

THE FREETHINKER.

EDITED BY G. W. FOOZE.

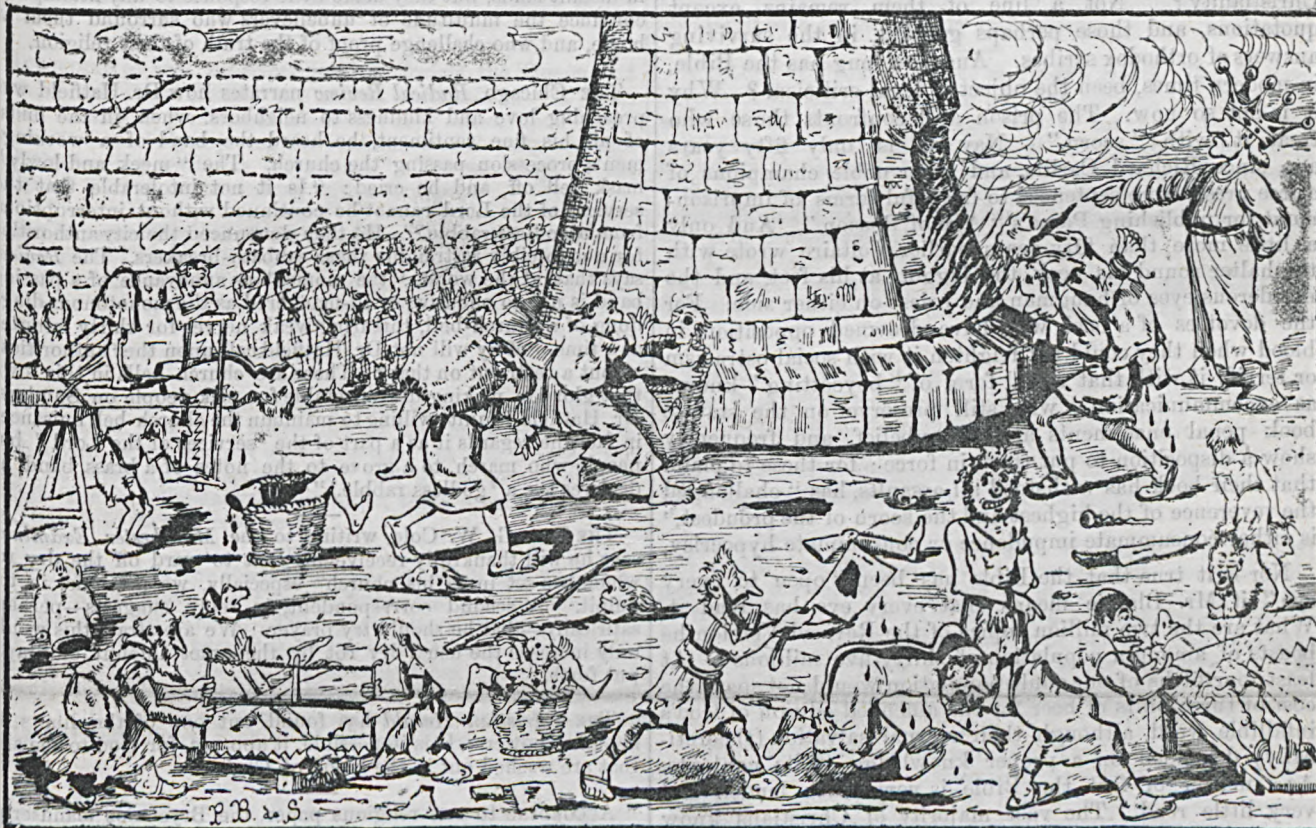
Sub Editor—J. M. Wheeler.

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COMIC BIBLE SKETCH. — No. 84.



“THE SURE MERCIES OF DAVID” (ISAIAH LV., 3).

“And he brought out the people that were in it, and cut them with saws, and with harrows of iron and with axes. Even so dealt David with all the cities of the children of Ammon” (1 Chron. xx., 3). — “And made them pass through the brick-kiln” (2 Samuel xii., 31).

BREAKING UP.

Among the “Present Day Tracts” issued by the Religious Tract Society, several of which have recently been criticised in our columns, there is one by the Rev. W. G. Blaikie on “The Vitality of the Bible.” It is written with some vigor and much urbanity, and in both these respects it differs widely from the preposterous rubbish which is shot into the literary market by so many Christian apologists. The author opens with a rapid panegyric on the Bible; he points to its extensive circulation, and notes that of the revised version of the New Testament “two million copies were absorbed in these islands alone”; and he asserts that the Blessed Book holds a place in the world which is unique for popularity and power. The long remainder of his Tract is an “inquiry into the nature and causes of this remarkable phenomenon.” It is not our intention to follow him in this investigation, for he seems entirely wide of the mark from beginning to end. One little sentence contains the key to the “mystery” he endeavors to solve. Speaking of the Bible in family life, he says that “usually it is the first book a child is taught to know.” Mr. Blaikie does not perceive it, but here lies the complete explanation of the continued authority of the Bible, or what he calls its “vitality.” The youthful mind is prejudiced in its favor; it is arbitrarily invested with a fictitious sanctity; its very words, with their strange antique flavor, take a mystic charm; it is from the first accepted by unsuspecting innocence, not as the word of man, to be tested and sifted, but as the word of God, to be taken on trust. The very same causes account for the “vitality” of the Koran, or any other sacred book. True,

