

THE FREETHINKER.

EDITED BY G. W. FOOTE.

Sub Editor—J. M. Wheeler.

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GOD VISITING ABRAHAM.

"And the Lord appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day."—GEN. XVIII. 1.

WESLEYANS AND HELL.

This year's Wesleyan Conference has given rise to a very warm discussion. The doctrine of "hell and damnation," to put it plainly in the language of Scripture, came up for consideration; with the result that it was once more declared essential to Methodist salvation, and a minister was "superannuated" for denying it. Only a year or two ago a celebrated foreign missionary was expelled for the same reason. It is therefore obvious that the Wesleyans mean to stand by Hell, and make it as hot as they can for any one who has the flagrant wickedness to doubt such a consolatory idea, which reflects such credit on the benignity of God. All the Niagaras of scepticism shall not, if they can help it, extinguish those flames which eternally illustrate the divine mercy as well as the divine justice.

The *Methodist Recorder*, although it devoted a column to the discussion on this subject, gave not a word of the incriminated minister's speech in defence. The reason assigned for this contemptible secrecy is "vigilance over Methodist orthodoxy," which would of course suffer from any stray breath of debate. Methodist orthodoxy, like every other form of that commodity, clearly depends on blind faith. It is not a real belief, but an acquiescence, which is in peril the very moment it is questioned. True Methodists, like true Catholics, must never think; they have only to believe. Their minds must never be agitated by strange ideas, or even by discussion of old ones. They must be kept quiet like people with heart disease, whose life is endangered by the slightest commotion.

In these days of publicity, however, it is not so easy to carry out such a close policy. This deposed minister's name has transpired. He is the Rev. W. J. Frankland, of

Brynmawr, near Swansea. His character is unstained, but his orthodoxy is tainted; he has injured no man, but he has the presumption to differ from John Wesley. Accordingly his "brethren" have deposed him, turned him out of the pulpit, and condemned him to live on a supernumerary's pension. At one moment, indeed, it seemed as though he would be absolutely expelled, and turned adrift on the sea of life to sink or swim. Such is the spirit of religious bigotry! Is it any wonder that Christians who act in this way towards each other are ready to put Freethinkers in gaol and rob them of their civil and political rights? We have no means of knowing what Mr. Frankland intends to do, nor perhaps would he thank us for our solicitude; but we always respect men who make sacrifices for their convictions, however widely we differ from them otherwise, and we trust that Mr. Frankland will throw himself upon the sense and goodness of his neighbors, and work up a fresh congregation. Ordinary people are not so stupid and brutal as their creeds; and Mr. Frankland may find that an able and conscientious man can lead them far on the path of progress.

Mr. Frankland appears to have been teaching the doctrine of "conditional immortality." This idea has recently occupied much attention in religious circles, where it is regarded as novel, although it is extremely ancient, and has been entertained by several Deists, including Thomas Paine. The secret of this notion is revolt against the atrocious dogma of eternal punishment. Sensitive men shrink from such a conception. Obeying their hearts instead of their intellects, they relinquish belief in Hell. Yet as they cannot quite allow that sinners and unbelievers will go to Heaven, they assume that these unfortunates are dropped on the road. This necessitates a denial of man's immortality. Those

who are "saved" have the gift of immortality specially conferred upon them. All the rest "die everlastingly" because their life is not protracted beyond the tomb. No doubt this doctrine has attractions for many good-hearted people, although those who fancy themselves of "the elect" in the scheme must have no small idea of their own importance. But, on the other hand, they are, in our opinion, rather weak-headed. Calvinism is horrible, but it is logical; and no subtle twistings of the words "eternal" and "everlasting" will change the broad outlines of Christ's teaching. Those who cling to a Heaven should retain a Hell. The one is the logical corollary of the other. If you abandon one you must abandon both.

The Wesleyans hold the logical position, but to me their reasonings seem to show that they are still not Christians. Mr. Frankland appealed to Scripture; they would not budge from Wesley. Nothing that "holy John" had decided should be considered an open question. They would preserve his legacy intact. Now, what is all this but sheer Popery? These Methodists are essentially Wesleyans, and only accidentally Christians. They are followers of John Wesley first and Jesus Christ after. John Wesley is their Pope who rules them from the grave, and they are as much Papists as those who swear by Rome.

What a fancy, that mankind can be permanently controlled by a popular preacher of the eighteenth century, who was never remarkable for intellectual power, who was thoroughly convinced of the truth of witchcraft, and whose work on "Christian Physics" shows that he could descend to the most childish puerilities!

Some of the Conference speakers, however, evinced a perfect belief in the possibility of all this. God is great, and Wesley is his prophet; who therefore can withstand him? Dr. Osborn grew almost rabid. In answer to the argument that they were running against the spirit of the age, he replied, "So much the worse for the spirit of the age." What a comical mannikin! A pigmy flying at the great wheels of the chariot of progress, whose revolutions are ages! The pigmy does not see his mistake; he thinks he arrests the wheels because they turn so slowly. But look what a space is traversed in a few centuries, and how all obstacles are ground into dust.

The *Christian World* calls their doctrine of eternal punishment a "hideous dogma," and part of "a lurid creed that is fast passing away." True, but the lurid creed is Christianity itself. It is passing away as all other creeds have passed—little by little. Part after part is discarded, but it is still the same creed. Dogmas men were once burnt for doubting are now openly repudiated, but it is still the same creed. All the substance is going, but the name remains. Begging Shakespeare's pardon, there is much in a name. Words are only the counters of wise men, but, as Hobbes said, they are the money of fools; and there is no more flagrant fact in history than the way in which men have been cheated with names. What is theology but a science of nomenclature, a system erected on the delusion that names are things?

Well, the Wesleyans go on with their "hell and damnation," and much good may it do them. There are certain people so enamored of the pit, that sooner than see it fail for want of sustenance, they would get up a joint-stock company and run it themselves. By a curious perversity of reason they argue that eternal torture proves the goodness of God. They resemble the workhouse governor, who, in the chaplain's absence, was summoned to the bedside of a dying pauper. "Well, Tom," he began, "you've been a dreadful sinner, and I fear you are going to hell." "Oh, sir," replied the poor wretch, "you don't say so?" "Yes," rejoined the governor, "I do say so, and you ought to be thankful there's a hell to go to." So think the Wesleyans. We ought to be thankful there is a hell to go to. We do not feel this gratitude, but we would not diminish theirs. They are the best judges of their own deserts. For our part, we are inclined to say that those who will believe in hell deserve to go there. The title of this article is "Wesleyans and Hell," but "Wesleyans in Hell" would be nearer our sense of fitness and propriety.

