

THE FREETHINKER.

EDITED BY G. W. FOOTE.

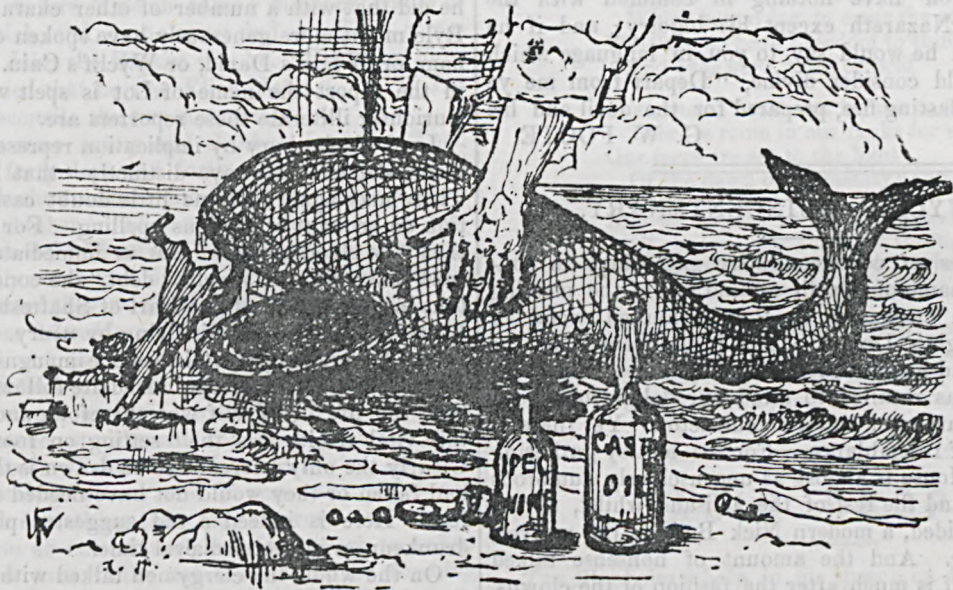
Sub Editor—J. M. Wheeler.

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JUNE 1, 1884.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]

COMIC BIBLE SKETCH. — No. 72.



JONAH EVICTED.

"And the Lord spake unto the fish and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land."—JONAH 2., x

ALL FOR JESUS.

I love my Jesus
I love my Jesus
I love my Jesus
Because he first loved me."

Christian Hymn.

THE Christmas Number of the *Freethinker*, for which I was sent to gaol with my friends Messrs Ramsey and Kemp, contained a series of satirical sketches of the chief miracles in the life of Jesus Christ, from the annunciation to the ascension. These illustrations seem to have shocked the pious folk who do very little for Jesus except love him, and very little for man except hate him. One of the fraternity called in at a newsagent's in Fleet Street who exhibited it in his window, and in a moment of phenomenal generosity offered him a half-sovereign to take it out. The newsagent declined the offer, although he afterwards took it out without getting a half-sovereign or even a halfpenny for his compliance. Such offers do not occur more than once in a lifetime. Nearly all the lovers of Jesus prefer another method of dealing with the critics of their lord and master. They like the method pursued by peppery Peter when he smote off an opponent's ears, and they like still better the method he pursued when he "burked" Ananias and Sapphira. So guinea-pig Tyler, the City of London fat-bellies, Scavenger Giffard, Judge North and Gaoler Harcourt, conspired to give us two years' imprisonment—all for Jesus. And when Judge North spoke of his "blessed Savior" he very nearly wept tears as large and tender as those which Shelley saw fall from the crocodile eyes of Lord Eldon. Even Lord Mayor Fowler, who sat on the Bench, looked deeply affected, and he has been pious ever since. In the intervals of his occupation in the refreshment-room of the House of Commons, he finds time to deliver a sermon about three times a week; and it is whispered that if the London Municipal Bill should be carried, after all his heroic efforts to defeat it by public meetings made up at the average rate of half-a-crown per head, he will probably join General Booth, and, quitting England in disgust and despair, take command of the "Salvation Yacht," which is to sail round the world and convert all the sea-coast heathen not yet killed off by missionaries and rum.

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These people pretend to speak in the name of Jesus. What contemptible bosh! Why, if Jesus Christ were alive to-day and you wanted to find him, would you ever think of seeking him at a Lord Mayor's feast? Would you ring Judge North's house-bell? Would you expect to find him arm in arm with Giffard or hobnobbing with Harcourt? Do you even believe that any parson, priest or preacher in England would invite him to dinner or admit him inside the front door? Do you not rather believe that the *bon sansculotte* would have to go for a hearing among Radicals and Freethinkers in some Secular hall where freedom is allowed to every form of opinion? These traders on his name would be frightened by his re-appearance. The news that Christ had indeed risen, not eighteen centuries ago, but yesterday, would alarm them more than all the dynamite plots ever brewed from St. Petersburg to Dublin.

All the sky-pilots in our midst, the great black army banded against the freedom of the world, say they fight for Christ. They tell us they are "all for Jesus," that they are ready to give up "all for Jesus." Yes, as generous Peter did, who required a hundredfold return in this life and an infinite reward in the life to come. They submit to the poverty of five hundred a year—all for Jesus. They crawl about in a miserable sixteen-roomed house—all for Jesus. They array themselves sadly in expensive broadcloth—all for Jesus. They marry heiresses when they can, and bear the fatal burden of riches—all for Jesus. They preach sermons enough to drive an idiot into fits—all for Jesus. Some of them go still further. They will take ten or fifteen thousand a year, sufficient to damn a hundred souls at the very least; they will painfully dwell in a mansion on earth instead of joyfully hastening to a mansion in the sky; they will put up with the appellation, not only of "master," but of "my lord" or "your grace"—all for Jesus.

General Booth has just got another ten thousand—all for Jesus. But the other sky-pilots, who are not such successful cadgers, question his sincerity, as he sometimes questions theirs. Well, what is a sceptic to do when they fall out? How can he decide between them. I know of only one safe plan. When Voltaire heard two old women blackguarding each other, he settled the matter straight off by saying "I believe them both." Yes, let us believe them both

All for Jesus! Oh yes, of course. But, gentlemen, of all the cash you ever collected for the Lord can you aver that a single halfpenny ever reached him? Have you not intercepted it all, from the annual tithes to last Sunday's collections? You have a society for converting Jews. Well, I will show you more than one Jew converted to Freethought by this paper. Can you show one? I doubt it. In London you talk of a Jew who was converted in Paris, and in Paris of a Jew who was converted in Berlin. Show us a single Jew converted here. Our demand is moderate. Show us one, only one.