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the Bible has lasted a few more centuries than the Koran, but as the latter has maintained its authority for twelve centuries, we fail to see what difference a little greater longevity makes to the argument. A phenomenon that has endured for twelve centuries is no more the result of transitory causes than a phenomenon that has endured for sixteen or seventeen. Besides, there is a very important advantage on the side of the Koran. Its adherents still actually try to fashion their lives on its precepts, and they rigidly observe many which are positively irksome; while there are very few Christians who even make a pretence of conforming their conduct to the teachings of the Bible. The Koran is appealed to by Mohammedans in public as well as in private affairs, and their national policy is sometimes decided by a text: but in England, for instance, the Bible is never appealed to out of church, except in religious controversy; it is never cited in support of any public measure; and if even Mr. Newdegate were to quote it in Parliament, so far from being considered a laudable act of piety, it would be universally regarded as a sure sign that the poor man was completely “gone” at last.

When Mr. Blaikie asks “Can all this be the result of sheer superstition and misguided imagination? Have so many generations of men been the dupes of one gigantic fraud?” etc., etc., he is only arguing for the divinity of the Bible as Sir Matthew Hale and John Wesley argued for the truth of witchcraft. And he forgets that exactly the same questions could be asked in exactly the same argumentative way by an imam of Constantinople. We must leave Mr. Blaikie face to face with this augur of a rival faith.

Our special object is to deal with a paragraph of Mr.

Blaikie's introductory eulogium on the Bible. He describes it as "A book that for eighteen centuries has run the gauntlet of every variety both of rude assault and of subtle criticism; a book that has thrown its pages open to every eye, that has challenged the reverence of the highest, and the scorn of the proudest." We join issue on every one of these statements.

First, the Bible has not challenged opposition and triumphed over it. The Church (to avoid the mischievous personification of a book) suppressed by sword and fire, as soon as she obtained power, the writings of all who dared to challenge her pretensions, or to question the divinity of her scriptures. Where are the criticisms of Celsus, of Porphyry, and of other opponents of early Christianity? Not a line of them remains except quotations, and those perhaps garbled, in the surviving answers of orthodox scribes. And how long has the Bible, in modern times, been the object of legal criticism? Why it is not so now. The prison still confronts those who treat it with "scorn." Nay, it is only fifty years ago since Richard Carlile, and other noble champions of a free press, were sentenced to frightful terms of imprisonment for publishing Paine's "Age of Reason." And only a little more than fifty years earlier Voltaire wrote with the halter round his neck, the faggots at his feet, and the murderous eyes of hangman and priest on either side. For the devotees of a book who have drowned opposition in blood when they could not frighten it with social ostracism or terrify it with that awful form of "boycotting" known as excommunication; who still preserve on the statute book penal enactments against unbelief, and frequently show a disposition to put them in force; for these to claim that their book has withstood all assaults, has "challenged the reverence of the highest and the scorn of the proudest," is either consummate impudence or consummate hypocrisy.

Nor is it true that the Bible has been "open to every eye," if Mr. Blaikie means that every eye has read it. What are the two million copies of the Revised Version he boasts of among a population of thirty-five millions? At least four-fifths of our adult population would not spare the cost of three pints of beer for the amended edition of God's infallible word, although their eternal salvation (theoretically) depended on a proper knowledge of its contents. As a matter of fact, the Bible is very much lauded and very little read. The vast majority of Christians know next to nothing of its true character; they are more or less acquainted with the select portions read out in churches and chapels, but the rest is almost a complete blank. How many converts from Christianity have told us that they never knew the Bible until they read the *Freethinker*? We remember the case of a pious old lady, to whom a more sceptical friend introduced, with proper marks of reprobation, certain portions of the Song of Solomon. "Go along with you," she exclaimed, "that stuff isn't in the Bible." "Oh, but it is," replied the other lady. Thereupon the blessed book was brought down from the shelf and put in evidence, and the pious old dame found to her horror that what she had thought rank indecency was really the word of the Lord.

Further, it has only been since the invention of printing that the Bible could be "open to every eye," even physically; and that only in Protestant countries, for the Romish Church has always discountenanced its general perusal, and at one time treated it as a capital crime. Mr. Blaikie's "eighteen centuries" is therefore a grotesque exaggeration. The Bible has not even been in existence for that period, much less studied or "open to every eye." It was not until after the second century that the New Testament canon was practically settled on its present basis. We thus reduce Mr. Blaikie's wild statements to this: that the Bible has for three centuries been accessible to the laity in Protestant countries, and that although there has been much barren study of it by its professional expounders, and infinite wrangling over the meaning of particular texts, together with some unauthorised criticism of a more drastic character, carried on under grave difficulties and sometimes terrible danger, the Bible is yet undeposed from its sovereign position, and is still the ostensible ruler of the Western world. But is that position *secure*, and is that government *real*? That is the question. We propose to show that agreement about the Bible was maintained by the joint powers of authority and ignorance; that directly it was put into the hands of the people the row began;

that an open Bible is, as Rome always held, a deadly peril to the faith; and that ever since Protestantism enunciated the principle of private judgment Christianity has been slowly but surely BREAKING UP.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be concluded.)

