

THE FREETHINKER.

EDITED BY G. W. FOOTE.

Sub Editor—J. M. Wheeler.

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COMIC BIBLE SKETCH. — No. 82



MICHAEL VERSUS SATAN.

"Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the Devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation."—JUDE, verse 9.

CONSECRATING THE COLORS.

THE Queen has recently presented new colors to the first battalion of the Seaforth Highlanders. There was a great parade at Osborne, half the royal family being present to witness her Majesty perform the one piece of business to which she takes kindly in her old age. She has long been, as Lord Beaconsfield said, physically and morally unfit for her many duties; but she is always ready to inspect her troops, to pin a medal or a cross on the breast of that cheap form of valor which excites such admiration in feminine minds, or to thank her brave warriors for exhibiting their heroism on foreign fields against naked savages and half-naked barbarians. The ruling passion holds out strong to the last, and the respectable old lady who is allowed to occupy the English throne because of her harmlessness can still sing, like the Grand Duchess in Offenbach's opera, "Oh, I dote on the military."

But Mrs. Guelph is not my game. I am "going for" the priests behind her, the mystery men who give the sanction of religion to all the humbug and hypocrisy, as well as to all the plunder and oppression, that obtain amongst us. Those new colors were consecrated (that is the word) by the Dean of Windsor. The old colors were consecrated forty-two years ago by the Venerable Dr. Vernon Harcourt, Archbishop of York, who was probably a near relative of our pious Home Secretary, the fat member for Derby. If I were a courtier, a sycophant, or an ordinary journalist, I might spend some time in hunting up the actual relationship between these two Harcourts; but being neither,

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and not caring a straw one way or the other, I content myself, as I shall probably content my readers, with hazarding a conjecture.

Consecrating the colors! What does that mean? First of all it implies the alliance between the soldier and the priest, who are the two arms of tyranny. One holds and the other strikes; one guards and the other attacks; one overawes with terror and delusion, and the other smites with material weapons when the spiritual restraints fail. The black and the red armies are both retainers in the service of Privilege, and they preach or fight exactly as they are bidden. It makes no real difference that the soldier's orders are clear and explicit, while the priest's are mysteriously conveyed through secret channels. They alike obey the mandate of their employers, and take their wages for the work.

In the next place it shows the intimate relation between religion and war. Both belong to the age of faith. When the age of reason has fairly dawned both will be despised and finally forgotten. They are always and everywhere founded on ignorance and stupidity, although they are decorated with all sorts of fine names. The man of sense sees through all these fine disguises. He knows that the most ignorant people are the most credulous, and that the most stupid are the most pugnacious. Educated and thoughtful men shriek alike from the dogmas of religion and the brutalities of war.

Further, this consecration of the colors reminds us that the Christian deity is still the lord of hosts, the god of battles. His eyes delight to look over a purple sea of blood, and

his devotees never invoke his name so much as when they are about to emulate his sanguinary characteristics. The Dean of Windsor does not shock, he only gratifies the feelings of the orthodox world, when he blesses the flag which is to float over scenes of carnage, and flame like a fiend's tongue over the hell of battle, where brothers of the same human family, without a quarrel in the world, but set at variance by thieves and tricksters, maim and mangle and kill each other with fratricidal hands, which ought to have been clasped in friendship and brotherhood.

Yet these hireling priests, who consecrate the banners of war, dare to prate that God is a loving father and that we are all his children. What monstrous absurdity! What disgusting hypocrisy! Surely the parent of mankind, instead of allowing his ministers to mouth his name over the symbols of slaughter, would command them to preach "peace, peace!"

"Until the war-drums beat no longer and the battle-flags are furled

In the parliament of man, the federation of the world."

Of course there is a comic side to this, as to almost everything else. The priests of the various nations consecrate rival banners, pray for victory for their own side, and swear that God Almighty is sure to give it them if they trust in him. Now what is the Lord to do when they go on in this way on opposite sides? He is sure to disappoint one party, and he is likely to get devilish little thanks from the other. A wise God would remain neutral, and say, "My comical little fellows, if you will go knocking out each other's brains because they are not strong enough to settle your differences by peaceful means, by all means get through the beastly business as soon as possible; but pray don't trouble me with your petitions for assistance; both sides are fools, and I wash my hands of the whole affair."

I have heard of an old Dutch commander who actually prayed the Lord to remain neutral, although from a different motive. On the eve of battle he addressed the deity in this fashion: "O Lord, we are ten thousand, and they are ten thousand, but we are a darned sight better soldiers than they, and, O Lord, do thou but keep out of it, and we'll give them the soundest thrashing they ever had."

Our Prayer Book pays a very poor compliment to the god of battles. "Give peace in our time O Lord," says the preacher. "Because there is none other that fighteth for us but only thou O God," responds the congregation. The compilers of the Prayer Book evidently blundered, unless they secretly felt that the Lord of hosts was used up, and not worth a keg of gunpowder or an old musket.

Consecrating colors, like consecrating graveyards, is after all only a trick of trade. The Dean of Windsor only practises the arts of his profession, and probably laughs in his sleeve at his own public performance. Perhaps he knows that God, as Napoleon said, is on the side of the big battalions; just as, probably, every bishop knows that Church corpses rot exactly like Dissenting corpses, although they lie in consecrated ground. Priestly mummeries will last as long as there is a demand for them. It is of little use to quarrel with the supply. The Freethinker's duty is to lessen the demand.

G. W. FOOTE

THE September number of *Progress*, which will be ready in a few days, contains some exceptionally able and interesting articles. Miss Louisa Bevington, a well known writer in the *Nineteenth Century* and other high-class reviews, contributes a powerful article on "The Moral Demerits of Orthodoxy." Norman Britton reappears after several months' absence with a splendid article on "A New Heaven and a New Earth." Mr. J. M. Wheeler also reappears with an article on "Laotze and the Taou-teh King." Mr. John Robertson writes powerfully on "Why have a Second Chamber?" Mr. Foote continues the story of his imprisonment for blasphemy, and Dr. Aveling concludes his notice of Phillip Marston's poems.

