventured to predict what social organisation will obtain when Science has purged the world of superstition, and the human race is left to face and solve the problem of its own salvation. The men of that great future will have such different light of knowledge and such different fire of emotion from those we possess, that it is impossible for us to conceive how they will think and feel in their novel state. Nor is it our duty to be always anticipating the march of time. “The prophetic soul of the wide world dreaming on things to come” only manifests its divinations in the orderly evolution of events. What will be will be, as the wise proverb says, and we have only to wait for it. Forestalling Nature is the fantasy of an arrogant brain. We must blend patience with our ardor, and learn faith in Progress as the natural result of

accumulating wisdom. However an inborn curiosity may prompt us to speculate on the future, we must recognise the present as the field of our labors. Let our mental horizon be as wide as possible, but let us always do the duty nearest hand.

Socialism, Communism, Positivism, and other proud schemes of social reorganisation, widely as they differ from each other, all pretend to the same infallibility. They cannot all be right, and they may all be wrong. They quarrel over a speculation as to the untried future which may disappoint the expectations of the simple and the wise—that is, they quarrel over a superstition, a belief transcending experience and born of the imagination. Nothing can be more barren, and nothing can be more gratifying to the sworn enemies of Progress, who are interested in every division in the other camp. They have even been known to foment such divisions with their cash, and they are naturally delighted when, instead of fighting them, we indulge in fantastic controversies on the nature of the peace which will follow our victories. We are simply soldiers of Progress, and our one duty is to fight. When we have triumphed and sheathed our swords, we may safely leave all the rest to Posterity, who will be quite able to decide the proper use of our conquests.

Our present task is to defeat ignorance and superstition. Positive Science is doing one half and Freethought the other. Ignorant people may be provoked to violence, but they can never make a wise revolution; and superstitious people, even if the energy and wisdom of their militant leaders won for them the most precious prizes of Progress, could never retain them. Privilege would hide itself, and when the favorable time came, it would reappear like a new-sloughed serpent. Despotism has two sides, the tyrant and the slave; and, as Whitman says, it is the stupidity of the people which is always inviting the insolence of power. Above all, after the fever of triumph subsided, and the pulse beat slower for past excitement, Priestcraft would resume its old arts of persuasion, and by remoulding the minds of the new generation, introduce a fresh period of slavery and corruption. We have seen this exemplified in the history of France since the fall of the old monarchy. Kingcraft and Priestcraft rose from the ashes of the Revolution with a still more detestable impudence, and if they could not repeat their former excesses, it was only because Freethought had to a considerable extent leavened the national mind. The same thing occurred after 1848, when the young Republic was drowned in blood, and the priests aided and sanctified the vile tyranny of Napoleon the Third. At present the French Republicans are on the right track. They are laicising education, depriving the priest of his usurped power, and filling the minds of the rising generation with secular knowledge without the alloy of theology. And they are striking the weightiest blow at the Church by their practical recognition of the truth that no country is safe while its women are left to the manipulation of priests. Michelet said truly of religions, that they are born and they die on the bosom of woman. By educating her girls in a scientific spirit, France is preparing the ground for the future to build on, and effecting a profounder revolution than all the dreamers and schemers of the world.

Personally I am neither a Socialist nor an anti-Socialist. I am content to work in the present without impatience of the future, settling the rival claims of society and the individual in special cases as they arise, and being true to the great *tendency* of Progress through all casual fluctuations of events and all difficulties of practical interpretation. I regard the destruction of theology as the real work of our day. No abiding good can be achieved without that. Thought goes before action, and the moulding of thought is the primary work of reform. We must free men's minds before we can free their bodies. By destroying the tyranny of heaven we shall destroy the tyrannies of earth; and by rescuing men from the thralldom of theology we shall rescue them from the thralldom of falsehood, ignorance and injustice, and give them the world of reality in exchange for the empire of dreams.

G. W. FOOTE.

THE EARTHQUAKE.

THE cowardice and the Christianity of the English people have been well exemplified in connexion with the earthquake. The results are quite as shocking as the cause. Let us admit at once that an earthquake is not a daily or even annual occurrence in England, and that some damage has been done to property by the natural vagaries of Tuesday week. Let us admit that the newspapers are anxious to turn a dishonest penny by exaggerating what had happened. Yet with all this we have in the letters and recorded utterances of the ambitious witnesses to the phenomena, evidence enough of the fright experienced and of the one-sidedness of the God-belief.

The papers burst forth with such headings as "Villages Wrecked," "Shocks in London," "Great Alarm." Of course not a single village was wrecked; the shocks were mere tremors, and the great alarm was the figment of the diseased brain of the writer in the *Evening Standard* of the article whose head-lines (I mean head-lines) I quote.

The cowardice and injustice of the English people are doubly shown in the supposition that "Fenians had been at their dastardly work." Any outrage, even on the part of Nature, must, of course, be referable ultimately to the Irish conspirators. It is dastardly work on the part of the Fenians to wreak vengeance on the buildings and persons of a nation by whom the Irish have been cruelly and foully wronged for centuries. But if God upsets buildings and persons without any provocation and, big bully that he is on

the Christian showing, injures inoffensive houses and living beings at least as much sinned against as sinning—is not his dastardly work?

An honest mind must be angered at the injustice and poltroonery of men who can denounce hypothetical Fenians and are afraid to denounce their brute-god in whom they pretend to believe. But on the whole, mirth is the most prominent feeling. It is all so funny. Says our *Evening Standard* genius: "The effects produced were in some cases most comical." The effect produced on the writing of the young man on the evening paper is most comical. The *Evening Standard* always provokes to mirth. But it was never so humorous as in dealing with this abortive earthquake. "The metropolis and portions of the eastern counties were visited this morning by earthquake shocks." It sounds like a paragraph from the *Court Circular*. The compositors would not re-enter a building until a surveyor had certified it as safe. As if a surveyor had served an apprenticeship with earthquakes! One gentleman at breakfast goes down and his wife up, as in a game of matrimonial see-saw. The letter writers are as comic as the article-mongers. Mr. Biddell gravely records that he "felt a new sensation," and an artful clergyman who felt a shock held his discreet tongue until his wife, by her rushing to the door, confirmed his suspicions that the shock was real, and relieved his mind of the dread that "he'd got 'em again."