ACID DROPS.

It is really too bad. Although poor Dr. McCann got his piteous appeal inserted in most of the Christian papers, he has not yet been able to raise enough of the root of all evil to start a paper in opposition to infidelity. Every year Christians demand and obtain vast sums of money for the conversion of savages in distant lands, but they make little response to any attempt to convince the multitude of unbelievers who surround them at home, and who challenge proof of the truth of their religion.

THE Chicago *Radical Review* narrates how Dr. Hatfield was preaching love and kindness to neighbors, when, in the midst of all his fine sentiment, he heard the band of a working-men's procession passing the church. The "meek and lowly" mask fell off, and he cried: "Is it not intolerable that the services of the Lord cannot be continued without interruptions from a godless rabble?" He then denounced the city authorities for not forcibly restraining these sabbath-breakers. The *Review* says that, at the worst, "the momentary annoyance of a passing band is not so offensive or ill-mannered as the monotonous ding-dong of a church-bell, torturing weak nerves for thirty minutes at a time. Why will not Dr. Hatfield call upon the 'authorities' to put a restraint on that? There are church bells in this town that glory in making life miserable for sick people on Sundays. Dr. Hatfield is quite willing to maintain the church-bell nuisance; in fact, he regards it as a part of the 'services of the Lord;' but people who march to a grove to the notes of a brass band he declares are a 'godless rabble.'"

THE Rev. G. W. Cole, writing to the *Manchester Examiner*, says he will thankfully receive any hint to ward off the dry rot which has set in in his church—especially, we presume, in the pulpit. A second correspondent, in reply, suggests—perhaps satirically—that he should try prayer. We are afraid this would only increase the usual dry rot by the exact amount of prayer put forth.

THE *Christian Herald* has found out one of the limits to almighty power. It is impossible, it appears, for God to see sins that are washed out in the blood of Christ.

ACCORDING to one religious paper, the Bryennios manuscript has borne fruit in the conversion of the Rev. J. M. Bell, M.A., to the Baptist persuasion. According to other papers the said manuscript turns out to be one of the numerous forgeries called forth by Christian credulity.

CHARLES HARRIS, of New Hampton, thoroughly believes in Jesus and in wife-beating. After ill-treating his wife, he took his prayer-book into the street and commenced preaching to a crowd that gathered round him. When ordered away, he attacked the policeman in a most ferocious manner, knocking him down twice and kicking him severely. The constable was saved from further injury by the bravery of a woman who, failing to induce any of the onlookers to interfere, threw herself into the conflict and seized the Christian hero of the scene by the leg until a second policeman arrived. The magistrates at Sunbury Petty Sessions sentenced the man of Christ to a month's hard labor.

"AN Indignant Reader" in the *Manchester Examiner* compares two sentences on recent clerical offenders. The one, who served as a curate under a false name and married several couples although he was not really in holy orders, received fourteen years' penal servitude. He was an "eloquent preacher, an active worker among the poor and the sick, and spent more than his salary in alms to the deserving." The marriages were duly registered and were valid, and practically the pretended curate has injured no one. Another criminal, the Rev. John James Lang, whose case we mentioned last week, was a real clergyman, as low in intellect as in morals. He was convicted of an infamous crime, and was sentenced to fewer months' imprisonment than the other was to years of penal servitude. It would thus appear to be fourteen times as wicked for a layman to impersonate a clergyman as for a duly ordained and sanctified clergyman to outrage little girls.

As a third instance, this justly "Indignant Reader" gives the recent case of a clergyman who, on returning from penal servitude, committed bigamy and other crimes. The judge told him that in the legal profession such an offender would have been struck off the rolls for the first offence. "But you," he said, "come back from penal servitude and are again employed and trusted as a clergyman, and again break the law." Whereupon the judge sentenced him to five years' penal servitude—one-third of the sentence passed on the layman who dared to

discharge the sacred functions of the priest without the orthodox ordination.

THE attention of the Torquay magistrates has been called to a handbill issued by the Salvation Army, headed "Cholera raging at Torquay." This method of obtaining attention by a deliberate lie that is calculated to alarm is a common one among all revivalists. But the 'cute ones lie about an eternal hell after death, and so cannot be easily exposed.

THE Headquarters of the Salvation Army are assuming more than ever the appearance of a store. Not only do they sell books, musical instruments, Salvation guernseys, bonnets, caps, tunics and other garments, but they now supply tea services, with portraits of Publican Booth; Salvation watches, which are the only kind of watch allowed to be worn by Salvation soldiers; and cards and pictures for the decoration of the houses of the saved.