G. W. FOOTE.

The new bishop of Ripon has been presented by his late congregation with a cheque for £500, and it was intimated that some plate would be sent on to his palace, where he will live in the enjoyment of £4,500 a year. Take no thought for the morrow; blessed be ye poor; woe unto you rich. Amen.

ACID DROPS.

THE *Christian Herald* has an anecdote of a parrot that said "Amen." This parrot represents pretty accurately the majority of modern Christians in their devotions. There is so little honest originality and genuine conviction that we think the parrot should be substituted for the dove as the emblem of the Holy Ghost and the great source of Christian inspiration in the congregations of to-day.

SURGEON, as reported in the *Christian Herald*, says that "God has once for all utterly refused the plan of merit and of works, and has chosen to bless men only and entirely through the plan, or method, or law of faith." Election and sanctification are everything. Good deeds and noble lives count for absolutely nothing. And yet Christians say that their religion is the sole source of morality.

The following is a verse of a Christian hymn by Dr. Watts:

"Rich were the drops of Jesus' blood
That calmed his Father's face,
That sprinkled o'er the burning throne,
And changed his wrath to grace."

What a picture! A father delighted as the blood of his murdered son splashes over his face! Father and Son are about fit for Madame Tussaud's Chamber of Horrors.

The following advertisement, cut from a religious contemporary, exhibits the talent of the clergy in developing novel forms of mendicancy:

A CLERGYMAN desires Immediate Loan of £10 or £15 for three months. Who will lend a helping hand to enable him to recover from the effects of ill-health and misfortune?—D. A., 90 Walworth Road, London.

AN American Christian has left half an acre of land in Ashburnham, Massachusetts, with the houses upon it, to the Lord Jesus. The new owner has not yet appeared to claim his property, but his representatives are perfectly willing to take possession in the name of their master. They will, however, have to show a *bonâ fide* power of attorney before they are allowed to act.

A CORRESPONDENT writing to the *Louisville Courier-Journal* from an insane asylum in California, says: "A mild and amiable-looking man told me he was God. 'And I,' said another, happening to be by at the same moment, 'am Jesus.' 'My dear sir,' said the first, 'what you say indeed surprises me. I am God and the father of Jesus. I am positive, however, that you are not my son. How, then, can you be Jesus?' 'You are certainly right there,' replied the other. 'You are not my father, but I am Jesus. Jesus was the son of God, too. Strange, very strange too. I don't understand it.' I left them discussing the matter, with puzzled looks. Neither seemed to doubt the other's egotistical claim, but only wearied their poor disordered brains with attempting to ascertain how they could be God and Jesus, yet not themselves be father and son."

ST. GEORGE MIVART, the Jesuit scientist, argues in the *Nineteenth Century* that animals have no ideas because they have no language, and that this constitutes "a limit to Evolution." Is it not evident, however, that their difference from man is only one of degree? The various cries of the gibbon represent different changes in its brain and nervous structure. Gregarious animals appoint sentinels, who give distinct notes of safety or of danger. All animals indeed have a means of communicating with their own species by a kind of gesture language. The tail of a dog is sometimes more expressive than the head of its master.

THERE is sufficient evidence in all languages that they have been largely built up of simple interjectional roots. Gesture forms a large portion of the language of all savage races. The entire vocabulary of many tribes consists of only a few hundred words. The clicking language of the Kaffir and the grunting language of the Bushman are but little higher than the collection of sounds used by some animals. The absence of abstract ideas is equally found in the lower races of man. Mr. St. George Mivart's argument is the strongest weapon in the armory of the anti-evolutionist, but it cannot stand against the facts derived from human structure and the evidence to be collected from the lower races of men.

THE *Present Day*, edited by George Jacob Holyoake, is dated on p. 23 "Aug. 1814." On the whole we incline to think the date is correct. Mr. Holyoake has gone back forty years since the time of his imprisonment, instead of advancing. If he lives another ten years or so he will get back to the eighteenth century.

THE Rev. W. J. Spriggs-Smith, advocate of total abstinence, is reported as saying that he shuddered "at the thought of the cup being administered at the Lord's Supper. He would forego all the livings that existed in creation rather than his hand should administer the cursed cup." We wonder what the sensitive sky-pilot thinks of Lot and Noah, and we

should like his private opinion concerning his blessed Savior's having made wine for guests "well drunk."

DR. HOUGHTON says "God was the first prohibitionist." The doctor omitted to state that God (while playing Son) was the first to perform the now common juggling feat of making wine out of water; and this was called a manifestation of his glory.

A WRITER in the *Sunday School Chronicle* asserts that it is only "the idle, irreligious, immoral, religion-hating aristocracy" who want the Sunday opening of museums. We say nothing of the epithets, but the absurdity of those only being advocates of the reform who have a constant round of leisure, not to mention art collections of their own, is apparent. It is quite true that it is not only the working classes who would be benefited, for the shop-keeping class needs the improving influence of "a free Sunday" yet more than the workers.

THE Romish Church has just discovered the bones of the apostle James in Spain. There can be no doubt about it. The bones were all ticketed, and a copy of his certificate of death was found near the skull. It is thought by some who ought to know that the Archbishop of Canterbury, being unable to resist the force of this evidence, will insist on its being accepted by the Church of England; and that if it refuses to do so, he will join the Roman Catholic Church and give up his fifteen thousand a year.

THERE are some funny people in America. A member of a Montreal church sued the sexton for passing him over at collection time, and the Supreme Court awarded him five dollars damages and costs. That man ought to be exhibited. Most church members over here would pay a good price to see him as a first-rate curiosity.

THE *Guardian* is indignant at the idea of a woman conducting service in an Episcopal Church, and asks, Is it lawful? Our pious contemporary is surely joking. Why, there are hundreds of old women performing in churches every Sunday, and the *Guardian* is stirring up a hornet's nest in questioning the legality of such a common occurrence.