DR. BUDDE, professor of theology at Bonn, has brought out a new book on "Genesis," in which he traces three distinct Jehovistic documents—one of the ninth or tenth century B.C., which knows nothing of Abel, Seth, or the Deluge; a second of the eighth century, which ignores Eden, Cain, the giants and Babel; and a third of the seventh century, which tries to reconcile both. Dr. Budde is also of opinion that in the primitive traditions of Israel there was no deluge, the myth being taken from a foreign source. This surmise is confirmed by the more prolix and archaic character of the Chaldean account and the fact that Noan is not mentioned in any other part of the Old Testament.

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

BEHAVIOR TO PARENTS.

CHRIST our Lord came down on earth
To be a type of faultless worth,
To us, the common herd.
He came to teach us perfect duty,
To show us perfect moral beauty
In every act and word.

When a boy he ran away.
His parents sought him night and day—
An anxious, weary quest.
As if his mother were his slave,
No sorrow for the pain he gave
This perfect son express'd.

His mother's cry he answered not,
But asked her back upon the spot
Why she sought him—her son!
Then spoke, as if 'twere fine and grand,
Words she could not understand;
But words of love spake none.*

Strange doctrines he would often preach,
And yet at times he seemed to teach
All men to love each other.
So strange his love, so far 'twould roam,
It scarcely could begin at home
Towards his only mother.†

Christ censures faithful sons who stay
To bury parents pass'd away.
For such he careth not.
Let the dead entomb the dead,
Says the Church's perfect head,
Go preach; and let them rot.‡

Unless we hate our parents well
Christ will not rescue us from hell—
Christ cannot have our love.
Only by crushing Nature's laws
Can we be worthy of his cause,
And join the saints above.§

Let all good children mild and meek
Learn of him how they should speak
To parents and each other.
Listen how the perfect one,
Listen how the perfect son
Answers his good mother.||

"Woman!" thus abrupt said he,
"What have I to do with thee?
Mine hour is not yet come."
'Twas at a feast in Galilee.
Surely the goodly company
At this were stricken dumb.

So now, good children, teach each other
How to speak to a good mother,
As Christ the Lord hath shown.
Call her "woman!" taunt her, do!
Ask what has she to do with you,
In cold and haughty tone.

This your model—follow this,
You follow Christ to realms of bliss;
You reap a grand reward.
But disregarding, know full well
You tread the sure descent to hell
You crucify your Lord.

W. P. BALL.

* Luke ii., 48-50.

† Jesus had several fathers—namely, (1) the first person of the Trinity, hence called God the Father; (2) Joseph, through whom Matthew and Luke trace Christ's lineal descent from David; (3) the third person of the Trinity, God the Holy Ghost, to whom (or to his deputy the angel Gabriel) apparently belongs the honor of Christ's earthly paternity. (As Jesus was one with God the Holy Ghost, and also one with God the Father, perhaps he is also his own father twice over in addition.) Joseph would probably not be greatly astonished because he was himself the son of two fathers (compare Matthew i., 16, and Luke iii., 23). Jesus apparently inherited the peculiarity in an intensified form, a matter that should prove interesting to Darwinians and theologians alike. In view of these paternal complications and the consequent difficulty of rightly apportioning Christ's duty as a son towards his various fathers, it is well to notice that he had no such excuse for misbehavior towards his mother. She was his only mother—unless, indeed, when born before the foundation of the world he had another mother, of whom we are left in absolute ignorance.

‡ Luke ix., 59, 60.

§ Luke xiv., 26.

|| John ii., 4.

ACID DROPS.

ONE of the Salvationists, delivering his testimony at the Hall, Chalk Farm Road, claims that though only forty-six years of age next birthday, he has swallowed four houses, a horse and gig, two acres of ground, £400, and so forth, and now, bless the Lord, he has "swallowed salvation" as his culminating feat. This idiotic brother is popularly known as "old forty-six with a tile loose."

A MAN coming out of a beer garden on Sunday was sun-struck. About the same time a preacher, overcome by the heat, fainted in his pulpit. There was a big moral here somewhere.

SPEAKING of cannibalism in connection with the rescue of the survivors of the Greely Expedition, the *Daily News* says: "Where the ghastly habit has survived into nascent civilisation, it has been through some connection with religion, as in Mexico," or for sating revenge, or "for some magical reason"—the last being to us but an elementary form of religious belief. Religion usually supports evil customs and habits till they are destroyed in spite of it, and then it turns round and claims the credit.

THE *Christian Herald* is fond of introducing the Devil in the good old-fashioned way. It tells us of a conversionist who, when tired and despondent, saved himself from Satan by flying to some Bible text and thrusting it into the tempter's face. The man describes the scene thus: "I just held the Bible, with my finger on that verse, under the sofa, for I knew the Devil always lurked in the darkest places, and told him to just look at that, and go away and leave me alone; and he did."

ANOTHER man, according to the same veracious paper, found that "Satan was at his elbow," finding fault with the small potatoes he was "digging." Hereupon he "stopped his hoeing, and replied, 'Ah, Satan, at it again, talking against my Father; bless his name. Why, when I served you, I didn't get any potatoes at all. What are you talking against Father for?' And on he went hoeing and praising the Lord for small potatoes. A valuable lesson for us all."

A THIRD convert says the Devil often comes about him whispering doubts, but he never holds any arguments with so dangerous a customer, but rushes straight to God's Word.

ANOTHER man, a Cornish miner, standing down-hearted on the brink of a coal-pit—we were not aware of the existence of coal-mines in Cornwall before—is tempted by the Devil to commit suicide. "Someone seemed to say, 'Now, Billy, just throw yourself down there and be rid of all your trouble.' He knew in a minute who it was, and, drawing back, said, 'Oh no, Satan, you can just throw yourself down there. That is your way home; but I am going to my home in a different direction.'" All this seems very foolish, but the scriptural narrative of Christ's temptation sets forth scenes far more ridiculous. Men who would themselves ridicule the *Christian Herald* anecdotes, put us in gaol for ridiculing the much more absurd biblical anecdotes from which they spring.

We understand that the waitresses at the Exeter Hall Restaurant have been sent packing. They behaved themselves with great propriety, but the presence of the fair sex was fatal to the moral tone of the Young Men's Christian Association. The good young men looked at the girls and sighed. Then they went home and read the Song of Solomon, and the next day they wanted the young ladies to join them in studying that portion of holy writ. *Il casto Giuseppe* is not half such a sheep as he looks.