The truth is, gentleman, "all for Jesus" means all for yourselves. My private belief is that your religion is chiefly a trade, and that, sooner than forfeit your livings, you would preach any other gospel to morrow. All for Jesus! Why you have nothing in common with the revolutionist of Nazareth except his bigotry; and if he were alive again he would say to you, in language which he and you would consider divine, "Depart from me ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

G. W. FOOTE.

THE WYCLIF QUINCENTENARY.

THE recent series of commemorative gatherings in connexion with the name of Wyclif remind me of the meeting of the Athenian mechanics in the enchanted wood of "Midsummer Night's Dream." Let it be granted, as the opinionated Euclid has it, that the first syllable of the word Quincentenary has recalled to mind our delightful "good Peter Quince," carpenter and amateur actor. Yet there is more than this of resemblance. For the motley gathering at the Mansion House is almost as unconsciously humorous as Flute, Snug, and the rest of the artisans, whilst, as the Lord Mayor presided, a modern Nick Bottom, the weaver, was not wanting. And the amount of nonsense talked about poor Wyclif is much after the fashion of the clowns' rendering of "the most lamentable comedy and most cruel death of Pyramus and Thisby."

The audience was not overflowing, although with amusing ingenuity the committee had arranged to celebrate in May the anniversary of a death that occurred on December 31. The clerical indigestions likely to be rife about the end of the year, and the necessity of taking advantage of the May meetings, compelled the committee to cast about for some Wyclif event in May. Some genius discovered that on May 21, 1382, the Reformer's tractates were publicly burned. This was quite near enough for the anniversary of the good man's death.

And here let me at once say that I use the phrase "good man" in verity. Wyclif was a man whom Freethinkers can delight to honor. Truly he had much to do with initiating that wholesale circulation of the Scriptures to which so much of the sin and misery of England are due. To-day we regard those who help in this nefarious work as far more dangerous to the community than the circulators of bad money. They are, in a phrase of George Eliot, "debasement of the moral currency." But they do this in the light of a science and a morality unknown to Wyclif. Him, therefore, as sturdy protester against evil authority, as introducer to his countrymen of a great printed book, as one of the makers of our English tongue, we honor. And we are the more grieved when we find his memory associated with the feeble sermon of the Bishop of Liverpool, the school-girl platitudes of the Lord Mayor, who had been carefully coached in his facts, and the milk and water conundrums of the Earl of Shaftesbury.

Bishop Ryle preached from the text "I think it meet to stir you up by putting you in remembrance." He found the likeness between the Christianity of the Wyclif time and that of the apostolic age very small. Quite a vignette, I should say. He reminded his hearers that Christianity was then buried under a mass of ignorance, superstition, priestcraft and immorality. He forgot to add that the resurrection of the creed has never taken place.

Lord Shaftesbury asked conundrums and answered them himself, like a Sunday-school teacher out to tea. "What is the use of a great many things?" "Were they at the sunset of the Reformation?" "Where were they?" Wyclif had "left us a basis upon which we could ever stand." This sounds like an encouragement to trample under foot the Bible.

The most strangely interesting thing about the whole

affair was the rudeness with which Wyclif was treated. Were it not apparently unconscious I should have called it studied insolence. The Lord Mayor called him an "object." It is true he prefixed the adjective "worthy." Another gentleman styled him the Morning Star. I do not know whether this is an allusion to the defunct newspaper of that name, or to the gentleman in the autobiographical song,

"I feel, I feel, I feel,
I feel like a morning star."

In either case, the remark is wanting in courtesy.

The Bishop went further, and at his hands Wyclif fared worse. He spoke of Wyclif's Lot, as if the fourteenth century Reformer were the possessor of that disreputable Old Testament villain. It is true that Wyclif by his translation of the Bible made Lot a lot more popular. But then he did that with a number of other characters, and Bishop Ryle might more generously have spoken of Wyclif's Abraham, or Wyclif's David, or Wyclif's Cain. I find also that in the report the name of Lot is spelt with a small "l." Curiously illiterate these reporters are.

Lord Shaftesbury by implication represented Wyclif as a money-lender. He says distinctly "that he stood a loan." There may again be some little doubt cast upon the assertion on account of dubious spelling. For the report has it that "he stood alone." But as immediately after this we read that "we owe Wyclif a debt," the conclusion is obvious that in the opinion of the Earl of Shaftesbury the rector of Lutterworth eked out his living by usury.

The Reverend Canon Girdlestone impugns the fair fame not only of Wyclif but of his immediate followers. He tells us that the life of Wyclif was threefold, and one division of this vital trinity was the "setting on foot his preachers." Clearly the only inference to be drawn is that the preachers had fallen or they would not have needed to be set on their feet. Here is indeed a sad suggested picture of clerical drunkenness in the mediæval time.

On the whole the clergymen talked with more valor than discretion of their dead *protégé*. And when the proposal is made to erect a monument to Wyclif, as if he were the Duke of Wellington, I commend to his would-be detractors, with one verbal change, the beautiful words of old Thomas Fuller on the parish priest: "Lying on his death-bed he bequeathes to all men his precepts and example for a legacy: and they in requital erect every one a monument for him—in their hearts."

EDWARD AVELING.

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES.

(Concluded from p. 131.)

Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword! (v. 33).—And you are not ashamed to proclaim it! Was there not bloodshed enough in the world before, but you must come to increase it? Oh, Jesus, were thy character a thousand times better than it is, this terrific threat would damn thee. To set families at variance thou art come. Yes, and war and strife have always followed thy track; thou and thy churches have always waded through blood when opportunity offered.

He that loveth father and mother more than me is not worthy of me! (v. 37).—Poor jealous ninny! A love-sick girl with a rival could not be more silly or more spiteful! And this is the character we are to imitate! Oh, ye Christians, civilise and educate and humanise your savior before you trot him out again for the world's admonition. Set him to play at football, and get him to attend a good debating class, so that he may have the peevishness knocked out of him before appearing to the world again.