ACCORDING to that superfine journal *Society*, the Queen and most of the Royal Family are ardent spiritualists. It says: "Very illustrious personages frequently seek advice upon future events, and one lady enjoying the confidence of Royalty arranges with the leading mediums for *séances*." Yet we laugh at the Sultan of Turkey for consulting with astrologers.

THE Superior-General of the Jesuits says that secret societies bring ruin to Christian States, "while the Virgin Mother's help of the Christians has alone destroyed all heresies in the world." We had a strong impression that the Jesuits were among the worst of secret societies and that all the heresies in the world had not yet been quite destroyed.

ONE of the signs of the times is the increasing difficulty of selling Church livings. The rectory of Church Stretton, worth £500 a-year, was lately put up to auction, but not a single bid could be obtained, so that the "lot" had to be withdrawn. It is high time that disestablishment ended these scandals and left the Church to its own resources.

ANOTHER sign of the times is the way in which the Church is endeavoring to secure itself against future loss by "commuting" tithes into capital in hand. Tithe-payers are compelled, by writ and by execution if necessary, to pay down a lump sum equal to the full capitalised value of the annual tithes. And if subsequently this stolen capital is taken from a disestablished Church—as it must be—the ecclesiastical crew will denounce the act of righteous restitution as robbery of the most barefaced and hideous kind.

C. H. COLLETTE, in the *Rock*, elaborately explains away all difficulties in the Scriptural account of the standing still of the sun and moon at the command of Joshua. Sun and moon are mistranslations for sunlight and moonshine. It was only the light and not the material sun that "stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day" (Josh. x., 13). "The miracle, therefore, that was wrought, or the extraordinary phenomenon which took place, was that the rays of the sun continued for a while to give light and refraction, or by other extraordinary interposition." This explanation, so highly satisfactory to believers but so absurd to onlookers, follows the line set by Kinns in his pseudo-scientific defence of the Bible. That Christians have to resort to such defence and such defenders indicates the straits they are put to. It is another sign of the times, indicative of the dry rot attacking Christianity from within.

WHILE the *Rock* says that "man cannot exist without the conception of God as the creator and ruler of the universe," the *Christian Globe* points out that the inhabitants of the Bonin Islands (North Pacific), ceded to Japan by our Government about nine years ago, have no temple, no idols, nor even the faintest notion of religion whatever. About five hundred million Buddhists repudiate any conception of God as Creator. We ourselves manage to exist without any such conception, and nobody seems able to impart it to us.

THE *Christian Commonwealth*, in its answers to correspondents, says that "the whole category of infidels"—among whom it includes "Atheists, Deists, Pantheists, Secularists, Agnostics and Freethinkers"—"have been unable to formulate a single thing that hopefully offers a single individual the slightest help at any place where there is a felt need. That fact alone is sufficient to condemn infidelity as a mock and delusion." We thought the *C. C.* had a better sense of truth and fairness than to countenance this miserable lying for the glory of God and the hatred of man. The teachings of Buddha and Confucius have afforded great help to millions in the past. The teachings of Darwin, Huxley, Tyndall, Spencer, George Eliot, Harriet Martineau, Frederic Harrison, Comte, Robert Owen, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Paine, Voltaire, Carlyle, Emerson and a host of other "infidels," help and encourage innumerable minds in the present, and yield far greater hope for the future. The Christian motto appears to be: Shut your eyes to facts and lie on boldly; for such is the pathway to the Christian heaven.

THE *Christian Commonwealth* also says in a leading article that "the Agnostic or the Positivist has no real sympathy with suffering." Why is it that people otherwise just and humanitarian in their aspirations lower themselves to the employment of such falsehoods? It is religion that blinds them and corrupts them. We must pity them as we would the victims of an overpowering disease.

THE *Christian Commonwealth* laments that in the House of Commons no one, with the exception of Mr. Gladstone, can quote from, or even refer to, Scripture as an authority, with the smallest hope of being heard. It is not more than a year since the voice of an ordinary member who made such an appeal was drowned in shouts of derisive laughter. It is so in every other branch of affairs. No sensible man thinks of regulating his business by the divine rule, and when in out-of-the-way districts Peculiar people try to conform to Biblical injunction they are interfered with by the sanitary authorities.

A COLONY of Peculiar People at Dawe's Heath, Thursdresley, have been visited by small-pox, but they, mindful how Asa died, when in his disease he sought not to the Lord but to the physicians, refused to call in medical attendance, but following the advice of James had the patient prayed over and anointed with oil. The medical sanitary authority has however been communicated with, and steps have been taken to prevent a spread of the contagion.

It is said that a prominent Chinese official has become a Christian. The Chinese Government will do well to keep an eye on him.

THE New York *Weekly Witness* winds up an editorial in favor of the Prohibition candidate for the Presidency by saying that "the Lord Jesus is the only leader to whom the *Witness* acknowledges entire allegiance." So there's another candidate in the field, exclaims the *Winstead Press*. He can't be elected. We won't have any lords in office in this free country.