The comical effects were not confined to human beings. Articles on shelves "chattered audibly," so that we ought no longer to wonder that walls may have ears; frames in composing-rooms danced; crab-boxes containing machinery for working the lock-gates at Ipswich dock were agitated; and when the spire of a church fell down, "the new water tower, a massive structure, was visibly affected." Note the stroke of genius in the descriptive phrase "a massive structure," and observe how the *Evening Standard* man, under great emotion, rises to poetic heights. It is a subject for the artist in all forms this of the new water tower "visibly affected."

Some of the experiences of certain individuals are open to more than one interpretation. There is a pleasing ambiguity about the fact "that people found themselves severely shaken before they could realise what was the matter." As a boy, I have found the same thing occur. I have even thought it was an earthquake until I knew that it was my nurse or my governess. Nor is the experience of the gentleman who "was suddenly taken aback by the dancing of his table, and his inability to write, caused by the extreme shaking of his hand," a singular one. These sensations are not unknown without any splitting, other than in the form of a headache.

But the most evident moral is that if you are a religious family or a religious edifice, you are more likely to suffer from an earthquake than anyone else. The family of Mrs. Horne, of 46 Russell-square, were all kneeling at the bed-side, presumably on the pray, when the bed shunted, the gas-jets jingled, and the chandeliers swayed to and fro. On the other hand, Mr. Gunn, theatrical manager, who was also in bed—in the next house—was carried back to the days of his infancy by the gentle rocking of the bed, as it were any cradle. And let it never be forgotten that whilst the north railway station at Colchester only did a sway to and fro, Langenhoe Church was destroyed, and that the only building in Colchester itself that suffered was the Congregational Church. The fall of forty feet of the spire of this ill-fated edifice gave rise to the affecting incident in connexion with the new water tower.

Upon the whole, God is improving. If he likes to go on sending earthquakes of a nature so discriminating that they only frighten clergymen, shake up praying families, and upset church towers, we can, nay we will, forgive him.

EDWARD AVELING.

ACID DROPS.

A CORRESPONDENT of the *Pall Mall Gazette* sends a long pious rignarole, which, he says, is the inscription written by Charles Reade for his own tombstone. If the great novelist ever composed such twaddle as his "last words to mankind" he must have been pretty far gone when he wrote his epitaph.

GAOLER HARCOURT has been sued in the Oxford County Court for £4 15s., the cost of "buttonholes and ladies' nose-gays" supplied to him during the election in March, 1880.

The Court ordered payment within fourteen days. Poor Harcourt's official salary of £5,000 a year is too small to allow of his paying his debts. Surely the bigots will get up a subscription for a man after their own heart; they owe him something for holding the key of our prison door so long. The worst of it is, he has quarrelled with the City Corporation, or they might have obligingly sent him a cheque. Perhaps the Lord Mayor will still give him something out of the poor box.

GAOLER HARCOURT denied in the House of Commons that he knew anything of the summons or the proceedings. W. Gray, of 30 New Inn, Hall Street, Oxford, the trustee of Harcourt's creditor, writes to the papers to say that he applied five times for the money, and that the summons was served in the usual way at the Gaoler's private residence in London. Our corpulent Home Secretary is a marvellous lover of truth. He loves it with a purely disinterested love, knowing that his passion will never be reciprocated.

THE Public Prosecutor, who so readily granted his fiat to Tyler and Co. for the prosecution of the *Freethinker*, is so neglectful of his proper work that Mr. Justice Manisty has felt obliged to describe him as "a mere name and a sham." This very same official, Sir John Maule, was praised by Judge North, who appears to be in the wrong every time he opens his mouth.

On Sunday last pious Judge North employed his coachman to drive to St. Sepulchre's, Northampton, where he was regaled by a sermon wherein the Rev. F. S. Thornton, the vicar, vigorously denounced the *Freethinker*. For this fresh advertisement we beg to return thanks.

RECENTLY at the Old Bailey, Mr. Justice Stephen found himself alone on the Bench, and an Alderman had to be sent for to constitute a Court. When we were tried at the Old Bailey the worthy fat-bellies turned up in full force, pious and sober Fowler being conspicuous among his civic brethren. We thought of objecting to their presence on the Bench as they were our prosecutors, and if they had withdrawn there would have been no Court. What a rueful figure poor North would have cut then! We pitied the poor man and waived the objection.

THE sanctity of an oath is well illustrated by the following scene in the Sheffield County Court: On entering the witness-box the Testament was handed to the defendant so that he might be sworn. He turned it about wondering, and having a vague idea that he ought to kiss the book, put it to his lips. His Honor (addressing the defendant): Do you know what you are kissing? The Defendant: Yes; the Sheffield County Court. (Great laughter, it being known to many that the words "Sheffield County Court" are stamped on the back of the Testament). His Honor: Do you believe in the Sheffield County Court? (Laughter.) The Defendant (emphatically): I do. (Laughter.) His Honor: That will do, then. (Laughter.) When we think of this pious scene, and then reflect that even in the House of Commons the oath is *practically* treated in very much the same spirit, we begin to understand why the Tories object to Mr. Bradlaugh's profaning it.

THE Bible is the word of God, who is the father of *all* of us. Yet it is an illegal act for anyone to print the Bible except at the University Press. God Almighty's word is no good without the Queen's endorsement.

A CHRISTIAN contemporary waxes eloquent over the strictness with which President Kruger, of the Transvaal, and his fellow-deputies to Europe keep the Sabbath holy. "It was a beautiful spectacle, the sight of these God-fearing men, un-seduced by the attractions of the gay metropolis"—Brussels. These God-fearing men, however, are not un-seduced by the desire of mammon, for out in their own country they are said to be thorough-going slave-holders. But that may be a part of God-fearing, and judging from the Bible we should say it is.

IN his memoirs, Bishop Wilberforce attributes to Cardinal Newman the words: "We can do nothing against it [infidelity]; it all rests with your Church." To this statement the Cardinal, in a letter to the *Weekly Register*, gives the lie direct. He says: "I do not believe any statement of fact made about me by Bishop Wilberforce, because from passages in his life which have already come before me, I know how little, in his statements about me, does he care about their accuracy."