He that taketh not his cross, etc. (v. 38).—Cross! What cross? "Aye! there's the rub." I suppose he meant the crutch or pilgrim's staff. To follow him was to become a professional beggar. Well, if men renounce the world, they can hardly grumble if the world renounces them. And that is the secret of all the persecution (so-called) which Christians have undergone.

CHAPTER XI.—*Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, and said unto him, Art thou he that should come or do we look for another?* (v. 2 and 3).—Not at all likely, Matthew, that he would be allowed to send his disciples if he was in prison. If so Herod was a far more merciful gaoler than Harcourt. Besides, did not John know his own mission as well as Jesus knew his? Further, does not St. John say John the Baptist knew Jesus at his baptism, and pointed him out to his disciples? The

story won't go down, Matthew; you are merely trying to enhance the value of your idol by means of the Baptist. Your trick is too transparent, sir.

There hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist (v. 11.)—To be sure! "Scratch me, and I'll scratch you." Still, *the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he!*—Ah! Yes. But who is the least in that kingdom? And whose is that kingdom? And who is king there? And who are his subjects? You speak in riddles. The kingdom of heaven is the same as the kingdom of Lilliput. I believe we have too many earthly kingdoms to need one of a heavenly cast—unless it is better, which yet appeareth not to be the case.

And if you will receive it this is Elias, etc. (v. 14.)—Yes, yes! The Jews expected Elias, or Elijah, to come and restore all things before Messiah came; Matthew wants to prove Jesus Messiah, and so he must find an Elias somewhere. He says John the Baptist was he. But John himself distinctly denied that he was Elias (John i., 21.) Let those who can, reconcile the two statements.

The son of man came eating and drinking (v. 19.)—Then you did not fast forty days and forty nights, Jesus? And if you turned all that water into wine, no wonder they called you a winebibber! That was not the act of a teetotaler, at all events; and all the pious ones of that profession are heartily sorry you did it. Had you turned the wine into pure water they would have commended you.

It shall be more tolerable for Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee! (v. 24.)—Now, Jesus, if you wish civilised men to follow you and delight in your name, you must cease that stupid egotistic swearing. Tut, tut, man! People don't deserve punishment for pooh-poohing you! Don't pose as a fool. Take a bit of sound advice, and tell the people something better; and if you want popularity with them preach something that may improve and amuse them; and, if you do not succeed, be wise enough to understand that that is your fault, not theirs. To be foaming at the mouth and threatening them with worse judgments, than Sodom got—my dear fellow, if you did that in the streets of modern London, they would send you to a mad-house! And I am in danger of Holloway Gaol for telling you so.

Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes (v. 25.)—Good sir, you are joking! How can babes understand what wise and prudent men cannot? The fact is, your father and yourself never have anything to do with wise and prudent people, for they are too wide awake for you, and so you turn to babes, and flatter them into believing that you have got a revelation for them which wiser people are too proud to receive! Such is the gospel.

I am meek and lowly (v. 29.)—We have just seen a few rare specimens of your meekness, and they don't suit us at all. Your yoke is easy. Very well, then, carry it. No man will wear a yoke except compelled. Your religion is slavery; you are the worst and pettiest of all tyrants; and therefore cannot succeed where freedom reigns.

JOSEPH SYMES.

Reprints from the Anti-Christian.—Our Indian friends are hard at work. We receive from them three reprints from the *Anti-Christian*. They are "An Address to the Nation," "Open your Eyes," "The Evils of Imparting Christian Education to Tender Minds." All are signed, at length, Kaliprasanna Kavyabisharad. They are thoughtful, earnest papers, more than tinged with oriental poetry and warmth. They will do good work whether their readers are oriental or occidental. The writer would do wisely to have the proofs revised a little more carefully. There are several slips in spelling. Thus the last sentence of the address speaks of "dominant ideas and purjudicial superstitions."

Jottings by the Way; or, Boon's Madness on the Road. Being a philosophical view of life past, present and to come in the Orange Free State, Natal and the Cape Colony. By MARTIN JAMES BOON. London: G. Standing, 8 and 9 Finsbury Street. Four shillings.—Some of our readers will be acquainted with the name of the author of this book as a London advocate of Republicanism, the Nationalisation of the Land, and the State issue of credit notes for industry. For about ten years Mr. Boon has been trying, and we hope making, his fortune in South Africa. He chronicles his journeyings and thought in that quarter with the unaffected freshness of a man with a good heart, a good headpiece and some humor. His English acquaintances will doubtless wish to see the volume, which is prefaced by his old friend William Maccall. The little book is well got up, but to the general public who pause before purchasing, the price will be prohibitory.

A SONG OF HOPE.

Christianity, where are the charms
Which bigo's have seen in thy face?
Better dwell midst hell's greatest alarms
Than be a sweet angel of grace.

For the priests in their ignorance preach
Of a Home for the loved of the Lord
Where (though now 'tis far out of our reach)
In the future we'll reap our reward.

But Reason no more hides her lamp,
And Sci-nce has lifted her voice,
And Freethought stands firm in her camp,
And lovers of Freedom rejoice.

For truth has struck off every link
Which bound fast to error the soul;
We claim to have Freedom to think
And over our actions control.

Then come, 'neath our banner to fight,
There is room in our ranks for each one;
Our faces are set to the light
Of the dawn of Humanity's sun.

And we sing, as we march, a sweet song
Of the love that shall last through all time,
Of man's glorious victory o'er wrong,
The music is sweet and sublime.

Priestcraft at our singing turns pale,
And in its wan lips dies the taunt
It would fling; and its last dying wail
Is drowned by our heart-stirring chant.

C. J.

ACID DROPS.

THE Blenheim whelp, in his speech on the vote of censure last Tuesday week, howled out his disgust that Mr. Gladstone had used his efforts more in the cause of Mr. Bradlaugh than that of General Gordon. The Conservative pup will drag in theology somehow—he has evidently got, as the cockney would say, *Gord on the brain*.

HE was called to order for describing the junior member for Northampton as "a seditious blasphemer," and had to withdraw the remark. It generally happens that some kind of a theological *dog mars* the harmony of a political assembly.

IF Randy wasn't so small and hadn't got a brother in the Lords, we might call him the only big-hot'un son.