LIZZIE MINER, a bright, pretty girl, who worked in Brainard and Armstrong's silk mill in New London, and who was made insane by the religion preached at the street meetings of the Salvation Army, has been placed in a hospital for the insane. She fancied that Satan was in pursuit of her soul, and that only by the constant singing of Salvation songs he might be kept away. Members of the Army called on her, but she became more violent, and had convulsive fits.—N. Y. *Truthseeker*.

THIRTY thousand pounds wanted! This is the result of the Bishop of St. David's commission of inquiry into the spiritual wants of Glamorganshire. The money is to be spent on new churches and mission chapels, and of course on the maintenance of as many sky-pilots. That is the end of everything with the clergy—cash!

The highest church in the world is said to be in the Rocky Mountains at Leadville. It is about 10,000 feet above the level of the sea. There are high churches in England nearly as many miles above the level of common sense.

NOT a sparrow falls to the ground without the will of God. So said Jesus Christ. The Chester farmers, however, entertain a different opinion. They are amalgamating for the purpose of killing the over-abundant sparrows that the Lord allows to infest their fields. No doubt the farmer's gun will kill the sparrows, but it also kills the text.

MR. EDWARD PLAYER, chief cashier at Sir H. Vivian, M.P.'s works, a churchwarden, was brought before the Swansea magistrates lately, charged with fraud; his defalcations, extending over five years, amount to £1,500.

A CORRESPONDENT tells us a good story. Last Sunday, carpenters, bricklayers and laborers were in full swing on the new premises in Soho which are being erected by the Improved Industrial Dwellings Company. Orthodox pedestrians on their way to church were horrified at the spectacle, some of them nearly dropping their gilt-edged volumes in the mud. Our correspondent asked one of the workmen whether he would be able to go to church. "Oh, yes," was the answer, "we knock off at half-past five, in time for that."

KING TAWHIAO, in his farewell letter to his friends in England, refers to Matt. v., 6-10. The last of these verses says: "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." We are afraid that the poor Maoris will have to rest satisfied with the kingdom of heaven, for the "meek" white man evidently means to "inherit the earth."

CLERICAL impostors are turning up almost every week, and if the business goes on with increasing rapidity, as it has done of late, the newspapers will have to keep a standing head-line for it. The latest case is that of the "Rev. G. R. Lea, LL.D.," of Birmingham. This adventurer passed himself off as a clergyman opened a mission hall, started a little magazine, collected subscriptions, got heavily into debt and then bolted. His numerou

creditors wanted him arrested for obtaining money under false pretences. Our verdict is, Serve them right. If they blindly trust any two-legged creature with a white choker on they deserve to be bitten.

SKY-PILOTS know full well that men would not readily accept their guidance, much less pay them handsomely for it, unless their profession were chartered by the State, or allowed to instil into youthful minds a fictitious sense of their value by means of "religious education." Hence we see that, when they have lost nearly all their unjust privileges, they strive more and more to strengthen their sinister influence over children, so as to preserve their salaries if not their power. The Bishop of Carlisle has just given a signal illustration of this truth. He desires the next Church Congress to discuss how School Boards and Board schools may be made as religious as possible. Priests hate secular education worse than the Devil hates holy water. Free-thinkers, however, should be on their guard against pestilent creatures. Let us make a fresh effort to resist this fresh invasion. The cholera is nothing to the priest in our schools.

MR. SPURGEON continues very unwell, notwithstanding the prayers offered up for his recovery. It is a curious fact in religious sanitation that Mr. Spurgeon finds Mentone a better place to pray from than Stockwell; in the former place his health improves a little, while in the latter a million prayers cannot mend it. Other sky-pilots observe a similar phenomenon. At this time of the year they leave crowded cities and pray for their health all round the sea coast. Prayer and oxygen are somehow more efficacious than prayer and carbonic acid gas. We fear the sky-pilots are too sensible to work this problem out by Mill's method of concomitant variations.

THE pious Marquis of Salisbury is the chief member of the Committee for raising poor Newdegate some cash in recompense for his losses incurred in trying to bankrupt Mr. Bradlaugh for the honor and glory of God. This same Marquis of Salisbury is the lord of Hatfield, where his own castle covers several acres of ground, and his laborers live in hovels worse than his dog kennels, yet he shows a hypocritical concern for the outcast poor of London.

A WRITER in the *Dispatch* says that Baron Dimsdale at the Hatfield demonstration "looked excessively gloomy and particularly suggestive of Mr. Newdegate" in his most solemn moments. So pious Newdegate is after all not unique in appearance among the children of men. We always thought it would be impossible to find his parallel except in Hades. He looks remarkably like a fancy picture of Satan in a colic.

EVERY ONE knows that the italics in the authorised version of the Bible represent words which have no place in the Hebrew documents falsely called originals, but every one is not aware of the extent to which these insertions alter the meaning. A notable instance occurs in the verse upon which Bible infallibility has been based: "All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God" (2 Tim. iii., 16). Here the insertion of the little word *is* perverts the meaning of Paul, who wrote before any other of the New Testament scriptures were in existence.