CARDINAL NEWMAN says that "if the Established Church was removed, a powerful obstacle to the spread of unbelief in England would be removed with it." When we take in conjunction with this the fact that 272 church livings are in the patronage of members of the House of Commons and 4,800 in the patronage of members of the House of Lords, we see

another evidence of the great truth which Gibbon so strongly enforces, that the religion of the peoples of the modern world has been generally decided for them by their rulers.

PRESSENSE calls Gounod's "Redemption" a "sublime protest against the platitudes of modern Positivism." Well, we don't know much about the platitudes of modern Positivism, but we are inclined to think that a much better protest than Gounod's "Redemption" against modern unbelief would be a fresh resurrection of Jesus Christ. It would be a much easier thing than composing an oratorio, and ever so much more convincing.

A WRITER in the *Christian World* says that "the wealth of the godless millionaire is dross." We don't think so. We fancy the melting-pot would show a great deal of good metal. Anyhow, we should like some of the "dross" to build a few Secular halls with.

A NEW work on the Bible is said to be intended to show the English reader "some of the beauty and force of the Hebrew and Greek originals." This is extremely good. The beauty of the Greek New Testament is of the most imaginary character. Mr. Swinburne, one of the best Greek scholars in England, in his recent article on Wordsworth and Byron speaks of the New Testament as "translated out of *canine* Greek into divine English"; and his observation is just exactly true.

SPURGEON has just been telling his young men that they are "responsible for their belief," and that "Freethought is rebellion." The first statement is damnably false, the second is divinely true. Freethought *is* rebellion, against tyranny of priest and king, altar and throne; it declares war against every despotism in heaven and earth.

THE Rev. J. F. N. Gilman, of Hennock, has been sentenced to three months' imprisonment as a first-class misdemeanant for libeling the Rev. A. Christopher. Messrs. Foote, Ramsey and Kemp had twenty-four months' between them for "insulting opinions," and were treated all the while like common felons. Such is English justice.

AT the vestry meeting held the other day at St. Ethelburga, Bishopsgate, one of the speakers complained that although the rector of the parish is in receipt of an income of £1,065 a year, his duties are entirely delegated to a curate, who receives an annual stipend of £140 only. It was stated that since the legal contest between the parish and the rector, on the subject of Ritualistic practices, which ended in a victory for the churchwardens, seven years since, the rector had not been seen in the parish. St. Ethelburga is stated to have a population of 199 persons.

AT Dunholme near Lincoln, the parson has circulated "A short and simple catechism to be learned by all parishioners." The following is a sample question:—"Is it then a sin to neglect thine own minister and thine own parish church?" Answer: "Undoubtedly. Because it is an open defiance of God's commandment, 'Honor thy father and thy mother;' thy father is God, thy mother the church."

THE *Nat Basket*, a missionary journal in Burmah, declares that "The ancient and gorgeous system of Buddhism has been no more affected by the preaching of Christianity than a few showers of rain affects the ocean."

FATHER ANATOLIG, a Russian missionary in Japan, declares it is useless for Christianity to wrestle with Buddhism, Confucianism and Shintoism in that country. The only means left to the Christian missionary is to establish as many schools as possible and impart the teaching of Christ "among the less intellectually developed masses of the people." It is found in Japan as elsewhere that the divine truths of the Christian religion can only be received by the ignorant and superstitious.

THE Bombay *Theosophist* says, anent missionary enterprise in India: "It is a pity to see so many sacrifices made by good people at the West merely to support a party of inefficients in the profitless, because hopeless, occupation of trying to persuade the people of India and other Asiatic countries to relinquish their ancestral faith for one which the missionaries are utterly unable to defend when questioned by even tolerably educated 'heathens.' The money is sorely needed at home to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and rescue the vicious from their state of lawlessness and degradation. It does no good here—except to the missionary."

A POSTER headed "Behold he Cometh," with the names of half a dozen reverends attached, announces a conference on the second advent at the Conference Hall, Clapham Road, for May 14—17th. We venture to predict that the conference will leave out of sight the fact that Jesus prophesied his second coming as immediately after the destruction of Jerusalem and in the life-time of his own disciples (see Matt. xvi.,

28; xxiv., 19-34, etc.) The fools, frauds and fanatics who preach the approaching second advent are among the most noxious of the blackbeetle tribe. They prey on the panic of their deluded followers. It was by this pretence of the near approach of the end of the world that the Salvation Army of the first century dominated the minds of the ignorant, and it has ever since been a large factor in perpetuating the delusion.

"MORE matter for a May morning," says Fabian in "Twelfth Night." More mirth at the May meeting cries the Freethinker year by year. The Earl of Shaftesbury is as usual to the fore in these comicalities. "The Jubilee Singers would make the hearts of the audience fill with the curses of the system of slavery and with blessings to Almighty God that it had been wiped away from so large a surface of the habitable globe." Surely the audience might spare some of their curses for the God who has arranged for slavery, and who whilst according to that high authority, the Earl of Shaftesbury, is almighty, does not take the trouble to wipe away slavery completely.

"FLAT burglary as ever was committed." Here is the Rev. Dr. Sinclair Patterson blaspheming the third and most shadowy of the persons of the Trinity. He urges the especial need of the holy spirit's baptism, consecration and self-sacrifice. Dr. Patterson's eagerness for the baptism of the holy spirit to take place may arise from a sense of justice. One third of the Trinity has already been baptised. Why not another? But the self-sacrifice of the holy spirit seems unnecessary. As the three persons of the Trinity are one, the murder of the son by the father is not only a murder, but was a suicide.

INQUIRY is to be made next week of the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether it is a fact that Mr. Blackwood, Secretary of the General Post Office, has established a "Civil Service Prayer Union," the object of which is "to make intercession for the unconverted members of our own department," and that those who refuse to join it are regarded as "unconverted." This Blackwood was a promoter of the defunct Anti-Atheistic Society, and threatened he would stop the sending of Paine's "Age of Reason" through the post.