A CORRESPONDENT wishes us to give a sketch of David (covered only with a linen ephod) dancing before the ark, singing "Where are my Sunday clothes?" We would oblige our friend, only our artist cannot make his pictures sing—although they speak for themselves.

THE pious Tories believe in special providence. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without the Lord wills it. What, then, do they think of the sudden prostration of two noblemen, one by lightning and the other by sunstroke, just at this critical moment? Is it a sign of God's displeasure? Is it a warning from heaven to the Peers? Is the Lord angry with the Lords, and is he showing it in the old style? Salisbury and Churchill should call a meeting to consider these questions, and granny Northcote should open it with prayer.

PROPOSALS for the abolition or reform of the Lords are the order of the day. A very good suggestion is made by the *Church Review*—namely, that the House of Lords shall become a part of the House of Convocation. That still more decrepid institution is always crying out for lay assistance.

THE immense majority of the pious peers are members of

the Church of England, and much of their obstruction to reforming legislation has been with a view to retaining the privileges of that body. Between them they have the patronage of over 5,000 livings, or nearly half the benefices in the country. They have thus been able to put the fool of the family into the pulpit, and cement the alliance of Church and State tyranny.

THE Roman Catholic Christians boast of making progress in China. This is how they do it. The priests give themselves out for "medicine men," and sick infants are baptised by inducing the parents to have them washed in water from the priest's bottle as a means of recovery. By this pious fraud they reckon that the souls of several thousand heathens are yearly saved from the everlasting bonfire.

CONVERTS in China, as elsewhere, are only made from the lowest classes. The more intelligent Chinese call the missionaries "preachers of lies," and regard the Bible and Christianity as a tissue of absurdities. They cannot understand Christian benevolence in sending them opium, and they find polygamy, concubinage and slavery sanctioned in our sacred books. Christianity has been industriously propagated in China for nearly a thousand years, yet it has made no impression on the race. There could be no more conclusive disproof of its claim to be a universal religion.

A TRAVELLER, who has recently returned from the Sandwich Islands, says that he saw in Honolulu a long, handsome street of elegant houses, showing evidence of much ease and luxury. These are the homes of missionaries; a significant contrast to the miserable tenement houses of the poor at home! The traveller also saw the wives of some of these missionaries, reclining in sedan chairs, carried by heathen natives, whom the ladies spurred on to greater speed by poking their parasol handles into their naked backs!—When will people learn to give their money where it is most needed—at home?

RELIGION at the seaside would make a capital subject for a series of descriptive articles. At Weymouth, for instance, there is a male Mary Jane who collects a lot of little boys and girls on the sands in the morning and teaches them a hymn, after which he gives them a foolish discourse, larded with such phrases as "dear boys and girls," "duty to your parents," "Come to Jesus," "naughty children," and "God will punish you." While he is maundering the little ones dabble their hands in the sand and fling it in each other's laps, or else Tom and Polly exchange furtive smiles and winks. Of course the man is simply wasting their time. They ought to be paddling in the water, building sand fortifications, or riding a donkey instead of listening to one. So much for the morning. In the evening an outdoor tub-thumper spouts to three or four of his personal friends, who hold a lamp for him to give out the hymn by. The profane crowd patronise the band and the comic singers, and let the voice of heavenly wisdom waste itself on the sea air. Sensible people!

"THE lamb, the lamb, the lamb, the lamb," shouted this spouter the other night. At least this is how it sounded at a distance, and we thought that a little mint sauce would be an improvement, for the menu was monotonous. As we drew near, "lamb" resolved itself into "lamp," and "Trim your lamps" was repeated about a dozen times as the refrain of a hymn. A caddy not far off clapped and shouted "Bravo," and three or four passers-by sniggered. Just then Mr. Trim-the-lamp's light flickered and nearly went out. He preached without practising, and bothered about other people's lamps without looking after his own.

IN an article on "Padlocked Piety" the *Christian Commonwealth* says there is, perhaps, nothing more fearful of liberty than the average kind of piety. It declares that "the age we live in is an age of padlocks." But these padlocks, it appears, are used for locking up British piety, British churches, British religions. We had an idea, and a rather vivid one too, that it was religion that locked up other people; and if "the most useful exhibition" of "condemned padlocks" suggested by the *C. C.* ever took place, we should certainly expect to see there one huge but extremely ancient and rust-eaten padlock, with the words "Blasphemy Laws" upon it.

JOHN MORGAN, a blind Bible-reader, was fined 5s. and costs at Widnes Petty Sessions for being drunk. He reads, of course by touch, from a Bible printed in raised letters. The magistrate told him it was abominable that he should be intoxicated at the very time when he had the sacred volume in his hand, and was getting his living by reading it to the multitude. Perhaps the man had just been reading Proverbs xxxi. 7, which says, "Let him drink and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more." John Morgan would have been very good company for Noah.

BEING faithful lovers of liberty, we deeply deplore the arbitrary measures taken against the Salvationists in Switzerland. While they conduct their services in their own hired

buildings they are surely entitled to protection. At the same time it is fair to say that the Salvationists did not begin in this moderate fashion; they tried to imitate their English practices, and to a great extent they are now reaping the harvest of their own folly.

DURING the recent earthquake in New York, people rushed out of the churches in a state of panic. Of course they believed in God's providence, but they preferred getting out of his house when he began to rock it like a cradle. "Safe in the arms of Jesus" is a capital hymn, but when the arms wave about as though their owner were tipsy, you would rather be put down on *terra firma*.

GOD is no respecter of persons. So says Scripture. The Archbishop of Canterbury, however, ventures to differ from the Almighty. He has gone down to Windsor to confirm Princess Louise of Wales. The young lady enjoyed a strictly private performance by this high comedian, only a few members of her own family being present as he went through his professional business.

MOODY says the Church has become more aggressive. Does he refer to the blasphemy trials, the Bradlaugh episodes, the enforcement of extraordinary tithes, the Sunday-trading prosecutions, and the interferences with Sunday bands, secular science-classes, and so forth?