THAT religious impostor, Dr. Kinns, is having a testimonial got up for him, in recognition of his great efforts to rehabilitate the scientific character of Moses. Enough money is to be raised, if possible, to keep him in comfort for the rest of his life. The committee for this fine project includes the Earl of Shaftesbury, who is a little gold mine for opponents of "infidelity"; the Lord Mayor, who is working up a character for piety; the Bishop of Bath and the Dean of Canterbury; the redoubtable Jabez Hogg, of Bedford Square; and Sir Thomas Chambers, member for Marylebone and Recorder of the City of London. The last gentleman charged the grand jury at the Old Bailey on both our indictments, and called on them as Christian men to bring in a true bill against us. A Freethinker is thus liable to be tried for Blasphemy by a member of a committee for the promotion of Christian Evidences. The same man may subscribe money to assist in confuting the sceptic, and send him to prison for not being confuted. What a blissful state of things in a free country, where the people sing—"Britons never, never, never shall be slaves!"

CHRISTIANS will think Mr. Foote in his "Gospel Ghosts" comes dangerously near blaspheming the Holy Ghost, about which terrible crime all Christians are at loggerheads, although they agree it hath never forgiveness. By the way, an American author, Dr. M. Woolley, author of the "Science of the Bible," explains it. The Holy Ghost, or Pnuma, is the *summer wind*. If you don't get your seed in and raise a crop during summer, you commit a sin against the Holy Ghost, which will not be forgiven during this year or any subsequent one. Time once past never returns. All right!

WHEN the survivors of the last American Arctic expedition was discovered, the leader was reading the prayer for the dying, and was too weak to stand. The *Christian Commonwealth* doubts "whether any infidel could sincerely fling a sneer at this picture of a most heroic sufferer praying to his heavenly father at such an hour." No "infidel" dreams of sneering at suffering and heroism, but he feels that it is his duty to point out and denounce the cruelty and hard-heartedness of the alleged "heavenly father," who views such "ghastly" scenes of suffering with fiendish indifference. But the Christian will say that God saved these men. Twenty out of the twenty-eight were already dead, and the eight survivors were rescued by their fellow-men, and not by God.

ANOTHER of those deplorable and numerous cases of insanity which are directly traceable to the dogmas of Christianity has occurred at Widnes, where a respectable woman was brought before a justice of the peace and committed to Rainhill Asylum. The poor woman has lately been attending evangelistic meetings in connection with the Calvinistic Methodists, and encouraged by their ranting, prayers and

declamation, developed serious religious mania. She constantly mourns that her sins are not forgiven, and says she is sinking into hell. Such cases are common in all asylums and occasion a vast deal of misery outside. Yet we incur the penalties against blasphemy for exposing these pernicious dogmas.

A WRITER in the *Christian* notices the religious strife and contention which, as in Chloe's household (1 Cor. i., 11, 12) destroy the peace and harmony of otherwise happy homes. He tells Christians: "This division and spirit of party among you will be your ruin. . . . It is the reason why so many are sick among you." The association of sickness and death with perfectly irrelevant religious causes is thoroughly scriptural. St. Paul, speaking of those who take the Lord's Supper unworthily, says: "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep" (1 Cor. xi., 30).

FOLLOWING the recent example of the Bishop and clergy of Chichester, the rector of Warrington has started his new lightning conductor with a special divine service, including suitable psalms, hymns, prayers and blessings, together with a procession of the choir, clergy and congregation. In the chief prayer the rector informed the Lord that the lightning conductor was put up for the purpose of appeasing and lessening his wrath. Judging by effects, the simple copper rod of science mollifies the God of thunder and turns away his bolts more effectually than all the prayers of the pious and the intercessions of the Redeemer who was slain for the special purpose of appeasing the divine anger.

IN connection with the Dublin scandals some "shocking disclosures" are being made. Two men are arrested for keeping houses for the commission of unnatural offences. Among the guests at a ball where all the guests were of the male sex, though some of them were dressed in female attire, were a priest and a parson.

THE Jubilee of the Anti-Slavery Society was rather a farce. An occasion which one might suppose would bring out all that was noble in England, results in mediocre speeches from such friends of liberty as the Archbishop of Canterbury, Sir Stafford Northcote, Lord Mayor Fowler, Cardinal Manning, and H. Richards, the rejected of Northampton; with a decent speech—evidently written for him—by the Prince of Wales, who, although he forgot to mention the decrees of the first French Republic against slavery, did mention the services of the Atheist M. Victor Schoelcher in obtaining the emancipation of slaves in the French colonies.

WHEN such a set are considered the representatives of the anti-slavery movement, no one can be astonished at any perversion of history. Archbishop Benson declared that slavery was abolished when Jesus Christ was crucified as a slave. J. C. was never crucified as a slave at all, but treated just as any other Jewish malefactor would have been treated. The well-salaried Archbishop was more correct when he admitted that "the Bible and the New Testament contained scarcely a word that might be construed as against slavery, but what they did tell us of was the duty of the master and the slave to one another." Just so. Moses permitted slaves to be struck within an inch of death without any punishment falling upon the master, and Paul exhorts them to obedience. The Greek word translated "servants" in the New Testament ought to be rendered slaves. The regulation of slavery which the Archbishop admits, proves it to be a Biblical institution. Indeed it was always defended on the ground that it had the warrant of God's holy word. Christian Brazil still keeps a million and a half of slaves.

God and Jesus were brought as prominently as possible into the jubilee proceedings, but nothing was said of the modified serfdom which still exists in every Christian country, and which, countenanced by the Biblical text, "Be content with your wages," keeps starving workers at the mercy of those who live by their labor.

THE recent religious story of the blaspheming soldier struck blind at Portsmouth having turned out to be all moonshine, another "terrible warning," probably of a similarly trustworthy character, is sent forth from Portslade, and is going the round of the press. A laborer named Elliott having called on God to strike him dumb if he failed to do some particular deed, and having also got drunk, found he could not speak or hear or swallow solid food. Whether this "dreadful" "divine visitation" is merely a case of sore throat or not we cannot say, as the frightened man refuses medical help, saying that under the circumstances it is impossible to cure him. According to Lord Coleridge's ruling in Mr. Bradlaugh's case this "fearful oath" is identical in principle with the Parliamentary oath, which is alleged to be invalid unless it is a sincere invocation of divine judgments in case the promise is not kept.