ALTHOUGH the *Southend Standard* states that the prime movers in the Sunday trading prosecutions wish they had let the question alone, fresh summonses have been issued to be heard on May 8th. A prosecution of the magistrates' coachmen, etc., might be advisable to check the bigots. Mr. Petherick, 29 Osaburgh Street, N.W., will be glad of subscriptions to carry on the war.

MR. AND MRS. BUCKLE, the new Salvation players at the Grecian Theatre, should buckle themselves to the truth. They gave it out that a reporter of the *Freethinker*, which they described as the production of Mr. Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant, was converted at a meeting at Chalk Farm. It is needless to say there is not a word of truth in the statement.

A CORRESPONDENT who has frequently been bothered by clerical beggars, sends us a letter exposing a common but shabby clerical trick, that of writing to all shareholders of railways, demanding subscriptions in a "stand and deliver" style. There is no limit to clerical cheek.

ONE of the prominent reasons assigned by Dean Burgon for his objection to the admission of women to examinations for university honors is that their purity would be contaminated by reading the classics. Of course men's purity cannot be so corrupted, or is of no account. According to the Dean of Chichester, a woman must be debarred from reading Plato or *Æschylus*, lest her purity should be tainted, but every little girl may have free access to the bestial stories of Judah, Lot, David, Ammon, etc., and is encouraged to revel in the filth of Ezekiel and the lust of the Canticles.

"MAJOR" MOORE, the head of the American Salvation Army, is in gaol, charged with grand larceny to the tune of \$65,250. He finds it difficult, says the *New York Sun*, "to apply to the administration of that body here the principles adopted with such effect by General Booth in London."

Apropos of "God at the Theatre," Balfe's opera of the "Bohemian Girl" supplies a good illustration of the efficacy of prayer. When Count Arnheim hears of the abduction of his daughter, instead of going immediately in search, he and his servitors fall on their knees and sing a prayer. While this is going on the gipsy is seen making his escape with the child.

A CORRESPONDENT sends us something like a proof of the power of prayer, taken from the *Essex Weekly News* for April 18. It appears that at Tolleshunt Knights, a man named Beckwith was dreadfully stabbed by another named Smith. The following day being Sunday, the divine doctor prescribed prayers for his recovery, but, owing to a mistake, prayed for

Smith instead of Beckwith. The prayer was answered. Smith lived—by the way, he had never been injured, but that is no proof he might not have died but for the prayers. Poor Beckwith, however, died; which shows how necessary it is to be particular about names. Now the people have found out their error they wish to get their prayers back, as they wouldn't like Smith to get any more benefit from them.

THE Rev. G. H. Humphreys, a leading Calvinist in New York, has been playing the "angel" to Laura Jones. As they could not find a poor wittol to play the part of Joseph, the baby caused a bother, and the result is that the "angel" has been ordered to pay five hundred dollars down and five dollars a week for fourteen years. If the magistrates of Jerusalem had made a similar order against Gabriel, it is highly probable that the immaculate conception would never have been palmed off on the world as a holy mystery.

THE Paris *Charivari*, deploring the growing infidelity of the day, gives as an instance of the genuine Christian piety which is becoming extinct, the following letter from Baron Giradot's collection of autographs. The mother of Cardinal Richelieu writes to a young married lady: "For years I was fervently praying God to send to my son a mistress like you; one that has the desired qualities. I now find that God Almighty was pleased to accept my humble prayer, since you have allowed my dear son to be your humble servant." What a charming picture of mother, son, mistress, cardinal, church, and God Almighty!

IN "Lemaistre's Travels" we read that over the gate of a church of La Chartreuse, near Milan, is the following inscription: "Marie Virgini, matri, fille, spouse Dei—To the Virgin Mary, the mother, the daughter, the wife of God." This adds another mystery to "the mystery of godliness," for according to this Jesus was his own father and the son of his own daughter.

THE Christian Evidence Society advertises "Funds much needed." We have always found the blackcoats powerful in one kind of argument—the *argumentum ad crumenum*, or appeal to the pockets.

CHICAGO boasts that it possesses fifteen miles of solid grog shops, besides more gambling hells and other resorts of vice, than any other place of like population. This is the city Messrs. Moody and Sankey left to its wickedness in order that they might evangelise Britain.

"A CURSORY History of Swearing" has just been published. We are unaware if the author traces this peculiarly Christian practice to swearing Peter, or to Jesus who cursed the barren fig-tree.

THE widow of Joshua Oalsman, the Leek farmer whose toes the Rev. William Beresford determined should face the east in order that he shouldn't walk off in the wrong direction on the morning of the resurrection, has petitioned the Home Secretary to order the exhumation of her husband that she may have him buried the other way.

THE *Church Review* says of the late Bishop of Ripon, "his death has attracted no attention and his life we trust will be no example."

AT Fakenham, Norfolk, Robert Bell, a Salvationist leader, got seven days for assault, and another, Samuel George, has been committed to trial for indecently assaulting a girl of eleven.

CLERGYMEN who attempt to use scientific illustrations generally come to grief. One genius at the meeting of the Young Men's Christian Association sighed forth "if they had all the latent energy in the church set on fire what a store house!" To speak of setting energy on fire is as inaccurate as to speak of weighing the bulk or calculating the cubical contents of the weight of a body. There is only one way to make sense of the nonsense. That is by reading the word "set on fire" as qualifying "church," not as qualifying energy. If all the latent energy in the church set on fire became kinetic. If the church, in a word, were destroyed, and out of its decaying noisomeness better and brighter things constructed, the world would be the happier.

THE history of the Baptist Missionary Society on the Congo River has been stained and darkened by death, and consecrated by graves. Yet the society "has cause for reverent thankfulness to God." The society is evidently a collection of brave, manly people. It has so much respect for God that it has none for itself.

A LADY who has lived at Port Elizabeth says the missionaries are a curse instead of a blessing, and that they set up stores, and thus introduce strong drink to the native population who join their congregations.

SPECIAL NOTICE.

We shall publish next week an article by Mrs. Besant on "The Clothes of the Bible."

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, May 4th, Hall of Science, London, at 7 p.m., "Bible Blasphemy."

Monday, the 5th, Philharmonic Hall, Southampton, at 8.30, "Blasphemy Laws as Interpreted by Lord Coleridge, Justice Stephen and Justice North."