ONE of Moody's reasons for resolving to stay henceforth in America is, that "charity should begin and end at home." The pious showman never made a greater blunder. It is not *charity* but *reformation* which should begin at home and continue there while there is work to be done. A recognition of this truth would have kept Moody in America instead of sending him to Europe to reap a rich harvest of English gold.

MOTHER GIRLING, boss of the New Forest Shakers, claims to have the five scars on her body representing the five wounds of Mr. Jesus Christ, a young Jewish gentleman, who is said to have been crucified and stuck under the fifth rib more than eighteen centuries ago. She is, however, very chary of showing them, and in many cases only the sisters get a glimpse of the fifth scar.

THE other Sunday a box was placed at the door of the English church in the Rue d'Aguesseau, Paris, to receive contributions towards the recent restoration of the building. At night it was opened and the contents amounted to seventy centimes (7d.) The senior curate mentioned the fact for the edification of English visitors, the Sunday night following. The clergy are never satisfied.

THE *Church Times* says: "In point of fact, marriage, at the present moment, can be said to exist only in England. This may seem at first sight to be a startling assertion, but it is the plainest and most undeniable truth." So that there is no matrimony in other countries, but only "concubinage"; and if the Wife's Sister Bill—the Bill for the Legalisation of Incest, as this polished Christian newspaper calls it—should pass into law, marriage would be destroyed altogether in England also. Talk of hurting people's susceptibilities by ridiculing their religion, could there be a more sweeping and uncalled-for insult to mankind and womankind at large than this piously insolent attack upon their honor and virtue?

AT the annual meeting of the Ragged School Union, Mr. Cadman succinctly stated the Christian theory of charity. He declared "We have considered the work as being work for Christ. We have not worked for human applause nor even for the civilisation and moral advantage of the children." Good works on this theory are simply done to make personal salvation sure.

THE parishioners of St. John the Baptist, Earlestown, have sent a petition to Dr. Ryle, Bishop of Liverpool, complaining that their pastor, the Rev. T. R. Matthews, has driven "our curate, wardens and sidesmen, our organist and choirs, and last, but not least, a splendid congregation numbering 500, from our church, and he has also been the means of our Sunday-school being deserted by both teachers and scholars." They asked to be relieved from the parson's services, but the Bishop replied that any change could be only initiated by Mr. Matthews himself.

DURING the recent heavy thunderstorm and darkness which visited Dundee and district, many ludicrous scenes occurred. At one of the mills no less than six girls fainted away, owing to a report that it was the last day. One pious old woman exclaimed, after the violence of the storm had abated, "It was awfu', in fac' it jus' reminded me of the crucifixion." "Oh, did it?" said a Freethinker who was standing by; "I was not aware that you were present on that occasion."

THE religious papers report that a prayer-hospital for the reception of people given over by the physicians, has been

opened in Erie. Why do they not admit persons in the early stages of their diseases? This plan would result in less wear and tear on the part of the people who make the prayers, and should be equally effective.

WE have every wish that Dr. McCann's pitiful appeal to the Christian papers and public for aid in starting a paper in opposition to the scepticism of the day should be warmly responded to. Freethought thrives by opposition. Before he started the *Champion of Faith* we gave Dr. McCann some good advice, which his subsidisers would not permit him to follow. If Dr. McCann puts his paper under the control of the Christian Evidence Society, he must expect it to go the way of the *Bible Defender*, the *Sword of Truth*, the *Shield of Faith*, the *Christian Evidence Journal* and other trashy papers, which, like the *Champion of the Faith*, came to an end because insufficiently supported by either Christians or Freethinkers.

A WRITER in the *Rock* says that patronage in the Church is bestowed as a rule by favor, and not by merit. He points out to young curates that marriage with a daughter or relative of a bishop is the surest method of securing rapid promotion over the heads of able and hard-working clergymen who have no friends in high quarters. "Many such cases," he says, "could be adduced to prove the gross abuse of Church patronage." The simple remedy for all this is of course Disestablishment, but the *Rock*, being itself a Church of England newspaper, doesn't care to see this.

THE *Methodist Recorder* advertises that it represents and promotes Primitive Christianity. This raises a nice question as to the character of the religion which Baptists, Presbyterians, Ranters, and even Mormons, claim to exhibit in its primitive aspect. Both the Romish and Anglican churches declare that their authority and doctrine come down by apostolic succession. The Salvationists say that they represent the original army, and another recent sect, the Christadelphians, pretend to revive the faith and practice of the ancient church.

ANYONE who reads the New Testament at all carefully will see that the primitive Christians differed almost as much as the moderns. Paul taught justification by faith, James justification by works. The Christians at Ephesus did not as much as know there was any Holy Ghost. Some taught that circumcision was necessary. At the first Christian council at Jerusalem, to settle the disputes of the Church, it was settled that all Christians were to abstain from meats strangled and from blood, a practice hardly any Christians have followed.

ONE of the features of primitive Christianity revived by Methodism was the love-feasts held at night. Even in the time of Paul these were the occasion of great scandal, and later on drew on the Christians the most odious charges. It was these secret meetings, and the crimes believed to have been wrought in them, which occasioned the persecution to which the Christians were subjected by the most tolerant of powers, pagan Rome.

ONE aspect of primitive Christianity which has lingered on and is constantly revived among the fanatical, is the belief in the near approach of the end of the world. Only the moderns who believe it are eighteen hundred years behind date. This doctrine was taught by Jesus and his disciples in more explicit language than any other, and was a main factor in spreading the superstition to which people cling although this main tenet has been falsified by the continued existence of the heedless world.

ONE of the mayors of Doncaster is popularly remembered for having said, in the course of a public speech, that "a mayor must be, like Potiphar's wife, above suspicion."

A BOY recently thought he would create some merriment in church; so he dropped a handful of pennies in the plate. But the plate had a velvet lining, and when the coppers fell in it and made no more noise than a five-pound note would have made, and that youth figured up what he could have purchased with the money, he was about the wildest one in that church.