At a meeting held at Bethsham Faith Healing House, Mrs. Baxter, speaking of the healing of a Mrs. Strain, said "God had himself received the evil which was draining her life away." This might be fortunate for Mrs. Strain, but can scarcely be considered so for Jahveh. In the present infirm state of his constitution he really cannot afford to have much of his life drained away.

At the same meeting Captain Dennis, of Barnet, told his hearers that he felt like a cork in a soda-water bottle, as though he must go off with a rush. That is exactly what he and all believers in faith-healing will have to do. The effervescence of common sense will speedily blow all such impediments to human progress out of the world.

THE *Christian Herald* has an article entitled "Is Consumption Curable?" It says "health and strength may be the reward of those who adopt this method." But, strange to say, the method spoken of is neither anointing with oil nor the prayer of faith. The article is simply a review of a medical work.

At a meeting at the Imperial Mission Hall, Hanley, for the purpose of protesting against certain attempts to stop open-air services and processions, the chairman, Mr. W. Brown, submitted that no evil would befall the Salvation Mission out of this attempt to put down processions. On the contrary, he felt that nothing but good could come out of it, if they were only true to themselves. It is strange that Christians cannot see that the same thing is true of others as of their own sect. No more effectual method could have been discovered to direct the peoples' attention to Freethought and so advance the cause than the recent prosecutions for blasphemy.

SPEAKING on the same subject at the Church Mission Hall, the Rev. T. P. King declared that if a fine were imposed upon him "he would say that he could not pay it. He would take the alternative—fourteen days at Stafford." Evidently

the rev. gentleman is anxious to pose as a martyr, and is not particular about adhering too closely to the truth in attaining the object of his desire.

THIS year being the quincentenary of Wyclif's death, Protestant Christians are directing their attention to him whom they regard as the great precursor of the Reformation. John Wyclif played John the Baptist to the Jesus of Martin Luther. By daring to think in defiance of established authority he became the forerunner of generations of Freethinkers. When will people see that by claiming to be reformed, a religion must abandon all title to a divine origin? Or else they must think that God's work very soon gets out of repair and requires to be patched up by human industry.

PERHAPS they are justified in arriving at the latter conclusion from their own records of divine failures. God made angels and men to love him, serve him and be happy with him. But they both rebelled against him, and he banished them from his presence for ever. As a creator the Father was a failure, and the Son in the work of redemption met with but very partial success. It is left for man himself to make his own life and that of his fellows worth living.

WE have been very much amused by some correspondence that passed several weeks ago between Mr. E. J. Reed, member for Cardiff, and one of his constituents, Mr. Jacob Edmunds, on the subject of our imprisonment. Mr. Reed offers a remarkably curious explanation of his declining to remonstrate against the sentence passed on Messrs. Foote, Ramsey and Kemp. He says that we went "farther than was necessary," and that we "deliberately offended the public sentiment." So far there is nothing extraordinary in Mr. Reed's observations. But, seeing that Mr. Edmunds might easily trip him up, he proceeds—"I do not say the public sentiment is right, but I say that we have to submit to it just as Christ had to submit to it." Of course we have to submit to it—Mr. Edmunds knew that well enough before—but the question is, "Ought we to have to submit to it?" Mr. Reed's contention would justify any atrocity if "public sentiment" sanctioned it. Nay more, his petty argument implies this, that if he had been in Jerusalem when his lord and master was crucified he would have said nothing against it; and if Jesus Christ had appealed to him instead of imploring God to let the cup pass, he would have replied, "My dear savior, I really can't remonstrate against your murder; public sentiment justifies it, and we really must submit." Supposing, however, J. C. had retorted, "But, my dear Reed, if you had to undergo the crucifying instead of me, would you have quite such a sublime respect for public sentiment?"—what answer would Mr. Reed have made?

MR. REED, in closing his second letter to Mr. Edmunds, says "there is little difference between us." Mr. Reed thinks we deserved twelve months' imprisonment, and Mr. Edmunds thinks we did not deserve a day. So Mr. Reed really says that twelve months' imprisonment makes very little difference. Let him try.

TALMAGE says "there are no ghosts except those that go on two or four feet." Is the third person of the trinity a biped or a quadruped?

THE *Aberdeen Evening Gazette* finds an exceedingly novel argument against the abolition of Fast Days in Scotland. It is, to put it shortly, that if the frisky Scotties cannot go on the spree on those occasions they will find a vent for their carnal feelings by spreeing on the "blessed Sawboth." We recommend this argument to the Lord's Day Rest Association; it is the only sensible one we ever heard on their side of the case.

IN church most Christians turn to the East when saying their creed; but when they want to force their creed down other people's throats they turn to the North.

MR. A. HARLOW, of 297 Goswell Road, writes that goods have lately been stolen from a large city warehouse. Everybody was suspected except the real culprit. At last he was unearthed, and oh all ye angels! he turned out to be a parson's son. The sky-pilot squared everything, whether out of the previous Sunday's collection or not we are unable to say, and the matter was hushed up. Moral—don't go into the thieving business unless you are a parson's son and your father is rich enough to square it when you are found out.

THREE vacancies in the Army Scripture Reader's Society. It is only necessary to look in the face of the average Christian to see a vacancy.

THE clergy are taking up the early closing movement. If only they would apply it to their churches!

SOMEBODY has discovered that there are no such missionaries as Christian soldiers. Thank man for that!

VERSES, typical of the refinement and poetry of the Christian religion, sung at a negro camp-meeting:—

"When ole man Gab'el blows de win' fru his ho'n
Oh, sinner, wash de dirt off yer face;
De folks'll come er runnin' like the hogs arter co'n,
Oh, sinner, wash de dirt off yer face.
He'll hug de holy men an' kiss 'em on the jaw,
Oh, sinner wash de dirt off yer face;
But, alas, fur de nigger whut had trifled wid de law!
Oh, sinner, wash de dirt off yer face.

Oh, Mars Moses, gimme yer han',
An' he'p me fur ter come fru the gate.
Yer knows, Mars Moses, dat I wanster jine de ban'
'For de hour it hab growd too late,
Mars Moses, 'fore de hour it hab growd too late."

CHRISTIANS do things in a funny order sometimes. At the opening of the new English church in Berlin the parson first thanked the Emperor, then the Princess Royal, then himself, and last of all poor God.

THE largest sewer in London, about which the papers have so much to say just now, is not the Court of Common Council.