ANOTHER instance occurs in Psalm vii., 11, which reads "God is angry *with the wicked every day.*" What the writer said was that God was angry every day—*i.e.*, Jahveh was always in his tantrums—a statement corroborated by many parts of the Jew-books.

THE *Christian World* is very wroth with French "Republican Imperialism" for "disregarding the first rules of morality in dealing even with the weakest peoples." The same journal views Lord Wolseley's departure for Egypt with great satisfaction. We should like to know what difference there is between Mr. Gladstone's political buccaneering in Egypt and M. Ferry's political buccaneering in China. The *C. W.* might also remember that Christian England has a much larger and blacker score of such sins than infidel France. We teach the other nations a bad lesson, and then preach at them for practising it.

"CAPTAIN" RESTALL, of the Blue Ribbon Gospel Army Band, having borrowed £3 10s. to buy instruments for his band, declines to pay. Summoned to Barrow County Court, he pleaded that many of his gossellers had left the band without paying their share of the cost of the instruments. He would not send them back, because he was only the servant of Mr. Baxter of London. The judge ordered the money to be paid in this and in another similar case. Mr. Baxter is editor of the *Christian Herald* and author of a work entitled "Louis Napoleon the Destined Monarch of the World."

A WEST SOMERSET jury is said to have returned the verdict, "Died by the hereditary visitation of God," in the case of a man who had broken his neck when drunk, and whose grandfather had met with a like mishap. This jury was almost as bad as the heathen, who, when he was told how God the father's projects were thwarted by Satan, and how God the son was murdered, exclaimed, "My word! what an unfortunate family!"

THE Archbishop of York advises his clergy who have small incomes and large families to beg of their congregations. We advise them to pray hard and trust in providence. A London parson who recently married a young couple in poor circumstances, told them to get as many children as they could, for the Lord would feed them like the sparrows. This gay and festive sky-pilot should recommend his white-chokered brethren to expect victuals from the same quarter, without dipping into their neighbors' larders.

THE Hulsean Lectures for 1883-1884 are entitled "The Atonement viewed in the light of certain modern difficulties," by the Rev. J. J. Lias. The object of these wordy discourses is to establish that Jesus did in some sense suffer in our stead. How a God could suffer or how humanity has benefited by his sufferings, Mr. Lias altogether omits to explain.

SIR JOHN WHITTAKER ELLIS, M.P., has just laid the foundation stone of an episcopal church at Coleraine. Sir John was the Lord Mayor who first committed us at the Mansion House for trial. This is a free country! All men are equal before the law! Yet a zealous Christian may sit on the bench to try a Free-thinker for criticising Christianity.

THERE is no truth in the rumor that Lord Mayor Fowler has been spoken of by Sir Wilfred Lawson as a fit and proper person to become the president of the United Kingdom Alliance.

THE *Christian Herald* gives moral instruction of its usual lofty and veracious type, in the shape of instances of sudden death sent in answer to swearers' prayers. "A drover" in 1826—recent instances not being readily discoverable—fell dead while swearing. "A blacksmith" swore in a public-house, and "God struck him instantaneously dead, with an oath on his lips." "A man" at Sedgeley, having lost by gambling, swore horribly, "wishing the Devil might fetch him if he made another bet." Afterwards, on making a bet, he "instantly fell backwards a ghastly corpse upon the ground." It is alleged that such cases as these "show the awful peril incurred" by taking God's name in vain. The innumerable millions of instances in which people swear with perfect impunity so far as miraculous visitation is concerned, count for nothing with the superstitious Christians who feed with avidity upon the wretched "spiritual" food provided for them by such papers as the *Christian Herald*.

WE hear that the Christian Evidence Manufacturing Society will offer prizes for essays on the following subjects: (1) The moral lessons of the Song of Solomon; (2) The chosen people of God, and why he chose them; (3) The meekness of Moses and the tender mercies of David; (4) Joshua's views upon astronomy; (5) The number of children that are compatible with virginity; (6) Proof that the world came to an end in the lifetime of the apostles. If the prizes are given in hard cash instead of, as heretofore, unsaleable books, a large competition of unemployed Bible-bangers may be expected.

REVIEWS.

A United System of Weights and Measures, applicable to all nations; by JOHN MORRISON. Published by William Kidd, 112 Nethergate, Dundee.—This improvement on the French decimal system of unified weights and measures is highly laudable in intention, but we fear that it is not likely to be adopted by a busy world which sees the temporary difficulties of a change of system far more readily than it perceives the permanent benefits.

Our Corner, edited by ANNIE BESANT, September.—A very interesting number. Mrs. Besant brings her Autobiography down to her separation from home. Mr. Conway, who is leaving England to settle down in his native land, writes on the Oath Question with his usual brightness. There are also articles of interest to general readers by Mr. Bradlaugh, Miss H. Bradlaugh and J. Bonner, and a touching poem by J. R. Waller. But the articles of most importance, perhaps, are Mr. J. M. Wheeler's on the House of Lords and Mr. J. Robertson's on the Art of Burns. Mr. Wheeler believes in the value of a second chamber when its members are not hereditary. Those who wish to see this view ably combated should read Mr. Robertson's very careful article in *Progress*.