A CERTAIN emperor, when he gives a hunting-party to his distinguished visitors, is accompanied by a gamekeeper, who, standing near his royal master, reports to him the effect of each shot. "A brace of pheasants, your majesty!" "A rabbit, your majesty!" "A partridge, your majesty!" chants the keeper, in a monotonous tone, as the visitors shoot at the game. Once, it is said, when a distinguished guest, a bad marksman, seriously wounded an ecclesiastical dignitary, the keeper chanted with the same monotonous voice—"A Bishop, your majesty!"

THE King of Belgium is spending £80,000 a year in "civilising and evangelising" Central Africa. He says: "God took away from me my son, my only son, and then he laid Africa upon my heart." Pity God didn't lay Belgium upon his heart; £80,000 a year would go a great way in so small a country.

SPECIAL NOTICE.

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, August 24, Milton Hall, Hawley Crescent, Kentish Town, London, at 7.30, "Did Adam Fall?"
 Tuesday, the 26th, Secular Hall, York Street, Walworth Road, at 8.30, on "Sky Pilots."

Aug. 31, Milton Hall. Sept 7, Hall of Science, London; 14, Hall of Science; 21, Glasgow; 23 and 24, Aberdeen; 28, Edinburgh. Oct. 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; 23 and 30, Hall of Science, London. Dec. 7, Leeds; 21, Hall of Science, London; 28, Milton Hall, London.

CORRESPONDENTS.

ALL business communications to be addressed to the Manager, Mr. W. J. Ramsey, 28 Stonecutter Street, Farringdon Street, London. Literary communications to the Editor, 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. H. Hargreaves, J. de Fraine, E. A. Southgate.—The young man alleged to have been struck blind had neither "blasphemed" nor sworn at all. Mr. Copping, inspector of the Haslar Hospital, is our authority.

W. H. SPIVEY.—Thanks for the photograph of "Old David." It is a speaking likeness and shall go in our album.

W. PEARSON, Leeds.—The Rev. H. Parrish excels in abuse. The tale of the nameless physician who heard Voltaire's recantation is worthless, being on the authority of a priest fifty years after Voltaire's death.

C. REID.—It is certainly advisable that a candidate should be selected for Marylebone in opposition to that pious bigot Sir Thomas Chambers. We hope one will be forthcoming.

GEO. SEXTON.—You say Christianity changed you from "a bad young fellow" into a moral man. But might not reflection or some other appeal to your emotions have led to a like result? What proof does your conversion afford of Jesus being born without a father? A Buddhist or Hindu finds the same peace and joy as yourself in his superstitions, and he deems that they are the cause of his remaining moral. If your conduct is only influenced by the hope of heaven or the fear of hell we pity you.

J. WIDDICOMBE.—Thanks for the cuttings. We are always pleased to see notices of *Progress*, whether flattering like the one in the *Western Daily Mail* or the reverse.

J. E. B.—Doubtless Quakers are often bitterly opposed to Free-thinkers, and this is much to be regretted. Your suggestion that Freethinkers should obtain seats on the political committees to prevent such bigoted action as you describe, is a thoroughly sound one. On behalf of the Quakers, however, it should be remembered that John Bright has eloquently defended the rights of Freethinkers in the House of Commons, and that Quakers are almost the only Christians who consistently decline to sanction war.

T. J. CLEALY.—We have no remembrance of having seen your MS.

J. T.—Such cuttings are always welcome.

We shall esteem it a favor if our readers will send us any notices of the *Freethinker* or *Progress* they may see in their local press.

A STAUNCH YOUNG FREETHINKER.—All civilised religions have their sacred books. The Hindus have the Vedas, the Confucians the See Chow, the Taoists the Tao-teh-king, the Buddhists the Tripitakas, the Mohammedans the Koran, and the Mormons the Book of Mormon. A series of "Sacred Books of the East," edited by Max Müller, is published by the Clarendon Press, Oxford. The Koran can be procured for 2s. Most sacred books are very dry reading.

W. MEERS.—Yes, our Summer Number is still selling well. It far exceeds in circulation anything that went before it, but it is not a publication from which we expect to reap much profit, owing to the great expense of production. We actually lost several pounds by its predecessor, the famous Christmas Number for which we went to gaol, and that had an unprecedented sale.

S. JONES.—There was only a delay of a day, and your newsagent has misled you. Mr. Foote's new Bible Romances have been on sale nearly a fortnight. The others will rapidly follow.

G. G. ROSS.—Your suggestion shall have consideration.

F. SMITH.—By profanity is simply meant opposition to superstition. SEVERAL replies stand over through Mr. Foote's absence from town.

EDITORIAL.

MR. SAMUEL KINNS, author of "Moses and Geology," for whom a pious Tory committee is seeking to raise a big testimonial, threatens us with an action for libel unless we make an ample public apology for calling him "an impostor." Mr. Kinns is mistaken. We called him a "religious impostor," and distinctly referred to his puerile efforts to rehabilitate the scientific character of Moses, on account of which subscriptions to his testimonial are being invited. We used the phrase in exactly the same sense as though we spoke of a scientific, an artistic, or a political impostor; one whose public pretensions are woefully belied by his performance. We made no attack on Mr. Kinns's private character. Mr. Kinns is a public man and he must

submit to public criticism, especially when he allows his friends to solicit pecuniary support for him through the public press.

SUGAR PLUMS.

ON Sunday evening Mr. Foote lectures at Milton Hall, his subject being "Did Adam Fall?" On the following Sunday he takes the kindred topic, "Will Christ save us?"

THE *Newcastle Examiner* says that "the versatility and ready adaptability of Mr. Foote's attainments are well illustrated in the diverse characteristics of the two publications which he edits. *Progress* is solid, grave, erudite and sincere. . . . The *Freethinker*, on the other hand, is light, witty and playful." It points to the failure of our prosecution and imprisonment, and remarks that our Summer Number "is every bit as broad and irreverent as its Christmas predecessor." It calls the *Freethinker* the "Secular *Punch*," and says that it "contains several jokes which would excite a smile from even Jove himself."

ONE of the most vigorous of our Indian Freethought contemporaries is the *Anti-Christian*, of Calcutta, edited by Kaliprasanna Kavyabisharad. We are glad to learn that the *Anti-Christian* is to be enlarged, and we hope its sphere of usefulness will be widely extended.