JOHN LINDSAY, the individual who was base enough to perorate a clergyman, was sentenced at Leeds Assizes to fourteen

years' imprisonment. This "clerical impostor" had the highest recommendations from clergymen, and was renowned for the fervor of his prayers and the excellence of his preaching. He had performed many marriages, which are perfectly legal, because they have been registered. If the parties, however, are under the delusion that marriage consists in the priestly ordinance, they had better have the knot tied over again.

THIS is the way in which the *Church Times* speaks of Mr. Spurgeon: "He has given the other Dissenting ministers in London only too much reason to appreciate the words of Job—'The Tabernacles of the robbers prosper.' How these Christians love one another!

THE *Church Times* advocates that the "lower classes" shall go to church in their working clothes. Do not the bishops attend in their aprons?

WE need no longer remain in doubt as to the utility of the injunctions to "believers," "husbands love your wives." The following incident will enlighten us as to the necessity of such a command amongst Christians. In a certain North British town there resides a young man who for some years past has figured as a street preacher. He was married about seven months ago, and about six weeks ago his wife gave birth to a child. On Sunday last his heart, it would appear, was so full of love to God that he had none for his wife. They had quarrelled about something, and in the heat of the "row" he commenced to beat her unmercifully, and then turned her and her infant out of doors. The unfortunate woman's body is actually covered with the marks of the blows she has received at the hands of her inhuman husband. If the above is the manner in which a Christian expresses his love for his wife, we are at a loss to know how he would fulfil the command of his Master, "love your enemies."

ANOTHER clerical worthy has come before the public at Burnley. The Rev. John James Lang, a clergyman of the Church of England at Thornton-in-Craven, has been sent to Quarter Sessions without bail on a charge of indecently assaulting three little girls. The prisoner is a married man, but living separate from his wife and having two girls in the house, who, the counsel for the prosecution declared, were nothing but common prostitutes.

As a pendant to our reflections on the Marquis of Salisbury's toleration (save the mark!) last week, we note that his lordship has refused to grant a site at Hatfield for the erection of a Wesleyan chapel. It is to be hoped that Non-conformists will remember this fact in the present crisis.

MR. SPURGEON's statements are often as accurate as his theology. He has just told his Christian brethren in London not to be afraid of "Comtism, Atheism and know-nothingism" (this is a stock piece of wit with C. H. S.), for the number of persons who attended all their meetings could be seated in one gallery of his theatre—we beg pardon, his tabernacle. This is fresh news indeed. We thought the Tabernacle held about five thousand, but it appears that over ten thousand can be accommodated in one of its galleries. We should say that Mr. Spurgeon had been taking lessons from Barnum if we did not know that he is quite capable of teaching any showman in the world a good many wrinkles.

At Weston-super-Mare last week, General Davidson, the local secretary for the Bible Society, said, at the annual meeting, in referring to the Domestic Mission in connection with the society, which was started to enable poor persons to purchase Bibles by small weekly subscriptions—the books being sold to them at half price—that "one poor woman in Weston, who scarcely earned a livelihood for herself, had been so determined that none of her nine children should go out into the world without his or her Bible, that she was now subscribing for the eighth 27s. Bible." The General thought this was a good example to the poor woman's neighbors, as well as to many in a much higher position in life. Our own opinion is that any society that would encourage "a poor old woman who scarcely earned a livelihood for herself" to spend over £6 in purchasing Bibles for her children is not worthy of any rational person's support. The money spent by the old woman in Bibles would have given her children a year's extra schooling, which would have been of far more service to them than the contents of such an obscene book.

THE Pope's big toe has gone wrong through an ingrowing nail, which renders pressure very painful. Pilgrims who visit Rome for the sublime pleasure of kissing his holiness's big toe are not, however, sent away broken-hearted at the disappointment. He graciously lets them kiss the big toe of the other foot instead, and the happy pilgrims rejoice as of yore.

WHY does not the Pope excommunicate the cholera microbes? That policy was pursued in ancient times, and Catholic historians say with great success. The great St. Bernard once excommunicated a swarm of flies; and according to an enter-

taining article in the *Atlantic Monthly*, a Bernese curate excommunicated a kind of vermin called ingers in the following terms: "Thou irrational and imperfect creature, the inger, of which there were none in Noah's ark, by the authority of my gracious lord the Bishop of Lausanne, in the name of the ever-lauded and most blessed Trinity, through the merits of our Savior Jesus Christ, and in obedience to the Holy Apostolic Church, I command you, each and all, to depart, within six days, from all places in which food for man springeth up and groweth." What a pity we cannot get rid of plague and pestilence in this easy fashion, instead of fighting them with the slow weapons of Science.

THE religious press in France is boasting of the services rendered by the priests and nuns during the cholera epidemic. Admiral Krantz has had to dismiss the St. Mandrier chaplain for refusing to attend cholera patients. The priests are agitating for public religious processions to avert the wrath of heaven and bring prestige and money into their own line of business. Thus they divert people's attention from the real source of danger, the fearful state of the drainage and the bad water supply. M. Clemenceau, on his recent visit of inspection to the plague-stricken districts in Marseilles, was shown a sewer falling fifteen yards in an open cascade. "This," says the *Daily News* correspondent, "results from the opposition of the bishop to a work of drainage ordered by the municipality, which would have compelled him to suspend religious services for some days in St. Martin's Church. The quarrel is referred to the Council of State. Meanwhile, the whole neighborhood is poisoned, and the engineering works, which have already cost nine million francs, are suspended."

M. CLEMENCEAU recently interpellated the French Government as to the steps it meant to take to prevent the spread of the cholera. He recommended sanitary boards; whereupon one of the pious members exclaimed, "You must restore the religious faith of the people." "Why," retorted Clémenceau, "at Toulon the hospital chaplain was dismissed because he refused to visit the cholera patients." The pious member collapsed.

"UNCLE Tom's Cabin" is being played at the Elephant and Castle. According to the advertisement one of the scenes is "Eva in Heaven." Why does not some champion of religion try to stop this awful blasphemy? The Christian pantheon will soon be played out if it is played on the stage. Here is a chance for Tyler, Harcourt, the City Corporation, Giffard, or even Maloney.