May 4, Hall of Science; 11, Hall of Science; 12, Leicester; 13, St. James's Hall—Demonstration against the Blasphemy Laws; 15, Eleusis Club, Chelsea; 18, Claremont Hall; 20, Walworth; 25, Leeds; 26, Bradford; 27, Bradford. June 1, Plymouth, N. S. S. Conference; 8, Claremont Hall, London; 21, Sutton in Ashfield; 22, Nottingham. July 6, Claremont Hall, London; 13, Claremont Hall; 20, Milton Hall, London; 27, Milton Hall; 29, Manchester. 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.—May 4, 11, 18, Milton Hall; 25, Hall of Science. June 8, 15, 22, 29, Milton Hall.

RECEIVED WITH THANKS.—J. Sanders, Au Revoir, S. Fleming, E. R. Bemmell.

G. LACORDAIRE.—The sentiment is good, but you want more practice before you can expect an adequate command of verse.

EMIGRANT.—We will answer your letter through the post.

INFLEXIBLE FREETHINKER.—We have been greatly amused by your interesting letter. No doubt, as you say, the sky pilots of Salisbury are disgusted with the failure of the ligots in their efforts to suppress this journal or alter its policy. Of course they like to put our circulation as low as possible; but it is gratifying to know that one newsagent in Salisbury sells four times as many copies as the man in black said circulated in the town.

J. ANDERSON wishes us to say that the next smoking concert at the Hall of Science, London, will take place on Sunday, May 4, at 9.

B. ELLIS, Secretary of the Peckham and Dulwich Branch of the N. S. S., states that they have had to clear out of their old premises at a few hours' notice, in consequence of Christian bigotry. Their meetings will henceforth be held at the "Sailor Prince," Gordon Road, Peckham.

R. COSFORD, who ascribes his conversion to Freethought to Judge North, is thanked for the cuttings.

W. L. LA TREILLE, 6 Brockland Terrace, Lewisham, invites all Freethinkers in that district to communicate with him respecting forming a branch of the N. S. S.

J. W. MOSS.—Thanks for jokes. A chess or draught problem column would hardly come within the scope of our journal.

A BIBLE STUDENT refers to Numbers xxvi, 44, which mentions "the family of the Jesuites," as proof that Ignatius Loyola did not found the order.

C. WORDLEY.—Your plan of leaving a copy of the *Freethinker* in coffee-shops and news-rooms is a very good one.

J. PERCIVAL.—The servant of Jahveh spoken of in Isaiah was no personal Messiah but the personified nation of Israel.

J. T. CONGREVE.—These divergences of opinion will happen. Your view is no doubt as honest as ours, and we must agree to differ.

H. W. KITCHENER.—We are of course acquainted with the story of Minerva. It shows that the Pagan mythology did in that case dispense with the mother, but you will observe, on the other hand, that it retains the father.

T. LONGLEY.—Ordering an editor to insert your letter is just the way to get it put in the waste-paper basket.

H. WOODWARD.—The highest dignity in the English Church is Archbishop Benson, not Jesus Christ.

G. SENIOR.—A picture of Lazarus and Dives appeared in No. 136. Try again.

E. J. PILGER.—We incline to place Matthew and Mark between the years 80 and 100. Luke and Acts in the early part of the second century, and John in the latter part of the second century.

HENRY CHAPMAN, of Stratford, informs us, upon the authority of a deacon of Mr. Knagg's Church, that the conversion of no Secularist has been known of there within the last six or seven years.

W. SMITH, Leeds, sells the *Freethinker* in the covered market every afternoon and evening, and in the Lecture Hall on Sunday.

MME. GOEDBLOED, 29 Foley Street, W., is agent for Freethought literature.

FREEDOM.—We know no work on "Self-Contradiction of the Bible," by A. J. Davis. There was a tract of contradictions, entitled "The Scripturians' Creed," by Citizen Davies, now out of print. We can supply you with "Gospel Contradictions," by Judge Strange, and Cooper's "Bible Analysed," which should serve your purpose.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Monroe's Ironclad Age—Philosophical Inquirer—Beckenham Journal—Lynn News—Salisbury Journal—

Anti-Christian (Calcutta)—Boston Investigator—Christian—The Word (Princeton)—Salisbury Times.

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.

SUGAR PLUMS.

We have received the following further subscriptions towards the expenses of the Demonstration against the Blasphemy Laws, to be held in St. James's Hall, London, on May 13th:—C. L., 5s.; R. Green, 6d.; Jacobs and Robinson, 1s.; N. W., Plymouth, 10s. 6d.; Inflexible Freethinker, 5s.; G. Ward, 6d.; Ex-Ritualist, 1s.; a Portsmouth Friend, 2s. 6d.; R. Bulman, 2s. 6d.

TICKETS for the reserved seats at the Demonstration can be obtained at 28 Stonecutter Street and 63 Fleet Street. Front seats 2s. 6d., Balcony 1s. Mr. Robert Forder, 6 Cambridge Terrace, Islington, N., will be glad to send a poster announcing the Demonstration to any person who will get it exhibited. We trust our friends will do their best in this matter, and give the meeting all possible publicity. It might be as well to add that the major portion of the seats will of course be free. The few reserved seats are simply intended to contribute towards the expenses.

INGERSOLL'S new lecture, "The Dying Creed," is having an extraordinary sale. It is generally pronounced to be the most brilliant discourse he ever delivered. Indirectly the Colonel is doing as great a work on this side the Atlantic as he is doing directly on the other.

A NEW anecdote concerning Colonel Ingersoll is reported in the *Boston Investigator*. One of his interviewers asked how the supposed author of the Decalogue was able to so thoroughly cover the whole field of human transgression. The Colonel replied, "I suppose he was on visiting terms with his neighbors."

THE Freethought Publishing Company has just issued a full report of the debate on Socialism between Mr. Bradlaugh and Mr. Hyndman, in pamphlet form, at 3d. As many people will like to keep a copy of the debate, it is a great pity that it is printed on such poor paper and with inferior ink.

ACCORDING to the *Ironclad Age* the new Constitution of California puts church property upon the tax list, and the Senate has refused to elect a chaplain.

A MEETING will be held at the Hall of Science, London, on Wednesday evening, May 7th, at eight o'clock, to consider the desirability of forming a Sunday Cricket Club.