DR. MONROE's *Ironclad Age* gives a very good report of a lecture by Gerald Massey on Friday's question to Crusoe, "Why does not God kill the Devil?"

THE current number of the *Westminster Review* has a paper on "The Myth of Simon Magus," in which it is conjectured that the Simon referred to in the Acts of the Apostles, and about whom so many fables were circulated by the early Christian fathers, is no other than Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles.

THERE is abundant evidence of the strong antagonism between the Pauline and Petrine sections of Christians in the early age of the Church. In the Apocalypse Paul is evidently referred to as one of those who "say they are Jews and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan," and again in the reproof passed on the converts in Thyatira who knew "the depths of Satan as they speak," there is an apparent allusion to the Pauline expression, "the deep things of God."

THE "weekly concerts" in Central Park, New York, are now given on Sunday afternoons instead of on Saturdays as hitherto. The churches, of course, are bigoted in their opposition to this very reasonable step, which they persist in regarding as "a violation of their rights." The press, however, which is far more powerful than the pulpit, takes up the side of the people in this fight. The leading papers of New York remind the clergy that the time is gone by when they could control the people's amusements.

ONE sensible feature in the Revision scheme voted by the French Congress is the suppression of public prayers at the opening of each session. The Catholic champions are of course very angry, and Bishop Freppel calls it the "institution of official Atheism." Some day we shall see the same reform carried on this side the Channel. Christians ought to wish for it as well as Freethinkers, for there is no more blasphemous farce on the stage of the world than "prayers" in the House of Commons.

SINCE the passing of the Act of 1870, allowing clergymen to relinquish their orders in the Church, sixty-two of them have formally abandoned their holy calling. Among them two at least—namely, Mr. Leslie Stephens, the eminent writer, and the late Mr. J. R. Green, the popular historian, have left the Church for Agnosticism.

Two new colleges are being erected in Paris. They are to be called after the names of Voltaire and D'Alembert.

IT is to be hoped that all Freethinkers in the Tottenham district will attend and see fair play at the outdoor meetings. Last Sunday the disciples of the meek and lowly Jesus, unable to meet Freethought arguments, took vengeance by demolishing the platforms, and having "Ishmael," the vendor of the *Freethinker*, dragged to the police-station, where he was immediately liberated by the inspector.

NOTWITHSTANDING Christian opposition, the Secular party at Kilburn are prospering. Next Sunday evening they open an additional lecture-station in the Salisbury Road. The conductors are Messrs. Quinny and Durrant.

THE Christians have had a defeat at Oakenshaw Colliery Wellington, Durham. The members of the colliery have a

reading-room for which one penny per week is stopped out of their wages. The *National Reformer* and the *Freethinker* being asked for as well as other papers, got placed upon the table, but the majority of the committee, being Christians, passed a resolution to discontinue the *Freethinker* at the end of the quarter. At the quarterly meeting, the committee's recommendation was opposed by Mr. Bland who succeeded in getting a majority of almost two to one in favor of the *Freethinker* being kept on the table.

At the same colliery a circulating library has been commenced and donations of Freethought works are earnestly requested.

A NEW working men's club has been commenced at Clapton. The first donation to the library was a set of back numbers of the *Freethinker*, which we are informed are read with great avidity, especially on Sundays.

W. LEWIN writes to the *Nottingham Journal*, complaining of "the presence of a magazine in the Reference Library containing matter of a very blasphemous and objectionable character," and calling on the authorities to remove "such disgraceful literature" from the public libraries. This objectionable magazine is *Progress*, and the especial object of Mr. Lewin's wrath is James Thompson's little poem "Bill Jones on Prayer." We can quite understand this bigot's desire to suppress everything that differs from his omniscience, but we are at a loss to conceive how he found "indecent" in *Progress*, or how it affects "the purity of literature." If W. Lewin will drop subterfuge and innuendo and plainly call *Progress* "indecent" we will take a jury's opinion on the subject. But of course he will do nothing of the kind. We are too well aware of the tactics of bigotry to expect such a straightforward course. The way in which the champions of orthodoxy fling about the word "indecent" when they are excited by opposition, only serves to illustrate the effect of Bible study on the human mind.

WHAT do the fastidious Freethinkers, if there are any of them left, say to this? *Progress* is now called indecent because it is heterodox. What advanced publication is safe from the malignity of pious zealots? And what is the use of trying to conciliate these people?

We are anxious to know whether the committee of the Nottingham Free Library are going to be frightened into subservience to such bigots as W. Lewin. We hope they will stand firm. At any rate let them examine *Progress* for themselves before they banish it from their rooms. If they exclude a magazine so ably written by men and women in many cases of high standing in literature, they must abandon all pretensions to toleration.

An individual who announces himself as "the famous Bailey, the great orator from London," having appeared at Spennymoor, lecturing against "Bradlaugh, the would-be M.P.," Mr. Tunstall will lecture next Tuesday in reply; subject, "Show the rascals up."

THE AVESTA.*

It may at first sight appear strange that a pamphlet on "The Zend-Avesta and the Religion of the Parsis" should find place among a series of tracts designed to meet the scepticism of the age. Who, it may be said, questions the superiority of Christianity to Zoroastrianism, or would seek to revive the latter? And yet it is without doubt that the study of ancient religions has been one of the elements which have discredited Christianity. In the science of comparative religions Christianity is seen to be but one of many faiths that have swayed the minds of men, that have risen, thriven and decayed; and no more than any other can it claim to have an exclusive monopoly of truth, or to be other than an outcome of human instincts and human ignorance—a growth of earth and not a gift from heaven. Not only is its so-called peculiar morality found to have been taught by Buddha, Laou-tsze, the Stoics and others, but its dogmas and ritual have been copied bodily from older Paganisms. Hence the necessity for a Christian advocate disparaging these as much as possible in order to make a foil to the resplendent glories of his own religion. An instance of this occurs in this pamphlet, at the outset, where Dr. Mitchell, writing of the theology of the Avesta, says that in one place we discover Monotheism, in another Dualism, in a third Polytheism. The same may be said of the Bible. The plural name Elohim, the fear "lest man