THE BIBLE GOD—Jehovah was altogether a Jew. He kept the Sabbath day; he loved fasts and festivals; he believed in the virtue of circumcision; he was interested not so much in the general well-being of the human species, as in the success of the single people of whom he was the true leader in battle and the ultimate sovereign at home. What happened to all the remainder of mankind was to him a matter of trivial moment, although it might suit him occasionally to use them as instruments either for the chastisement or the restoration to favor of his beloved Israel.—*Viscount Amberley*, "Analysis of Religious Belief," vol. ii., p. 370; 1879.

SPECIAL NOTICE.

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, Sept. 7, Hall of Science, Old Street, City Road, London, E.C., at 11.15, "Our Glorious Aristocracy;" at 7, "Judas Iscariot."

Wednesday, Sept. 10, Hackney Workmen's Club, Haggerstone Road, E., at 8.

September 14, Hall of Science, London; 21, Glasgow; 23 and 24, Aberdeen; 25 and 26, Dundee; 28, Edinburgh. Oct. 2, Hall of Science, London; 5, Liverpool; 9, Hall of Science, London; 12, Halifax; 16, Hall of Science, London; 18, Failsforth; 19, Manchester; 20, Longton; 23, Hall of Science, London; 26, Plymouth. Nov. 2, Burnley; 9, Birmingham; 16, Nottingham; 23 and 30, Hall of Science, London. Dec. 7, Leeds; 14, Oldham; 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, London, E.C. 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. 3s.; Three Months, 1s. 7½d.
- SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS:—Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*:—One inch, 3s.; Half Column, 15s.; Column, £1 10s. Special terms for repetitions.
- RECEIVED WITH THANKS:—J. L. Lightfoot, C. Brewer, J. M. Hoyle, W. Robertson, J. Sykes, A. Pomeroy, W. C. Saville, Miss Roberts; the *Word* (Princeton, Mass).
- W. LAVSON.—There are some errors in your calculations, and the subject is hardly of sufficient interest.
- F. T. R.—Scarcely up to the mark.
- TOTTENHAM.—"Ishmael" has opened a shop at 75 Stonebridge Road, South Tottenham, for the sale of Freethought literature, and can deliver at customer's own residence on day of publication.
- JAMES MALBY, Princess Street, Glossop, will sell a complete set of the *Freethinker*, giving half the proceeds to the cause.
- A STAUNCH YOUNG FREETHINKER.—We can supply you with an English translation of the Koran for 2s.
- J. EDMUNDS.—The poem entitled "Thomas Aquinas' Prayer" is by W. M'Call, and is found in a volume entitled "Reverberations." "Why should the Atheist fear to Die?" is by Percy Greg. Both can be procured from Trübner, Ludgate Hill.
- GEO. COCKMAN.—We think poor Tom Bowling has suffered enough without troubling whether his body or his soul has gone aloft.
- J. WIDDICOMBE.—We cannot pass an opinion on Lord Rayleigh's address without having the full text before us. The passage you cite is somewhat equivocal.—We remember seeing more than one visitor from Exeter to the Plymouth Conference, but whether one of them bore the name you mention is more than we can say.
- H. FENEMORE desires us to state that the premises of the South London Secular Hall Company, 61 New Church Road, Camberwell, are now completed and ready for the occupancy of the Camberwell branch of the N. S. S. The lectures will be given in the large hall on Sunday evenings at 7.30.
- W. H. CARTER.—Atheists do not believe in creation and cannot therefore be required to account for it. When you say "we all believe there was a first cause" you exceed the truth. To our mind a first cause is a contradiction in terms. We have no space for the proper treatment of the subject in this column, but you will find it dealt with in Mill's "Essays on Religion." Mirabaud's "System of Nature" might be read afterwards. Write us again on the matter if you are still dissatisfied.
- W. KEERLE.—We are always glad to receive such letters.
- J. EVANS.—M. Paul Bert, the eminent French politician, savant, Freethinker and educationist, was born at Auxerre, Oct. 19, 1833.
- AN ATHEIST BLACKSMITH.—Thanks for your support and the paper, which we return.
- INQUIRER.—Our Freethinker Tracts would just meet your need. They are all adapted to the general taste and intelligence, and you could not do better than distribute them widely if you can. The price is extremely low, just sufficient indeed to cover the cost of production.
- W. IRVING.—Mill's "Logic" has been a very expensive book, but a new edition is announced at the price of five shillings, similar to the People's Edition of his "Political Economy."
- J. R. BROUGH advises every Freethinker to read Norman Britton's article, "A New Heaven and a New Earth," in the current number of *Progress*, as one of the best he ever read in his life.
- J. R.—Much obliged, but it appeared in the *Freethinker* long ago. It is also in one of Mr. Foote's "Bible Romances." Thanks for your good wishes.
- W. ARMSTRONG.—You had better ask Mr. Bradlaugh himself.
- G. W.—The comment is a little far-fetched. We saw the poem when it appeared.
- PHONO.—Send us as many jokes as you like.
- J. ANDERSON asks us to announce that the Sunday smoking concerts will be resumed at the Hall of Science Club, London, Sunday, September 7, at 9.
- THROUGH press of matter Mr. Ball's reply to Dr. Porter stands over till next week.