IN his interesting plea for cremation, in this month's *Progress*, Mr. Britton contends that the custom of burning the dead is entirely Aryan and opposed to Semitic prejudices. It is, however, interesting to note that the enlightened editor of the *Jewish World* believes that cremation "will ultimately become the universal method of disposing of the dead."

THE twelfth edition of the "Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation," an early and crude exposition of the development theory, has been given to the world for the first time with the name of its author, the late Robert Chambers. The authorship, which for a long while occasioned much speculation, has for some time been an open secret, but the full story is told for the first time by Mr. Alexander Ireland, who transmitted the MS., which was in the handwriting of Mrs. R. Chambers, to Messrs. Churchill the publishers.

THE *Westminster Review* opens with a comparison of "The Samson Saga and the Myth of Herakles," which conclusively shows the mythical nature of the exploits which the book of Judges attributes to the Phœnician sun-god Shimson.

IN the new volume of the "Short Protestant Commentary of the New Testament," edited by Professors Schmidt and Holzendorff, just published by Williams and Norgate, the Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians are thought to be by a later hand than Paul, the 2nd Thessalonians is assigned to different authorship from the 1st, with the teaching of which it is supposed to clash. Timothy and Titus are assigned to the second century. The First Epistle of Peter is held to have been written by a Roman Christian in the time of Trajan, and the undoubted spurious Second Epistle is relegated to the latter half of the second century.

CHRISTIANS who point to the sixth satire of Juvenal when they describe the horrible state of domestic morality before

Christianity appeared, should look at some of the inscriptions on "heathen sepulchres" recently quoted by a religious journal from the new edition of Backhouse's "Early Church History." The following are from "heathen" husbands to their dead wives: "She never gave a bad word to her husband." "She never committed any fault except by dying." "Though dead, she will always be alive to me, and always be golden in my eyes." Such inscriptions clearly show how unnecessary was the Christian "reformation." Paul's disgusting view of marriage, and Jesus Christ's gospel of eunuchs, were not likely to *elevate* the morality of husbands and wives whose love defied the power of death.

On Sunday evening, at 7.30, Dr. E. B. Aveling will lecture in Milton Hall, Hawley Crescent, Kentish Town Road, on "The Gospel of Evolution." On Wednesday evening next, at 8.30, Mrs. Annie Besant commences a course of instructive lectures on "Facts Everyone Should Know." On May 7 she will deal specially with "Food, and How it Nourishes." We hope all friends will rally round the North-West London Branch of the N. S. S. in their endeavors to combine the constructive with the destructive. The charge for admission is twopence, so as to be within the reach of all classes.

At a meeting of the Browning Society, presided over by Mr. J. Russell Lowell, the American Minister and poet, a paper by Mr. J. Cotter Morison was read on Browning's poem "Caliban on Setebos." Mr. Morison pointed out that the moral of the poem was that if Caliban by appropriate reasoning deduced such a grotesque, laughably hideous god as Setebos, what right had other natural theologians to suppose their deductions had a better success or foundation.

THE letter of H. Stringer, referred to in last week's "Correspondents," is worth a fuller notice. He informs us that when Mr. Foote delivered his first provincial lectures at Manchester, after his release, he walked all the way from Brightside to attend them. Brightside is the other side of Sheffield, and over forty miles from Manchester. H. Stringer is only a young lad, and he did the journey quite alone. We hope he will show as much perseverance in his studies as in his pedestrianism, and grow up an ornament to the cause of Freethought.

In *Our Corner* for May Mrs. Besant continues her interesting autobiographical sketches, and gives some specimens of her girlish prayers, the expressions of which appeal strongly to the emotional, not to say sensuous, temperament. Mr. Bradlaugh continues his papers in opposition to Socialism, which we think he carries unnecessarily far in objecting to the nationalisation of the land. Surely as a permanent essential to life land is in a different category to other property, and the scheme of compensation by terminable annuities need not hurt any landlords, still less the small proprietors whose interests Mr. Bradlaugh properly considers. C. N. expounds a self-deifying philosophy of Hylo-Idealism, which he calls "the creed of the coming day," and D. contributes one of his acute essays in answer to Mr. George's definition of capital. The paper, however, which will most interest our readers is that by Mr. Foote on "The Duty of Blasphemy." Mr. Foote contends that what Freethinkers have to face is not honest prejudice, but hypocrisy. "Now hypocrisy cannot be confuted, but it may be shamed, and this idea has been the motive of all great satire from Juvenal to Pope, and from Lucian to Voltaire." According to the law, not only ridicule but any attack on Christianity is blasphemy. In vigorous language Mr. Foote declares that when honest men can be imprisoned under such a law it is not sufficient to agitate for its repeal. It is not the conveners of meetings who do most to abolish iniquitous laws but those who defy them. The proper answer to a blasphemy prosecution is to blaspheme.—J. M. W.

THE London correspondent of the *Norfolk News*, believed to be the proprietor, Mr. J. H. Tillett, M.P., supplies the following items to the issue for April 19: "I believe that the better and clearer-sighted section of the clergy are determined that the voice of Mr. Justice North on the Blasphemy Laws shall not go forth as the voice of the Church. They feel, as Maurice taught them to feel many years ago, that this unctuous assertion of the rights of 'religion' involves a sad denial of its truths. I am informed on very good authority that the Archbishop of Canterbury was very seriously impressed with his duty as a prime exponent of the gospel of love. Had he been left to his own initiative, he would have spoken out and told the Church its duty. But he had strong pressure brought to bear on him. Whatever he may be politically, Sir William Harcourt has been the consistent foe of the liberal spirit in things ecclesiastical, and he warned the archbishop that such an appeal would be dangerous to the cause of law and order. Lord Cairns was of the same opinion, and the archbishop was dissuaded. It is not too much to say that his decision is a grave one for his Church. That the evangelical party has almost to a man resisted with blind bigotry every attempt to mitigate the monstrous sentence pronounced on Messrs. Foote and Ramsey is a

fact to be noted. I could never quite understand their claim to arrogate to themselves the title 'Evangelical.' If the spirit of the *Rock* and the *Record* be not the grotesque opposite of the spirit of Christ there is no meaning in words. If the Church of England had been true to its vocation, the scandal of the Bradlaugh question, the grosser scandal and wrong of the blasphemy sentences, would never have rested on the nation's head. Dissenters were happily true to *theirs*, and they have the satisfaction of knowing that their brave example is bearing sure though tardy fruit."