THE best news of Moody and Sankey that the English people have heard this long time—Moody and Sankey's farewell.

MOODY thinks people can get on without stimulants, and yet he supplies his gulls with the vilest and most pernicious of stimulants. The doctrines he teaches are more harmful than even the drink-curse to the moral and physical health of the nation.

JOSEPH COWEN, of Newcastle, says that in the romantic ages Christianity signified culture. In the *very* romantic ages!

MR. ARTHUR PEASE, M.P., is a humorist of the first water. Naturally, therefore, he is a total abstainer. He has discovered that the police have, when on beat, many opportunities for private meditation. We should have thought that soldiers would have more chance of that. Imagine a constable interrupted in his consideration of the mystery of the trinity by having to arrest a man drunk enough to see double, or interrupted in his prayerful seeking for God by the cry of "Stop thief!"

GOD missed his mark again last week. The lightning struck a Roman Catholic Chapel at Killowen and destroyed the larger part of the building. Perhaps, however, the Almighty had a Protestant fit on.

THE suicide of the Dean of Bangor is a painful affair. The poor gentleman appears to have been the victim of religious mania. This is one of the worst forms of insanity, and it generally ends in suicide. Religion in its mildest forms is bad enough, but in its worst forms it is the greatest curse in the world. The deceased Dean used to shut himself up for hours with his Bible, and a copy of the "blessed book" was found in the room where he strangled himself.

WHY do they stamp "Holy Bible" outside the "blessed book?" Because nobody would ever find it so inside.

ANOTHER sample of the beauty of religion. Two men are arrested at Ardahan, county Galway, for committing an extraordinary assault on a young woman who had turned Protestant, and left the holy mother church. They waylaid her, beat her very severely, cut off all her hair and all the buttons of her dress. Perhaps they intended to use these last articles for future collections.

MIRACLES.—"The Christian considers the miracles of the history of the Jews and Christians credible, but those of the Indian, Egyptian, or Greek mythology, as fabulous and ridiculous; the Jew acknowledges the miracles of the Old Testament, but repudiates those of the New, etc. Now the Christian faith calls upon science to do the same, and not indeed to disallow the miracles altogether, but to allow it to exist within the Christian circle, and especially to have existed within that of original Christianity. Science, however, holds a position of far too great universality to indulge so narrow a pretension, and will say: I will recognise miracles as possible either in all provinces of religious history or in none."—*D. P. Strauss*, "Life of Jesus," Introduction, p. 196, vol. i.; 1865.

ERNEST HENRY AVELING, youngest brother of Dr. Edward Aveling, passed away quite quietly early on Monday morning last. He had been suffering from consumption for a year. He died an Atheist.

SPECIAL NOTICE.

Our next number will contain a Full Report of the Annual Conference of the National Secular Society, held at Plymouth to-day (Sunday, June 1st).

MR. FOOTES ENGAGEMENTS.

June 1, Plymouth N. S. S. Conference; 8, Claremont Hall, London; 15, Rochdale; 21, Sutton in Ashfield; 22, Nottingham; 29, 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; 21, Glasgow; 28, Edinburgh. Oct. 5, Liverpool.

CORRESPONDENTS.

ALL business communications to be addressed to the Manager, 28 Stonecutter Street, Farringdon Street, E.C. Literary communications to the Editor of the *Freethinker*, 28 Stonecutter Street, London.

THE *Freethinker* will be forwarded, directly from the office, post free to any part of Europe, America, Canada and Egypt, at the following rates, prepaid:—One Year, 6s. 6d.; Half Year, 3s. 3d.; Three Months, 1s. 7½d.

DR. EDWARD AVELING'S ENGAGEMENTS.—June 8, 15, Milton Hall; 22, 29, Hall of Science.

J. P. HASTIE, 86 Third Avenue, London, W., appeals for further support for the Paddington Branch of the N. S. S. Freethinkers in the district are earnestly requested to join.

ATHEIST BLACKSMITH—Thanks for your good wishes, but we prefer, at any rate for the present, not to make any such appeal.

J. PAYNE—It is quite true, as you state, that the resolutions at St. James's Hall were not carried quite unanimously; but the only dissentient was the irrepressible and well-nigh omnipresent Jenkins, a person who is never counted one way or the other by sane people.

F. J. WALLER.—We are always glad to receive jokes and cuttings. Our readers really render us great assistance by sending us these and help to make this paper more interesting.

SAILOB.—We have not heard any confirmation of the report that the Naval and Military Bible Society adopt for their motto the text "The Lord is a man of war." The society is, we rejoice to hear, carried on at a great pecuniary loss.

CITY OF LONDON.—Neither Mr. Foote, Mr. Ramsey nor Mr. Kemp has received any invitation to speak at the after-lunch meetings held in the City against the Municipal Reform Bill.

HALF-A-DOLLAR.—We believe that your synonym is the average pay of the men employed by the backers of the Corporation to disturb meetings in support of the bill for reforming that iniquitous body.

W. R. COBHAM.—Thanks.

W. C. MARSH.—The work you inquire about is the Apocrypha of the Old Testament. We can send you a good second-hand copy for about 2s.

M. BLACKWELL writes to say that she takes three copies of the *Freethinker* every week, and practises all sorts of ingenious devices to introduce them to people's notice. She finds that nearly everybody who sees the paper once wants to see it again.

J. H. WHITHAM.—Thanks for all your good wishes. It would be too horrible to publish the obscenities of the Bible in a separate form. It would serve the bigots right if we did, but we have more regard for the morals of the community than they have.

J. DOUGLAS.—Mr. Foote hopes to publish the rest of the Second Series of "Bible Romances" during June. The unexpected pressure of work has delayed them.

IN consequence of Mr. Foote's absence from London, many correspondents remain unanswered this week.

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 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 are happy to state that there is a decided improvement in Mr. Wheeler's condition. We have had a short interview with him, and he is composed, although still very weak. It will take a considerable time, we fear, to recover his physical health, and the strength of his mind entirely depends on that now.

Progress for June contains articles on "Social Liberty" and on "The Bradlaugh-Hyndman Debate" for the student of sociology; on "Tory Democracy" (by G. W. Foote) for the politician; on "William Buckley" for those that love adventure; on "Tragedy" for the dramatic reader; on "Brute Habits in Man" for the science-lover. Dr. Edward Aveling also contributes some verse, "A Street Cry." Not the least interesting article is that on the "Censorship in Russia." It is from the pen of one of the most eminent thinkers of the Russian nation.