become as one of us," and a dozen other passages, indicate polytheism, to which the Jews ever and anon returned despite the warnings of monotheistic prophets. Dualism decidedly creeps up in the book of Job and in the Christian doctrine of Satan. Again, he complains of Ahura-Mazda, the "wise Lord" of the Parsis: "He is not a purely spiritual being. He is not omnipresent or omnipotent." Exactly the same may be said of Jahveh, who had to come down and see what the builders were doing at Babel. Indeed, it may be said the Jews knew nothing of a spiritual monotheism until after their contact with the Persians, and that they also took from them their doctrines of Satan, of evil demons and of the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. In the Old Testament there is no trace of belief in any immortality, in any heaven or hell. The New Testament is full of both. Whence came these ideas? From Persia. The Avesta distinctly teaches the resurrection of the body. Its heaven and hell, with their celestial and infernal hierarchies, are as like the heaven and hell of the Christians as two peas. In the word *Paradise* we retain the Persian name, as in the Asmodeus of the book of Tobit is preserved the name of the malignant spirit designated Aeshma in the Avesta.

That our Christian apologist should quote Professor Darmesteter's remark that the Avesta is "very rich in demons" is very rich itself. The Gospels, with their deaf devils, dumb devils, unclean devils, *et hoc genus omne*, have borrowed largely of these riches. The Avesta shows that casting out of demons was a common practice. The remembrance of the seven devils in one of the favorites of Jesus, and of the legion of devils cast into two thousand pigs, might have restrained Dr. Mitchell from satirising the sacred book of the Parsees because it is "very rich in demons."

Dr. Mitchell admits "there are several characteristics which entitle the Zoroastrian faith to a high place among Gentile systems of religion. (1) It ascribes no immoral attributes to the object of worship. Ahura-Mazda, the supreme divinity, stands ethically much higher than the popular gods of Pagan nations generally. The Avesta retains much of nature worship; but evil qualities are never ascribed either to the physical object or the being who presides over it." This is not true of the God of the Bible. *Au contraire*, he is jealous, partial and bloodthirsty; loves Jacob and hates Esau. He hardens Pharaoh's heart in order to slaughter his people, and sends a lying spirit to Ahab. (2) "The Avesta sanctions no immoral acts as a part of worship." (3) "None of the prescribed forms of worship is marked by cruelty." The slaughter of idolators as well as the wholesale sacrifice of animals was a part of the Jewish religion. (4) "In the great contest between light and darkness, the Avesta exhorts the true worshipper not to remain passive, but to contend with all his might against the evil principles." In the Old Testament Jahveh takes up the function of both deity and devil. He is said to form both light and darkness, to make peace and "create evil," and in both Old and New Testament man is represented as clay in the hands of a potter, who makes some to honor and some to dishonor. (5) "One remarkable characteristic of the system is the absence of image worship." The majority of Christians have always worshipped images, and the remainder are just as senseless in worshipping a book. (6) "The Avesta never despairs of the future of humanity. It affirms the final victory of good over evil." The Christian scheme consigns the majority to eternal misery. Among other merits are allowed (7) "its encouragement of agriculture, (8) its inculcation of truth in thought, word and deed." Dr. Mitchell forgets to mention its still more notable inculcation of purity in thought, word and deed (Fargard x., 36). (9) "The position of respect it assigns to women, and (10) the kindness towards, at least, Zoroastrians, which it inculcates." Another point upon which I for one should claim its pre-eminence above the Bible, is that it teaches humanity to animals, and especially to that faithful friend of man, the dog. In showing the higher character ascribed to Ahura-Mazda, Dr. Mitchell does not mention that in the sculptures over the Behistun inscriptions (about 500 B.C.) we have Ahura-Mazda depicted floating in mid air exactly like the "God the Father" of Christian sacred art. Nor does he mention that the Mazdean Messiah is to be miraculously conceived by a maid in the regions of the dawn. A writer in the *Westminster Review* says (p. 216): "The resurrection of Christ on the third day, and his ascent into heaven (Luke

* *Present Day Tracts*, No. 25, "The Zend-Avesta and the Religion of the Parsis," by J. Murray Mitchell, M.A., LL.D. Religious Tract Society.

xxiv., 51), bears a strange generic resemblance to the Mazdean doctrine—that after three days and three nights the holy soul entered paradise. And so rooted among the masses was this belief, that during that period the sacrifice of the Zanda-ravân had to be continued for the soul's salvation." Nor does he tell his readers of Zoroaster's temptation by Ahriman, or that the petition, "Keep us from our hater, O Mazda," so frequently recurring in the Avesta, is precisely the "Deliver us from the Evil One" of the Lord's prayer. Altogether, I do not think that an investigation into the ancient faith of Persia is likely to lead many sceptics on the road to Christianity, nor can I express surprise that the remnant of Parsees, who in Bombay and elsewhere keep up their ancient faith, show little disposition to exchange it for the patched dogmas of the more modern religion, sent to them by our many well-endowed missionary societies.

J. M. WHEELER.

INTOLERANCE.

INTOLERANCE! dread, hateful monster thou;
 Could but the sun of freedom truly shine
 And earth be freed for aye from thee and thine,
 Nations would happier, kindlier be than now.
 Of persecution in the past, oh! how
 Red history speaketh in its every line,
 Telling of priestcraft's deadly, sinuous twine.
 Back! despot, back! much blood is on thy brow.
 The power thou wieldedst in thy days of yore
 A shade of its then giant self we see;
 Soon wilt thou vanish to return no more,
 The time is near at hand when thou must flee.
 Freethought speaks out with grand commanding voice,
 True men at thy discomfiture rejoice.

ALFRED PARKER.

THE LORD'S PRAYER.

DISSECTED AND EXAMINED.

Our Father.—This does not mean the father of sceptics—it means the father of those clergymen who figure occasionally in the Divorce Court and very frequently in Criminal Courts for very serious offences. It also means the father of Sir Henry Tyler, Sir W. Harcourt, Lord Mayor Fowler, and other good Christians.

Which art in heaven.—Is he only in heaven? Heaven is such a tremendous distance from the earth that it is doubtful whether "our father" hears his own prayer. It is ordered in the Prayer-book that this prayer be said in a loud voice. We should think this was very necessary if God is in heaven.