ON May 8 and 9 Dr. Aveling debates with Mr. Maloney, of Birmingham, at the Camden Hall, Liverpool, on the question—"Does Man Survive Physical Death?"

MR. FOOTE'S lectures at Portsmouth last Sunday were attended by exceptionally good audiences in number and quality. In the evening the New Pavilion presented a fine sight, with its handsome interior, and its crowd of enthusiastic faces. The local Branch of the N. S. S. is making headway, and before long it hopes to have a fine hall of its own. Mr. J. Brumage, the Secretary, deserves special praise for his untiring energy in the service of the cause.

FREETHINKERS should persuade their orthodox acquaintances to attend our lectures. Last Sunday, at Portsmouth, a member of the local Branch persuaded an "anti-infidel" shop-keeper to go and hear Mr. Foote's afternoon lecture. "Well," he asked when they got outside, "how did you like it?" "Why," was the answer, "I could have sat for a month." In the evening the "anti-infidel" gentleman brought his wife and family to join him in taking another dose of Freethought

LETTER FROM MR. SYMES.

Melbourne, Victoria, March 3, 1884.

DEAR MR. EDITOR,—Long ere this finds you, you will, no doubt, be in the full blaze of your blasphemy again, just as if Holloway Gaol and the bigots were only a dream. Our society here very kindly and readily fell into my suggestion to send you a telegram congratulating you on your release—I hope it found you. Your physics, I trust, are no more deteriorated than your hatred of superstition and persecutors. Your path is now clear; the greatest obstacles ever to be met are probably now surmounted. Orthodoxy cannot enter the arena with able and earnest men without damage to itself. And though its friends prefer persecution to honest fighting, even that does not pay them. Popular sentiment is no longer with the persecutor—even the meanest and most cowardly of our foes feels compelled to try and screen his persecution under one pretence or another; they dare not, even to themselves, call it by its true name; that would be too ugly, too abhorrent to endure. And this is perhaps the best guarantee we could possibly have that persecution has no future—that it is a thing that must die before many years have passed.

In the meantime we must think, work, reason and laugh. These are our weapons. We need no others. Our weapons are not big guns and cowardly infernal machines; not the knife of the assassin, the lying tongue of the slanderer, the faggot and stake of the bigot, nor the legal processes of the ill-tempered poltroon. Our weapons are thoughts flying off from tongue and pen—the quiet, excruciatingly exact reasoning of the logician, the thorough probing of the surgeon, the indignant attack of the defenders of truth, the keen sarcasm that scarifies respectable falsehood, and the hearty laugh provoked by theological absurdity and the grotesque fables of revelation.

We will laugh till our right to laugh has been fully conceded—yea, we will laugh till our worst foes shake their sides—or shuffle off their mortal coil to escape our merriment. This shall be our revenge. Revenge we will have. For every outrage we demand compensation, and we shall extort the uttermost farthing.

If revelation be absurd to begin with, how is it improved by pigmies like Tyler, North and Co. solemnly, like a trinity of owls, undertaking to defend it? They think they show their wisdom; so they do—all that they have. The world is laughing at them. They break a lance for God Almighty, poor fellow! who is so old and decrepid that he cannot defend himself!

Be it so! Be it so! When the gods need defenders they are on their last legs. When the gods need defenders they always get them! The Pope's Brigade went to Rome to prop up the almighty power of the Vatican; and the persecuting brigade in England resolved, like so many Don Quixotes, to defend the divine Trinity and its (their—which

word should I use?) interests. Ay! the gods always get defenders when they need them; and whom do they get? Men formed in their own image—false, cowardly, mean, ridiculous old fogies, or young sparks who have not yet outgrown the nursery; men who look as wise as the most sapient-looking owls; men whose only end in nature seems to be to torture those whom fortune flings into their power and to answer by their absurdities those who can snap the fingers at their impotent malice.

I have not been long enough here to have much news to send. The weather has been mild for the most part since our arrival—one day we got the hot wind. As it blew into the gale it heated instead of cooling my face. But it continued only one day. On the whole, I do not think the heat very trying. It certainly does not exhaust me as it did in England.

I lecture only once a Sunday yet. I don't feel that sufficient. We have a "service" in the morning—songs, piano music, singing by the choir, recitations, etc., etc. A Sunday school has been started, and promises to be successful.

I have lectured twice on week-nights. Our lecturing season is hardly begun yet. The weather is so fine that I always wonder to see such good audiences. When I tell you how we do it you will wonder too. The hall we lecture in is licensed as a music-hall, and we cannot charge for admission at the door on Sunday. Therefore every person who would hear my lecture has to secure a ticket at another hall, a mile away, during the week. Spite of this, each Sunday night has brought me a thousand at least—members of Parliament, Government and municipal officials, journalists, etc., etc., being amongst them. I think our prospects are good, and we have a good working committee.

The parsons so far let me alone. I presume this is the lull before the storm. I don't spare them or their creed. Here I use language quite as plain as in the old country, and should adopt plainer if I could. I expect in a few weeks we shall start a paper, myself being editor. You may guess it won't support or compliment superstition.

Just now I must conclude. I hope now that the *Freethinker*—indeed, I dare not fancy otherwise—has recovered its long-lost tone, and resumed its outspoken style. Your presence at its head guarantees that. I dare not promise much while on my travels—my duties are so many; but what I can do will be done "heartily as unto the *Freethinker*."

On board the "Lusitania" I found a good deal of incipient Freethought. When it was known I was an Atheist, many of the passengers drew me into conversation, in most cases solely to be informed upon my views. The questions put were very natural for the most part. One gentleman, as we leaned at night over the vessel's side, said:

"But, Mr. Symes, if the ship were going down, now, would you not pray? Would you not say 'Lord, help me, or something of the sort?'"

Said I: "Most certainly I should not. I should as soon think of praying to the waves."