WE have just been reading of "a certain infidel named John Sanderson, who lived at Rochdale, and had a dog called 'Fox' with a great bushy tail, who was converted by a little girl named Alice, after several unsuccessful attempts from others." We wonder what denomination this converted dog preferred. Doubtless he would enjoy reading the New Testament in the "canine Greek," in which Swinburne says it is written.

THE following is a verse from one of the most popular of the revival hymns sung at the Sunday camp-meetings at Brooklyn:

"I'se got on de back of de Mefodis mule,
Sinner doan' ye stan' dar lookin' like a fool;
De bridle bit am silber, de saddle am gold,
An' I'se boun' fur to go to Aberham's fold.
An' I'll ride,
Yes I will,
An' I'll ride right on to glory!"

In another hymn Jesus is asked to rake off the believer's sins with a curry-comb. We shouldn't like to play the part of barber's cloth in this process.

THEY must be having bad weather somewhere, for a writer in the *Liverpool Echo* suggests that the clergy and ministers of all denominations should ask the Unchangeable to "stay his hand." The Bishop of Lichfield has sanctioned the use of a prayer for fine weather. In a letter to his archdeacons he attributes the abnormal seasons to the Deceased Wife's Sister Bill and the proposal to abolish the oath in the House of Commons. *Credat Christianus.*

A SABLE drone, not very far from Leicester, lately espied in a poor laborer's garden ten bee-hives. Tenacious of his tithes (not so much for his own sake as for that of the church), he exclaimed: "John, so you have got ten bee-hives? If you do not want your conscience to sting you, bring one to me, your soul-saving rector. The man soon after obeyed the mandate, and on his arrival at the rector's was ordered to carry the hive into the garden. "No," says he, "where's master." On being shown into the parlor, where the reverend divine sat—"Here," says Hodge, "I've brought yore bees, bu' th' hoive's moine, for I gen a shilling for 't, second hond." He then shook out the bees, combs, etc., and left the parson dancing about the parlor, to pacify the humming strangers as well as he could.

SPECIAL NOTICE.

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, August 10, Hall of Science, Old Street, London, E.C., at 7.30, on "The Lord of Lords."

August 17, Claremont Hall, London; 24, Milton Hall, London; 26, Walworth; 31, Milton Hall, London. September 7, Hall of Science, London; 14, Hall of Science, London; 21, Glasgow; 23 and 24, Aberdeen; 28, Edinburgh. October 2, Hall of Science, London; 5, Liverpool; 9, Hall of Science, London; 12, Halifax; 16, Hall of Science, London; 19, Manchester; 20, Longton; 23, Hall of Science, London; 26, Plymouth. Nov. 2, Burnley; 16, Nottingham. Dec. 7, Leeds.

CORRESPONDENTS.

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

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

RECEIVED WITH THANKS.—W. Skaife, T. Adams, Val. W. Hardwick, The Redcemer, H. G. Swift.

SAINT SALT.—Your yarn is rather too long. We shall be glad of shorter ones.

A. HAMMERSLEY.—The passage, "But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me," occurs in Luke xix., 27. We paid one penny for your letter because insufficiently stamped.

T. N. SELMAN.—The conundrum about Pharaoh receiving a check on the bank of the Red Sea, crossed by Moses and Co., dates from the time of the first Sanhedrim.

JUSTITIA says "The Summer Number is like the weather—hot, but not too much so." Thanks for the pars.

A. A. MORRIS draws attention to a new branch of the National Secular Society formed for Hammersmith and district. The meeting place is the "Monarch," Manchester Street, Notting Hill. We do not insert reports.

D. E.—Thanks, but we are rather too full of copy at present.

H. SEYMOUR, Tunbridge Wells, writes that owing to the action of the local bigots, the hall engaged for his debate with Mr. Allard was refused at the eleventh hour, after the tickets were extensively sold; but fortunately another hall was obtained in time, so that the debate did not fall through. Such are Christian tactics in Canon Hoare's preserve.

J. A. BACON.—Thanks. Glad you enjoy the Summer Number.

H. STANLEY.—Your account of Peter Mackenzie's sermon on the Devil is amusing, but we are rather full of matter just now, and pious Peter is hardly more worthy our attention than any other travelling clown.

MR. TRAPP, 104 Central Street, St. Luke's, sells this paper and all Secular literature.

C. B.—We do not usually insert verses that have been already printed.

S. J. B.—Thanks for the cuttings. We are glad to hear of Freethinkers in Tipperary, and shall be pleased to hear from you again.

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.

DESPITE the holiday time and the exquisitely fine weather, there was a good audience at the Hall of Science last Sunday to hear Mr. Foote's lecture on "Sky Pilots." This evening (August 10) Mr. Foote will lecture again in the same Hall on a new subject, "The Lord of Lords," which ought to be particularly interesting at the present crisis in political affairs. Of course Mr. Foote's lecture is not political, but theological, dealing not so much with the Lords as with their Lord, who is the head and front of all tyranny and public plunder.

THE extent to which Freethought works get translated into other languages is very noticeable. Mr. Foote's "Bible Romances" are being translated into Bengalee and Hindustanee as effective weapons against the missionaries. Col. Ingersoll's publications have recently been rendered into Norwegian. While the so-called standard theological works remain on the shelves and very rarely ever reach a second edition in the country where they are issued, such works as Rénan's "Vie de Jésus," Draper's "Conflict of Science and Religion," Buckle's "History of Civilisation," and Huxley's "Essays," are translated into almost every civilised tongue.

A NEW edition, the fourth, of Dr. Büchner's "Force and Matter" has been issued by Messrs. Asher and Co. This much denounced Atheistic work has passed through sixteen editions in German, six in French, four in English, three in Italian, and two in Hungarian, and has been translated into thirteen living languages.

MR. F. RAYNER, formerly of Southampton, has opened a

depôt for the sale of Freethought literature at 80 Piccadilly, Hanley, where he hopes to receive the support of our party. One feature of Mr. Rayner's business is that he undertakes to deliver Secular literature to his customers.