Hallowed be thy name.—The Devil is more deserving of having his name hallowed than the god called "our father," who made the world, and by his foreknowledge knew that it would be a wicked one, and then damns the majority of mankind for being what he made them. Does such a father deserve to have his name hallowed?

Thy kingdom come.—If when the Christians say this part of the prayer they mean they are anxious to go to his kingdom, it is a strange thing they send for doctors when his kingdom is likely to approach them, and have prayers said at church for their speedy recovery.

Thy will be done in earth.—What is God's will in earth? As the majority of his creatures are wicked, we must here again suppose that this is God's will. And does he will that thousands shall perish by earthquake, famine, pestilence, flood, and shipwreck?

As it is in heaven.—This is presumption. The Christians have to find out where heaven is situated before they assert that God's will is carried out there. We wonder if God wills to have the Salvation big drums and hallelujah fiddles in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.—If the starving poor that we have in our midst would only earnestly repeat this prayer their hunger would soon be appeased. God always thinks of our "daily bread" when he sends a famine in the land. "For his mercy endureth for ever."

And forgive us our trespasses.—This is really too much to ask for, as God intends that the majority of his people shall go to hell—for the Bible says "Many are called and few are chosen." If he forgave all of us our trespasses, he would have no use for hell. Perhaps he would pawn it or put it up for auction in lots. Then Newdegate and North could buy part of it for their enemies.

As we forgive them that trespass against us.—This is true enough. Especially when the utterers of this prayer imprison their opponents and deny them their rights as citizens.

And lead us not into temptation.—"Our father" led Adam and Eve into temptation. Doubtless the Christians think that he is now too kind and benevolent to do such a shabby trick again.

But deliver us from evil.—Yes, the evil of the exposure of their crimes and hypocrisy they wish to be delivered from. The other evils they fear are, intelligence, reason, opposition and ridicule.

SCOFFER.

THE PREACHING BUSINESS.

In the following dialogue between a colored preacher and his educated son, who hesitated to follow the same profession as his father, the theory of the preaching business is correctly illustrated. The argument of the old man is convincing, though quaintly stated.

"Now, sah, de business fur yer is preachin'. De nigger peracher is alers got a show. Bad crop years may come, de lawyers may suffer, de laborin' man may want, an' eben de jestices ob de peace may be put to der pinch, but de preacher can alers kiver his bread wid presarves, an' drink de sweet milk o' well favored persition."

"But, father," interposed the young man, "I am not orthodox in my belief."

"Yer's springing words on de ole man, chile, what doan enter de year ob de understandin'."

"I mean that I do not believe in the gospel story as it is told; that I have no faith in an endless hell; that I discredit the assertion of all men inheriting sin from Adam's mistake; and that it is excitement, a kind of emotional insanity, instead of a visitation of the holy spirit, that causes people to shout in church."

"Yer pints is putty well put, and in a jestice court would weigh mighty heavy in yer favor; but on dis 'casion da fall ter de groun' wid der own weight. It doan make no difference what yer believe, so yer can make udder folks believe it. Yer's arter a libbin', an' de congregation is arter de gospel. Yer is pleadin' a case jes' de same as de lawyer is. Dat's yer business. Tell de niggers dat a crown is waitin' fur 'em. Da cant 'spute ye; an' a nigger wants jewelry, yer know. Tell him dat hell is a yawnin'! Widout a hell de nigger would be miserable. Go on, chile, an' tell 'em 'bout de crown an' de hell, an' dar'll be honey in de pot, roasted taters in de fire, an' milk in de pitcher, an' persarves in de jar, a good coat on de back, an' a few dimes jinglin' in de pocket, when the nigger lawyer's dun gib up de 'fession, an' tuk a place greasin' de street car track!"

REVIEW.

Is the Christian Religion in accordance with Reason and Common Sense? London: E. G. Berryman, 84 Blackheath Road, Greenwich; 1884.—This book is, according to the author, "an unlearned defence of the truth of Christianity," intended for working men. Like most books dealing with the subject it can only be recommended because it is far more likely to make sceptics than to convert them. Take for instance this passage on the formation of Eve from Adam's rib: "Adam was in a deep sleep when this happened. It was only Adam who could have given an account of the matter—it was very likely only a dream, and told by him as such; and tradition had handed it down to the time of Moses as a reality" (p. 25). While there is nothing in the story to warrant this assumption of a dream, the legend of the incarnation is professedly based on Joseph's dream. If Bible difficulties are to be got over in this way the matter is a very simple one both to the believer and the unbeliever. All the big yarns, including the big one of God and his crucified son, were very likely only dreams handed down by tradition as reality.

PROFANE JOKES.

It is not true that Noah, while in the ark, was singing "Wait till the clouds roll by!"

ACCORDING to scripture, Samson had his hair cut off, while Moses kept his Aaron.

If the apostle who denied his master could have eaten Lot's wife, he would have been called Salt Peter.

SUNDAY-SCHOOL TEACHER: "Can anyone tell me what Jerusalem, the Holy City, was noted for?" First Boy: "Artichokes, sir!" Second Boy: "Please, sir, it was noted for holy men and donkeys!"

"I HES to call 'tention ob de brudders an sistabs ob dis congergation to de conterbution box. De total recceets from de lass' collection 'moun'ed to seben cents, four battons, and a piece of shabin' soap. Now, if dar be any brudder ur sistah in dis congergation what can lib a week on dat sal'ry let de same stan' up. No pusson stan's up. Dat am evidence ye can't. An' if yer want ter hole up der dignerty ob de true 'ligion, yers got ter 'crease de parsimony. De sabior hissef can't lib on dat, less de chicken surplus twixt Sundays am mighty brick."

CHILDREN'S BLESSED INNOCENCE.—Little Nell: "Oh I have such good news. Mamma and papa, and I are going to another city to live." Visitor: "Indeed! You amaze me! What city is it?" Little Nell: "It is such a funny name. It is called Harry, and it is an awful old city." Visitor: "Oh I guess you have heard the name wrong." Little Nell: "Oh no I didn't. It was at the breakfast table. Papa told mamma to go to old Harry, and mamma told papa to go there himself, and then I asked them to take me, and they didn't say anything, but I know they will."

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