I observed that prayer did not expel sea-sickness from the vessel. We had two deaths (both children) coming out; and the parson's son caught diphtheria. I did not refrain from pointing these things out to the pious on board; and yet not one of them shunned me except the clergyman—indeed, had I been perfectly orthodox they could not have shown me greater good nature.

Please post me the *Freethinker* regularly. Send me the bound volume of *Progress*. Full success to you.

JOSEPH SYMES.

P R A Y E R.

The prayer was long—beside the window kneeling,
I gazed upon the chill grey autumn world;
The oak-leaves, as in Bacchic frenzy reeling,
Before the wind in yellow squadrons swirled.
I thought "Perhaps these leaves are now appealing
To the deaf blast whereby their hosts are whirled;
But they—and we—fulfil, in blindness reeling,
The eternal, cruel purpose of the world."

W. A.

OBITUARY.—Mr. R. Hayes, a well-known worker in Radical and Freethought circles in East London, died last week of consumption after a long and painful illness, at the early age of thirty-four. He was buried at Plaistow on Monday last, a number of friends attending the funeral. Mr. W. J. Ramsey gave an address at the grave-side.

THE CHRISTIAN EVIDENCE SOCIETY.

By the blessing of Providence or the luck of having Fowler for Lord Mayor, the Christian Evidence Manufacturing Society obtained the use of the handsome small hall of the Mansion House last Tuesday for a meeting to raise £200 to equip their outdoor lecturers. With the exception of the reporters, the meeting consisted of the agents of the society, with a sprinkling of clergymen and old women, presided over by the pious opponent of the Municipal Bill, whose countenance bespeaks how well he can unite the worship of Bacchus with that of Mammon. The whole proceedings were one long appeal for what the Earl of Carnarvon called "the sinews of theological war." Mr. Marten opened with a statement of the financial position of the society, which it appears is less satisfactory than ever. This year Samuel Morley only invests £100; last year he doubled that amount. Mr. Marten spoke of the activity of those he foolishly called "Mr. Bradlaugh's emissaries," and said that if the C. E. S. could only get more money they would start a journal in opposition to infidelity. A large quantity of literary talent, it seems, has to be kept under a bushel for want of the sinews. He, however, admitted that Mr. Cowper's *Christian Evidence Journal* had been a failure, and let out that the C. E. S. had subsidised Dr. Sexton's *Shield of Faith* and Dr. McCann's *Champion of the Faith*, without being able to keep them afloat. Mr. Marten pointed out that money was also wanted to counteract infidelity in India, where it was being spread among university students.

Lord Carnarvon, a gay and highly decorated old nobleman, followed and appealed for cash on the striking ground that as the C. E. S. taught the minimum of religion, Catholics and Protestants could both join. This raised the dauber of the Rev. Donald Fraser, a tall cadaverous white-haired Presbyterian, who declared infidelity was propagated by attempts to make religion palatable as well as by sacerdotal superstition. The continent was in a dreadful state and they would soon have to fight Giant Pagan as well as Giant Pope, and these giants were first cousins. Infidelity led to the demoralisation of the people, it was the outcome of men's vile affections, etc. The benign Bishop of Bedford, who speaks so suavely that one fancies they can see the Holy Ghost oozing from his right reverend finger-ends, poured oil on the troubled waters by declaring that the Church had been to blame in the past. It had put heaven too far away and insisted too much on the literal inspiration of the Scriptures. Despite this there was nothing but Christianity to make men better, wherefore let Christian men shell out their cash.

It was not stated if the £200 was obtained, but the annual meeting takes place on the 27th, and when we have examined the report we shall overhaul the accounts.

PROFANE JOKES.

A 'CUTE boy gave the parable of the good Samaritan, with a remark of his own at the end. He concluded thus: "And he left him at the inn, and affectionately pressed a penny into the host's hand, saying, 'If thou spendest more, I will repay thee when I return,' knowing full well that he should see his face no more."

It is a habit amongst the Highland preachers to repeat the pronoun after the noun, as "the wicked man he sinned, ever," and it was all owing to this that a certain reverend banger divided his discourse into heads, thusly: "My text is, 'The Devil he goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.' The text it divides itself thusly: 1st, Who the Devil he was; 2nd, Where the Devil he was going to; 3rd, Who the Devil he was looking for; and 4th—what has never yet been solved—What the Devil he was roaring about."

PIOUS MINISTER, in street: "Well, my good woman, are you seeking Salvation?" "No, I'm seeking Sal Johnson's cat, that stole my meat, and when I catch her, I'll drown her." Exit minister, who thinks he is in the wrong street.

SCENE—Village in Stirlingshire, in which two churches, Free and Established, glare at each other from opposite sides of the way. Tourist, to native: "Your people must be very religious! Why, small as the village is, you have a pair of churches!" Native: "'Deed, man, they're no sa godly as ye wud think. It's mair spite than religion."

TYPOGRAPHICAL ERROR.—In an old English primer, the whole edition, by the omission of the single letter "o" at the beginning of a word in the third line, was printed as follows:—

"When the last trumpet soundeth
We shall not all die;
But we shall all be *hanged*
In the twinkling of an eye."

A PHILOSOPHER, being at sea in a violent storm, when the crew began to call earnestly to the gods for safety, he said: "Be silent, and cease your prayers; for should the gods know that you are here, we shall all certainly be lost."

A CLERGYMAN having told a poor woman that, on the whole, Providence had treated her very well, she agreed to it. "I don't deny it," said she, "but I sometimes think he has got even with me on corns."

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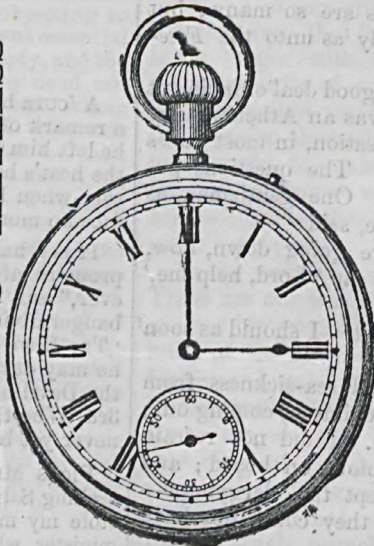
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