DR. PRESSENSE states that the French Chamber of Deputies "is preparing to make fresh reductions in the budget of public worship in the next session. It intends to strike a blow at the higher clergy by lessening the salaries of the bishops and entirely withdrawing those of the canons, and by suppressing the theological faculties. The inferior clergy will also have their meagre stipends reduced, and their numbers will be considerably diminished." Dr. Pressensé considers this policy very mean; but the Church has the remedy in its own hands. Let it disclaim all connection with the State, and support itself.

REPUBLICAN France is steadily fighting clerical reaction with the soundest of weapons—national education. The public expenditure on schools has risen from £2,998,696 in 1877 to £4,690,402 in 1882, besides eight or nine millions of extraordinary expenditure for equipping and endowing primary schools. There are now considerably over five million scholars in attendance. The progress has been entirely confined to the lay schools which in all have gained 540,301 pupils since 1878, while the religious schools have lost 68,177 scholars.

BROTHER JONATHAN is still troubled with Sunday laws. Mr. Ryan was taken to gaol for playing at base-ball in his grounds on Sunday, and though the police were unable to secure a verdict from the jury, they still stop the playing by arresting all who indulge in it. James Sampson, a farmer, of Fairview, Erie, was taken into custody for saving his hay from destruction by rain on the Lord's Day. He is a follower of Ingersoll, and when the church committee waited on him he offered to stop work if they could convince him that God would save the hay without Sunday labor.

SUNDAY recreation is being warmly discussed "across the herring-pond" just now, thanks to a happy innovation introduced by the New York authorities. The public concerts hitherto given in Central Park on Saturdays now take place on Sunday afternoons, much to the enjoyment of large numbers of the poorer classes.

THE *Fortnightly Review* for the current month contains a paper by Mr. Lucien Wolf, entitled "What is Judaism?" Mr. Wolf makes the essence of Judaism to be simply secularism. He says: "Judaism holds that the possibilities of human knowledge are limited to the visible world. Mankind is consequently taught that temporal happiness is the goal of existence and the whole aim of action." The law and ceremonial of Judaism he considers only its outward expression, and he thus sums up its distinction from Christianity: "The substantial difference between Judaism and Christianity is, then, that the one desires to teach us how to live, the other how to die. Judaism discourses of the excellence of temporal pleasure, the divinity—if I may be permitted the expression—of length of days; Christianity, on the other hand, emphasises the excellence of sorrow and the divinity of death." The article is interesting as showing the progress Jews are making towards pure humanitarianism.

THE *Academy*, reviewing Dr. Cox on "Miracles," alludes thus to the modern apologist's method of defining them as exhibitions of natural but higher law: "Works of healing may pass as credible, but how about changing water into wine, raising the dead, stopping the sun, and so on? Are not these distinct violations of natural law? Dr. Cox does not seem to see that his definition of a miracle, although perfectly defensible, does not include all the phenomena to be defended, and he refuses to make a selection, although this is just what modern Biblical criticism allows him to do."

THE Christian Evidence Society's lecturer at Peckham Rye last Sunday perpetrated a singular blunder. His subject was "Design in Nature," and he was dealing with the eye. "Now," said he, "I will illustrate what I mean. A convex piece of glass concentrates the rays of light and reflects them on the rectum." Of course the poor fellow meant the retina. Mr. Engstrom should give his outdoor lecturers a little instruction in physiology, so that when they do go in for mistakes, which is pretty often, they may at least avoid such ludicrous grossness.

THE PIETY OF THE PEERS.

In dealing with the House of Lords it is well that all Dissenters should be reminded of the attitude taken by that House towards questions of religious equality—an attitude which may fairly be described as one of intolerable intolerance.

For proof of this proposition we need not travel back to the days when the persecution of heretics was thought a

religious duty. Sufficient proof may be found within the present century since the notion of religious freedom and equality has become the property of the mass of the people.

They were the bitter opponents of Catholic Emancipation. In 1821 they rejected the Catholic Relief Bill by 159 to 120—25 bishops voting against the measure and two in favor—and again in 1828 by 178 to 130—27 bishops voting against and 2 in favor. In the following year they passed the measure, a great agitation in its favor having arisen. A Bill to permit Roman Catholic peers to sit among them they rejected by 171 to 129—23 bishops voting against and only 1 in its favor. It was the same in regard to the repeal of the abominable Penal Laws which was violently opposed, especially by the bishops, and which had to be considerably modified to suit the wishes of the peers. In 1835, when the Commons wished to repeal the law which enabled any man who had gone through the marriage ceremony before a Roman Catholic priest to repudiate his wife on proving that he had attended a Protestant church within twelvemonths of the marriage, the lordly defenders of piety rejected the proposal. In the same year they rejected the Irish Tithe Bill by 138 to 41—15 bishops being with the majority and only 2 against. The fight for the emancipation of our fellow citizens, the Jews, was continued for twenty-five years against large majorities of these most Christian peers. The Jewish Disabilities Repeal Bill of 1833 was rejected by 104 to 54, 20 bishops voting against and 3 in favor. Down to 1857 it was still rejected, then by 171 to 139.

The presence of bishops in the House has doubtless done much to give it its narrow sectarian character, and we have seen how they helped to swell the numbers on the side of intolerance. This pious Upper House has always shown itself ready to insult Dissenters. The Bill for admitting them to the Universities, though passed in the House of Commons in 1834 by a very decisive majority—164 to 75—was rejected by 187 to 85—22 bishops voting in the majority against two in the minority. It took more than a generation to compel them to do this act of justice. The measure was flung out in 1865, '66, '67, '69, and '70, and the pious peers surrendered in 1871. In 1834 they so amended a Poor Law Bill as to deprive Nonconformist ministers of access to the workhouses. In 1836 they tried to restrict marriage outside the Established Church to those only who took an oath that they had conscientious objections to the Church Service. Fortunately this highly moral and religious attempt was defeated by the Commons. By an amendment of the Municipal Bill they sought to exclude Nonconformists from any share in administering charitable trusts. In recent years they have thrown out scheme after scheme of the Endowed Schools Commissioners, in order that the Church might have a monopoly of the advantages.

It has been the same in regard to the abolition of compulsory church rates. In 1858 the Commons, after years of discussion, passed by a majority of 60 a bill for abolishing these impositions. The peers rejected it by 187 to 36—24 bishops voted with the majority, and not one to remove the grievance under which Dissenters were defrauded of their property. Again and again they treated with scorn similar bills, till forced to give way by Mr. Gladstone's strong Government of 1868.