MR. FOOTES received an enthusiastic reception at Leeds last Sunday. Freethinkers attended his lectures from all the sur-

rounding districts, many walking in as far as six, eight and ten miles from places where the railway accommodation is limited. There could be no mistake as to the feeling of the audiences on two points—they evidently hated the Blasphemy Laws and thoroughly approved the general policy of the *Freethinker*. Before the evening lecture Mr. Foote had the pleasing duty of presenting to Mr. Johnson, the President of the Leeds Branch of the N. S. S., on behalf of the Committee, a handsome writing-desk, in recognition of his efforts to strengthen the Society and to promote the cause of Freethought.

THERE was also a very good and extremely enthusiastic audience at Brighouse on the Saturday evening. Mr. Richardson and the local committee deserve high praise for the plucky manner in which they fight an uphill battle.

A CLERGYMAN has calculated that the odds are seven to one against a man turning Christian after thirty years of age. This should be an incentive to Freethinkers to support a purely secular system of education. Keep the young from the infection of superstition and they will be tolerably safe from the evil influence of the sky-pilots for the rest of their lives.

ON Sunday last the Pioneer Sunday Cricket Club had a good day at Eastcote, Middlesex. They were not interfered with. On the contrary, people in the locality willingly joined in the play. Members meet on Whit Sunday at Ludgate Hill Station, at nine a.m.

A BALL and concert for the benefit of a Freethinker of twenty-two years' standing, Frederick Fisher, takes place on Tuesday, June 3 at the Eclectic Hall, 18 Denmark Street, Soho.

IF any of our friends receive the impudent circular issued by the clergymen of the parish of Islington re Sunday closing, we hope that they will treat it in the same way as one of our correspondents. This man, who is a total abstainer, filled up the form that came with the circular with the pertinent query, "Why on Sunday more than any other day, are the clergy afraid of competition in the spirit trade?" and with the statement that he was willing to sign a petition for the opening of museums on Sunday, but unwilling to presume to dictate to any other his course of conduct on the question of Sunday drinking.

AT Southend the legal robbery of the Sunday traders goes on merrily. Five people in this free country were fined for selling cakes and ginger-beer on the day when the clergy drive their most flourishing trade. Mrs. Sykes has now been summoned five times and three others four. Indefatigable Mr. Petherick does not lose heart. He appeals for funds to carry on his righteous war, and as fresh summonses are already out, the funds are promptly needed. Every Freethinker is interested in this question, and Mr. Petherick's address is 29 Osnaburgh Street, N.W.

SOME of the students of the Botany class at the free Science Sunday School at Milton Hall have organised an excursion to Toy's Hill, near Westerham, on June 8. They are anxious to hear from other members of the class who may care to join them, or from others who may be botanically inclined. Address Juan C. Drenon, 155 Stanhope Street, Regent's Park, N.W.

THE Edmonton Progressive Society meets at St. George's Hall, Edmonton, on Sunday evenings. As this is a new venture in a locality new to Freethought, those to whom this is dear are invited to attend on Sunday next and inaugurate the meetings of the Society in good fashion. The hall is close to the G. E. R. station.

WHAT is the use of ridicule? ask many people, with heads as wooden as American nutmegs. The best answer is a practical illustration. One of our Bradford friends used to lend copies of the *Freethinker* to a clerical acquaintance, until at length the sky-pilot said, "Pray don't bring me any more; I really mustn't look at those Bible Sketches; I can't preach a serious sermon again on any of the texts they illustrate." There you are, "dearly beloved brother blockheads," as Carlyle says. That's the proper use of ridicule. We intend to go on laughing at Bible absurdities until it is impossible to read them with a serious face.

PEOPLE who object to ridicule remind us of the dull prelate who censured witty Bishop South for his sprightly sermons. "Now," said South, turning abruptly on him, "my dear brother in the Lord, do you really mean that if God had given you any wit you wouldn't have used it?"

MR. BRADLAUGH'S case comes on for hearing in the Court of Queen's Bench on Friday, June 13. He has against him the Attorney General, Sir Hardinge Giffard, and two other practitioners in the noble art of "any side for six-and-eightpence."

We earnestly hope, indeed we believe, that Mr. Bradlaugh will win. It will be a great moral triumph if he does, but we fear it will not practically affect the situation; for the House of Commons considers itself above the law, and it may continue to pass arbitrary resolutions in defiance of law and gospel alike.

WE are preparing a Holiday Number of the *Freethinker* which we hope to publish about the end of June. It will be about the raciest thing we have ever issued. The cover is admirably designed for the season, and besides other illustrations, the contents will include a brilliant series of sketches of Jonah's Excursion, and his abortive trip to Tarshish. Parsons will have something to preach about when they get this budget of blasphemy.

THE MEEKNESS OF MOSES.

"Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth."—(Numbers, xii., 3.)

If there be any truth in this text, the contemporaries of Moses were not remarkable for gentleness of spirit.

At the very commencement of his career this man of meekness exhibited a strong propensity for embroiling himself in other people's quarrels. This led him to the commission of a cowardly and brutal murder. "He spied an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren. And he looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he slew the Egyptian and hid him in the sand" (Exodus ii., 11, 12). The very next day he again interfered in a strife between two of his own nation, but when he found that his former crime was known, he "fled from the face of Pharaoh and dwelt in the land of Midian" (verse 15). On Mount Horeb he met with Jahveh, with whom he was previously unacquainted, and no mutual friend being present, he requested the divinity to introduce himself. He said, "When I come unto the children of Israel and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you, and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them?" (iii., 13). When he returned to Egypt it was with "the rod of God in his hand" (iv., 20). The rod of Jahveh was scarcely an emblem of meekness, and so both Egyptians and Hebrews found to their cost. Moses stirred up the people to rebel against Pharaoh's command, and go to worship in the wilderness. Jahveh, on his part, hardened Pharaoh's heart not to let them go. Between them they made the state of the wretched Hebrews far more unbearable than it had been previously. Then Moses gave Jahveh himself a taste of his meekness. At their first meeting, "Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God." Familiarity, and finding that his services were required, made him bolder, and he ventured to make use of language which, from the meekest of men to the omnipotent, may be described as a little cheeky. He said, "Lord, wherefore hast thou so evil entreated this people? why is it that thou hast sent me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in thy name, he hath done evil to this people; neither hast thou delivered thy people at all" (v., 23). After he had led the people from Egypt he praised the Lord in a song. It was not like the meek praising the source of meekness. It was rather the turbulent spirit which found glory in victory, the cruel mind of the barbarian exulting in the destruction of those he hated. "The Lord is a man of war" (xv., 3). "Thou sentest forth thy wrath, which consumed them as stubble" (verse 7). And he answers his own questions, "Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like thee glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" (verse 11) not by thanking God for showing mercy to his enemies, for being gentle with the erring and leading them from evil, but by saying, "Thou stretchedst out thy right hand, the earth swallowed them" (verse 12).