We all remember their opposition to the Irish Church Bill, which they rejected by 192 to 97—21 bishops voting to retain the iniquity and not one for its removal. Happily Mr. Gladstone had the mandate of the country so strongly at his back that the pious House was forced into speedy submission. The Bill to abolish the qualification for office, which made every servant of Government promise not to in any way weaken the Church as by law established, was opposed from year to year, and the motion to permit burial services other than that of the Church of England in churchyards had to be continued annually in similar fashion. When the peers could no longer refuse this just demand they did their best to neutralise its value by restrictions. Freethinkers will not forget how, when the Affirmation Bill was nearly passed in the Commons, it was proposed in the peers that the other House should not be allowed to permit the entrance of an Atheist. It is true this high-handed proceeding was quietly smothered by the canny Duke of Argyll, but it was quite in accordance with the traditions of a house whose cup of iniquity is full to overflowing, and which, if it does not submit to reform itself, in accordance with the spirit of the age, may find it can be dispensed with entirely.

J. M. WHEELER.

CHRISTIAN BLASPHEMY.

THE following is copied from an account given of the Christian religion which appears in the "Universal History of the Religious Rites, Ceremonies, and Customs of every Nation in the known World," written by William Hurd, D.D., and published in the year 1824. After alluding to the Roman Empire, etc., he says:—"Such was the situation of the world at the time when God sent his only begotten son to justify sinners, both by his active and passive obedience. But in what manner was this great deliverer ushered into the world? Here angels are lost in admiration; believers are filled with gratitude; while the profane are left to mock. The eternal Lord of heaven and earth, submitted to lodge nine months in the womb of a poor obscure virgin, and although he was the king of kings, and lord of lords, yet his mother, at the command of a pagan emperor, was obliged to leave the place of her nativity, and travel above sixty miles in a state of pregnancy, in order to pay a poor insignificant poll-tax. Although he was to have the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession, yet his mother was obliged to undergo the pains of child-bearing in a stable, among beasts, and instead of a cradle, the long-promised Messiah was laid in a manger. His life was sought after greedily by the bloody Herod, and his poor reputed parents were obliged to travel for shelter into Egypt, taking along with them him who was to clothe sinners with a robe of righteousness. In a humble obscure station, the eternal son of God who thought it no robbery to be equal with God, and to be God himself, lived till he was thirty years of age, along with his reputed parents."

RELIGIOUS SONGS FOR THE MORAL TRAINING OF INFANTS OF ALL AGES.

THE MONEY-BOX.*

TYPE of Christ-forbidden vice,
Worldly wisdom's devil's dice;
Thou temptest me in vain to fall,
To save a little and lose all.

What souls for Satan thou dost win
By teaching youthful souls to sin,
To break commands by Jesus given,
To lose his love and forfeit heaven!

Lay up treasure on this earth!
My God forbade it—he whose birth
Concerns me more than tongue can tell,
Whose death redeems the poor from hell.

Take thought for a future time?
Ah, no! My God forbids the crime.
And loved ones who on me depend
Must starve or take what God may send.

Thrift, when God condemns it so?
When riches bring but endless woe!
Who but the fool, the infidel,
Will tread the certain road to hell?

Save, and break God's holy law?
No! I obey with breathless awe.
I save my soul, naught else my care,
With thriftlessness and urgent prayer.

My teacher tells of worldly dreams,
Of savings banks and postal schemes.
He teaches me the Bible too,
And I know surely which is true.

The Bible is the word of God,
And I obey his slightest nod;
For worldly wisdom is a snare,
And all I want will come by prayer.

Forethoughtful providence is worse
Than any other human curse;
It makes us all forget our God,
Released from his chastising rod.

If we but put a penny by,
Our Lord's commands then we defy;
And after death we shall awake
In torments in the fiery lake.

Howling, weeping, gnashing teeth,
Or plunged those fiery waves beneath.
We shall repent and curse our birth.
We disobeyed our God on earth.

Then, scoffing sinner, while there's time,
Avoid such fearful sin—such crime.
Your money-box, that trap, that snare,
Destroy with fire, and turn to prayer.

Obey your God! To heaven aspire!
Let bank-books shrivel on the fire,
Lest you for ever shrivel so
Amidst tormenting flames below.

W. P. BALL.

* Matt. vi., 19, 25, 30, 34; xxi., 22. Mark x., 25; xi., 24. Luke vi., 20, 24. 1 Timothy vi., 10.

A NAKED PROPHECY.

PROPHECYING has always been a priestly and a kingly profession. With plenty of people ever ready to be deceived, and pay handsomely for the privilege, it is no wonder that priests took early to the business, and received sometimes the patronage and the support of crowned heads. And we have it distinctly upon record that on one occasion, at least, a king, either for pleasure or for profit, tried his hand at the business.

Whether the word "prophet" has undergone a complete change or not, whether it originally meant a poet, vocalist or musician, or whether it always meant a man who foresaw and foretold events, are questions with which we need not now trouble ourselves. Of this we may be certain, from the most reliable evidence, that prophets have invariably been disreputable characters, who have not only fattened upon the credulity of the people, but treated with a haughty insolence and malignant cruelty those of more honorable calling.

Balaam was a prophet, yet how brutally he treated his faithful donkey! Elisha was a prophet, yet he stood by complacently while she-bears devoured the children who had merely observed in chorus that the old man

"Had no wool on the top of his head
In the place where the wool ought to grow."

David was a prophet, who prophesied upon the harp, yet he appropriated Uriah's wife to himself, and had the soldier put in the front rank of the army as a target for the enemy. Jonah was a prophet yet how chagrined he was when the Lord repented of the cruelty he had intended to have perpetrated upon the children of Nineveh. Saul was a prophet and a king. When the "evil spirit" from the Lord had entered into him, "he stripped off his clothes and prophesied before Samuel in like manner, and lay naked all that day and all that night." Wherefore they say, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" Evidently, Saul thought that his garments were an impediment to his power as a prophet, and that naked prophesying was the right thing. Perhaps he thought the prophecy would be less obscure, clearer to the understanding if it were laid bare before the people—or clothed only in the garment of thought. What the prophecy was, and what became of it, the inspired writer has not told us. And why it was not preserved as an example to all future prophets of the perspicuity of naked prophesying is to me a great enigma, unless indeed I assume that it was a dead failure, and that the people saw through it at once. Upon that assumption the beclouded atmosphere surrounding the whole of subsequent prophesying is at once made clear; a new light is thrown upon the scene. Saul prophesied a naked prophecy. In clear language—a failure!

Isaiah prophesied in metaphorical language "That hearing you might hear and not understand." A brilliant success! Think of it ye pious dispensers of the holy spirit! Remember it! Fix it indelibly on the tablets of your memory. But remember also that if you must prophesy it is always safe to prophesy—after the event. ARTHUR B. MOSS.

THE COMMANDMENTS IN CANADA.

ONE of the professors connected with the Normal School of Ottawa, not having the fear of God before his eyes, has formulated the following rules for the pupils:

- I.—Thou shalt have any other girls but these girls.
- II.—Thou shalt not make unto thyself any graven image of any of these girls, or carry away any likeness of any girl that is in the lecture room above, or that is in the lecture room beneath, or that is in the waiting-room beside the lecture room; thou shalt not bow to them nor take walks with them, for I, the drawing master, am a jealous drawing master, and have reserved that special right for myself.
- III.—Thou shalt not smoke upon the street, for I, the principal, will not hold him guiltless that smoketh upon the street.
- IV.—Remember the hour of three o'clock on Friday afternoon. Four and a half days shalt thou labor and do all thy work, but in the afternoon of the fifth day, thou shalt do no manner of work, thou, nor thy masters nor assistant masters, for I, the principal, require your regular and prompt attendance in this lecture room, to disperse you to the several ministers of the gospel to attend to your spiritual welfare, which, I fear, is sadly neglected during the rest of the week.
- V.—Honor thy masters, and give unto them strict and unhesitating obedience, that thy certificate may be granted to teach in the fair Province of Ontario.

"VI.—Thou shalt not be out after 9 30 o'clock.

"VII.—Thou shalt not enter in by the centre door nor loiter in the passages.

"VIII.—Thou shalt not steal sly winks and looks from those on your right.

"IX.—Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy boarding house keeper if thou findest any foreign matter in the hash, for she will surely give thee away to the principal.

"X.—Thou shalt not covet the gold medal; thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's marks, nor his learning, nor his ability, nor anything that is thy neighbor's."

The publication of this parody leads the *Montreal Gazette* to observe that such "playing upon Bible phraseology is little less than blasphemous," and another Canadian editor voices his indignation thus:

"An extraordinary piece of blasphemy was a few days ago publicly read for the amusement of the teachers in training at the Ottawa Normal School, being a travesty on the Ten Commandments, in which the thunders of Sinai and the oft-recurring name of the Almighty are frivolously played with to make the foolish young men and women laugh. Woe to the land whose children are placed under the watch and care of such triflers. To say nothing of reverence for Almighty God, the disrespect publicly displayed toward their teachers by those who participated in this piece of profanity bodes ill for the training of the rising generation in that most important of all the departments of school training—respect for authority."

THE *Record* quotes the following dialogue as having recently taken place on a Sunday afternoon, in a church:—Priest (doing duty for his friend the Rector): Now, little boy, who is your father? Boy: Bill Jones, sir. Priest: Yea, my little man; but I don't mean your father on earth. You have another Father in Heaven. Boy: God, sir. Priest: Quite right. Now tell me who is your mother? Boy: Please, sir, Mary Jones, sir. Priest: Well, yes; but I mean your mother in heaven? Boy: Please, sir, mother ain't dead yet, sir. Priest: Still my boy, you have a mother in Heaven; who is she? Boy silent—dumbfounded at the discovery. Priest: Don't you know? The Virgin Mary; she is your mother in heaven. Now, tell me who is your father on earth? Boy: Bill Jones, sir, as I said afore. Priest: No, my boy; I don't mean him. Boy: But, sir, I always call 'em my father. I always thought as how he was. Priest: But who is the father of all? In my parish all the people call me father. Now, who is the father of all the little boys in this parish? Boy silent—staring with profound wonderment—as well he might. Priest: Why, Mr. — [the Rector]; he is the father of all the little boys in this parish. Boy: Please, sir, I didn't know that. Priest: Now, who is Mr. —'s [the Rector's] wife? Boy: Mrs. — [naming the Rector's wife. Priest: Oh, no, my boy; that is not right. Boy: Well, sir, I always hears her called Mrs. —. Priest: Yes, my boy; but Mr. — is married to the Church—the Church is his bride.

PROFANE JOKES.

A NEW YORK clergyman wants comfortable opera chairs substituted for stiff backed pews. If this is done and if smoking is allowed and some arrangement made so that one can go out between the acts, we predict a great future for his church.

ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT MILLS called on one of the younger classes in the sixth ward school to see how they were getting along in geography. As the lesson progressed he asked: "Now if I were to bore a hole down through the centre of the earth, where would I find myself?" One of the children eagerly took her hand for recognition. "Now, where would I be?" asked the professor, calling on the child. "You would be in—in—the bad place!" she shouted at the top of her voice. The professor was considerably shocked at the answer, but satisfied himself with saying, "You are a way off—sit down."

PLYMOUTH RELIGION.—A lady entered a Plymouth store, saying that she wanted to purchase a Bible to present to her husband upon his approaching birthday. She was shown what she wanted, and having made her selection, was about to retire, when she suddenly remembered there was something else. "Have you playing cards?" The shopkeeper had playing cards, and the lady selected two packs. As she was going out, an old gentleman remarked: "That's Plymouth religion all over—one Bible to two packs of cards!"

"PARSON," said a man, approaching an Arkansas minister, "I reckon you'd better take my name off your church books and let me go." "Why so?" asked the preacher. "You have always been a constant church member." "Wal, you see, I stole a mule, and I thought it wouldn't be healthy for the church for me to belong to it." "When did you steal the mule?" "About six months ago." "Why, since that time you have assisted in several revivals!" "Yes, but they proved that I stole the mule. So I have concluded to quit the church. If they hadn't proved it I'd have remained longer."

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