Jahveh committed to the care of Moses the ten commandments of the law, written upon tables of stone. "The tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God graven upon the tables" (Exodus xxxii., 16). Because he found that in his absence the people, at the instigation of his own brother Aaron, had set up a golden calf and were worshipping it, "Moses anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount" (verse 19). In this he displayed less of the meekness of a man of well-governed temper than of the angry impetuosity of a silly child. In the next action recorded of him he exhibited the savage barbarity of a monster, making his God responsible for his own inhumanity.

"He said unto them, thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbor" (verse 27). In consequence of this meek command "there fell of the people that day about three thousand men" (verse 28).

It is remarkable that it was for want of this virtue of meekness, for which he is so especially commended, that Moses was deprived of the privilege of leading his people into the promised land. The Israelites in the desert murdered for want of water. Jahveh commanded his servant to take his magic rod, and with it "bring forth to them water out of the rock" (Numbers xx., 8). Moses was irritated at the people's murmurs, and said unto them, "Hear now, ye rebels, must we fetch you water out of the rock? And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice" (verses 10, 11). It seems a small matter to strike a rock twice instead of once. We might think it a much more serious affair to destroy tablets on which a God with his own finger had recorded his commands. But Jahveh thought differently, or he was in a different mood at the time. He passed over the graver action without comment, but for the lighter offence he deprived poor Moses of the only reward he had hoped for. "Ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them" (verse 12). "So Moses, the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab" (Deuteronomy xxxiv., 5).

Had we not read in our text that he was meek above all men, we might have died in ignorance of the fact. The moral which we should learn from this is to read the whole Bible, and balance one text against another. Then we shall find each passage contradicted by so many others that we must admit the weight of evidence to be against believing any.

E. J. BOWTELL.

"THE ABOMINABLE TRUTH."

(A War Song for Bigotry.)

Hiss! What is this—the hated Truth,
Raising its humble head before me,
Daring to speak and laugh, forsooth?
Casting sceptic doubtings o'er me.
Ho! my faith! this must not be;
Clean my weapons, we will see
Whether men's minds shall be free
To the abominable Truth.

Yes, right and left, the voice I hate
Rings through the land its truth and warning;
Tells, plainly tells, it seals my fate—
Treats my menaces with scorning.
But I've arms and armour, while
Truth's sole weapon is a smile.
On, braves, and—in Christian style—
Kill the abominable Truth!

Ha! What is that? Well, well-a-day!
Really I fear I have been sleeping;
Here's a large borough dares to say
That its trust is in safe keeping
With a man who will not shirk
Truth, whatever dangers lurk
Near it. Quick! set fangs to work
On the abominable Truth.

Hey! 'Tally-ho! Keep up the chase,
Hunt him to death, and thus we'll frighten
Wretches who dare the Truth embrace.
Also it will help to tighten
Chains that kept, in years gone back,
Minds and bodies on the rack;
Chains that have of late grown slack
On the abominable Truth.

Stay, let us rest and view our work;
Ay, and 'tis good and blest and holy;
Righteous it is the Truth to burke,
All for pure religion solely.
Men shall hunger, pine and smart;
Mothers from their babes shall part;
We despise a broken heart
Full of the abominable Truth.

C. DEANE.

HYLO-IDEALISM has nothing whatever to do with card-playing. WHEN was needlework first introduced? When God "made the stars also" (all sew).

REVIEWS.

Plain Reasons why Prosecution for Blasphemy Should be Abolished. By W. MAWER. Freethought Publishing Company.—This is the substance of a speech delivered in the Wood Green Parliamentary Debating Society. It is very outspoken on the right side, and puts the case with great clearness and force.

Has or is Man a Soul? By the Rev. W. MATTHEWS. W. H. Morrish, Bristol.—A lecture delivered at Bristol by a courteous antagonist to Materialism. Mr. Matthews exhibits an admirable spirit, but he is all at sea on the intellectual side. He does not fairly understand the position he attacks. And it is distinctly untrue to say that "Psychology has the soul for its subject matter." Bain and Spencer would deny this at the outset.

The French Revolution. By ANNIE BESANT. Freethought Publishing Company.—Mrs. Besant's recent lectures on the Revolution are now bound up in a volume with those she delivered five years ago. The whole series makes a continuous narrative from the accession of Louis XVI. to the death of Robespierre, which Mrs. Besant evidently considers the proper place to drop the curtain; although Carlyle, with perhaps a surer historic as well as dramatic insight, carries the great tragedy on to Napoleon's blowing of the last remnants of Sansculottism from the steps of Saint Roch. Mrs. Besant's story is eminently readable, and for a popular work it is extremely full and accurate. We know of nothing so good, within such a moderate compass, published on this side the Channel.

The Women of the Bible. By COL. INGERSOLL. With a sketch of Col. Ingersoll by Charles Watts. Watts and Co.—Good wine needs no bush, and Ingersoll needs no introducer; but it is becoming the fashion for people on this side the Atlantic to publish his lectures with little prefatory addresses of their own, as though they conferred lustre on the great American instead of receiving it from him. Mr. Watts has conformed to this bad fashion. He gives us no personal reminiscences of Ingersoll, but just writes enough unnecessary laudation to fill up the requisite sixteen pages. We did not know before Mr. Watts told us so that "though Ingersoll writes in prose, he is one of the greatest poets that ever lived," and we still fancy that the gallant Colonel would not only repudiate that honor, but desire his critics to measure him on subjects they are actually acquainted with. Mr. Watts further records his opinion that Ingersoll is the greatest Freethinker the world has ever produced. Has he never heard of Voltaire or Giordano Bruno, or has he forgotten them? Colonel Ingersoll is paying one of the inevitable penalties of success; his modesty, no less than his veracity, must be shocked by such extravagant praise; and he may well cry, "Save me from my friends."

Our Corner. June, 1884. Freethought Publishing Co.—Mrs. Besant continues her very interesting Autobiographical Sketches, Mr. Joynt replies vivaciously to Mr. Bradlaugh on Socialism, "D" continues his able review of Henry George's economics, and Miss Hypatia Bradlaugh her story of Alexander Kourbanoff, a Russian exile. There are other readable articles, besides Mr. Bradlaugh's usual political notes of the month. Altogether a bright number.

CORRESPONDENCE.

A VOICE FROM AMERICA.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

Farley, Iowa, April 21, 1884.

MY DEAR MR. FOOTE,—I cannot tell you how glad I am to know that you are once more free and wielding mightily the iconoclastic club. A million hearts leap with joy and pride at your firmness and indomitable courage. A few more such cases as yours and that of D. M. Bennett will put the last screw in the coffin of the Church. Not one infidel has been "converted" by these persecutions, while many thousands have turned from the Church with horror and scorn. As I have the photographs of "Foote, Ramsey and Kemp," I will send you mine. We enjoy the "Comic Bible Sketches," and they often attract the Christian eye. Can you not issue the "sketches" on small leaflets, quite cheap, about 8c. per thousand, so that we can flood the towns and country with them. I have the promise of another subscriber to the *Freethinker* when I renew, which will be as soon as I can see J. Wilcox (a sub.), at Worthington. Freethought is growing in this country, and another decade will show a large increase in our numbers.—Yours in the work till death,

H. GILMORE.

"Ye maun get yer water elsewhere Jeanie," said a Scotch laird to an auld wife who fetched her water from a spring in his field. "Guid laird, where else can I gae then," said she. "Gae to hell," he replied. "Well," she remarked, "It's a lang lang way that frae me house; and again, I read in the Bible how a rich man went there once and could no get a drap; how much less may a pair auld body like me get twa stoup fu's there!" (Buckets full.)

A FEW REMARKS ON GOD.

No one knows who God is; his ancestry is nothing; for he has none. What comes from nothing is nothing, therefore God is nothing. This is about the safest conclusion to come to, as it leaves us with nothing to trouble about. Man often bothers himself about God; we never hear of God troubling himself about man.

There is a certain book written long ago, either by the wisest men or the greatest lunatics, and the contents of the book lead one to infer that most of it was written under the influence of Luna (the moon)—in short, that it is mostly moonshine. This book, called the Bible, tells us a few things about a God whose name was Jehovah. It mentions that God has eyes, nostrils, fingers, hands, legs, etc., but in no place does it record that he had any brains. And those who read of his doings in the light of reason very soon believe that he hadn't any. A lion knows nothing of God; a cow knows nothing of God; a dog knows nothing of God; a horse knows nothing of God; but a great many donkeys pretend they know a deal about him.

God is in three parts: Father, Son and Holy Ghost. One part came to live on earth once, but he couldn't get along well with men; he caused strife wherever he went, and it's always so when a God gets among men—there comes a devilish bad time of it.

This second part of Jehovah entered Jerusalem supported by an ass; and it's a fact that ever since then he has been mostly supported by donkeys. All the three parts of God are together again now, living in heaven.

God made everything; he made the world out of nothing; that's no matter to us. How he did it I don't know; it seems a great deal to me to make a planet out of nothing; but I suppose it was nothing to him. God is everywhere. That means he's limitless, and one end of him doesn't know where the other end is. If God is everywhere, how will that part of him feel which is in hell? And how will that part of him enjoy itself which is in a lunatic asylum? But that is where the entire trinity ought to be. God knows everything. Then why doesn't he come down here and enlighten us a little? It would gain him a lot of adherents. A long time since God didn't know astronomy, or botany, or geology, or even arithmetic; we assume he's been taking lessons since.

The second part of God is often denominated the good shepherd; and if his followers are not sheep they have sheeps' heads. The third part of God once looked sheep's eyes at a certain damsel yeleft Mary, who thereafter had a son whose paternity was put down to the Holy Ghost or the Holy Spirit. But this father never attended to the education of his son, and the consequence was the poor young fellow grew up very verdantly; in fact, he was green enough to believe that his father was a spirit, although he never showed much spirit himself, except when he made some wine at a wedding.

These are a few things that I know about God. His residence is in heaven, and he sits on a great white throne. Saints (?) surround him, singing his praises; and this they will do for ever and ever—that is, as long as ever and ever lasts—and I pity them. God is a Conservative: he won't progress, he'd rather recede. He once showed his back parts to a gentleman named Moses, as it is written in the book of Exodus. But of this we won't say more; we don't want to be as indecent as the three-part party—Jehovah. So for the present we'll leave God, and it would be a good thing if everybody else left him too, for good.

WITTWON.

PROFANE JOKES.

"MAMMA," said a little girl, who had been examining the baby's arm, "I can't see where the baby has been christened."

LORD HOWELL the Ecclesiastical judge used to relate that a vicar was once so wearied out with his parish clerk confining himself to the one-hundredth Psalm that he remonstrated and insisted upon a variety which the man promised. But old habit proving too strong for him, the old words were as usual given out the next Sunday, "all people that on earth do dwell." Upon this the vicar's temper could hold out no longer, and putting his head over the desk, he cried, "D—n all people that on earth do dwell."

A COLORED friend having turned Baptist-preacher went in for immersion on a grand scale. Rowing several converts into the middle of a lake, he proceeded to pitch them in one by one. With a blessing, the young ones swam ashore with ease, but one old darkey was heard to say as he struggled up the bank looking like a half-drowned possum, "Look 're boss, some o' dese days dey'll lose a 500 dollar nigger wid dis damn nonsense."

THERE was a young man out in Arizona who once declined a pressing invitation to favor a select company with a song. "Oh, really you must excuse me," he said, "I tell you I can't sing. I don't come of a singing family. Why, there was my old father, he used to try 'O d Hundred,' but he had s' little ear for music that he never got more than ninety out of the tune."

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