SUGAR PLUMS.

Mr. FOOTE opens the winter season (as we must call it despite the weather) at the Hall of Science, London, on Sunday, September 7, when the morning lectures are resumed. In October Mr. Foote will deliver a course of four Thursday evening lectures in the same hall on "The Roots of Christianity." They (that is the lectures, not the roots) will be as thorough as possible, and ample opportunity for discussion will be allowed after them.

If the Christian Evidence Society likes to send representatives to oppose, they shall be furnished with free tickets of admission.

THE "Age of Reason" for sixpence! *Impossible!* many will say. But, like Mirabeau, the Progressive Publishing Company does not recognise "that fool of a word." Thomas Paine's theological masterpiece is actually published by this firm, for the very first time, at the low price of sixpence. It is printed with good readable type on excellent paper. Paine's miscellaneous writings on religion will soon follow at the same price; and when the two volumes are bound together, readers will be able to obtain Thomas Paine's complete theological works for a shilling.

J. BILLCLIFF, Christchurch, New Zealand, sends over to our office a large order for Freethought literature, which he intends to sell out there, all for love. "Well," the reader may say, "what of that? Who is J. Billcliff?" Somebody, my good friend; and you would not be surprised at my writing about him if you knew him as I do. He is only a half-educated working man, but he has ideas of his own, and a heart as true and brave as ever beat in a human breast. I never saw him in danger, but I am sure of his courage. He carried his Atheism open to the world, and would not play the coward for any man or any consideration. He was a Bayard of Freethought, *sans peur et sans reproche*. Every time I grasped his honest hand I felt fresh spirit for the fight; and when, in prison, I learned that he had left Manchester for New Zealand, the news saddened me; for I counted on the pleasure of a hearty greeting from him after my release, and on seeing the look of "Well done" in his frank eyes as we met. It was some satisfaction, however, to know that the N. S. S. had elected him as a Vice-President before he left England. A better man was never elected to the office. Lecturers and writers attract far more attention than other Freethinkers, and I suppose that is inevitable; but my private opinion is that men like Mr. Billcliff are the backbone of our party. Long life to him and his family! And may he be as great a tower of strength to Freethought in his new home as he was in the old one.—G. W. F.

HERE is a good little story *apropos* of Mr. Billcliff. A medical gentleman in Manchester, called one evening on an old lady patient. He excused himself for being late on the ground that he had been detained by having to call on Mrs. Billcliff. "Oh," said the old lady, "I think I know the family; they are dreadful people; Mr. Billcliff is a horrible man, they say, nothing but an Atheist." "Really," replied the doctor with a good-tempered smile, "you must be mistaken, ma'am; I've known Mr. Billcliff for many years, and if I had ten thousand pounds to-night that I could neither carry about nor take home, I should leave it at his house and nowhere else." "Dear me," said the old lady, "you don't say so doctor? Well, well, who would have thought it?"

WE see by the American papers that the Freethinkers there are not asleep. The New York State Freethinkers Association holds its seventh annual convention at Cassadaga Lake on the 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th of September. The National Liberal League—our transatlantic cousins use the word "Liberal" to signify "Secular" or "Freethought"—holds its Eighth Annual Congress at the same place on September 8th and 9th. It advocates a Secular Republic, separation of Church and State, universal secular education, free speech and free press. The Northwest Kansas Freethinkers' Association holds its camp-meeting at Concordia from September 2nd to 7th.

OUR esteemed contributor, Mr. E. J. Bowtell, is now using his pen on behalf of Freethought in America. In the *New York Truthseeker* he gives our transatlantic cousins an account of the "admirable organisation" and work of the N. S. S. From this article we extract the following paragraph which we think should be borne in mind by Secularist organisers: "It appears to be a growing practice, and one attended with satisfactory results, to relieve the dryness of the ordinary proceedings by some entertainment at the meetings. Musical and dramatic sketches and occasional balls are given by some branches for this purpose. This is found especially valuable in attracting ladies to the meetings. The co-operation of woman is held to be of the utmost importance, as it rests with the female sex chiefly to protect the next generation from the corrupting influence of theology."

THE *Freethinker* is very well known, and has a very fair circulation in America, where our Comic Bible Sketches are heartily relished. One of our subscribers in Chicago writes that he is so fond of the *Freethinker* (and *Progress* too) that he "wants them again as soon as possible." He is also anxious to know when Mr. Foote's "Bible Romances" will be completed; and, in conclusion, he says that "it is pleasant to quite a number of us here to see the whole pack of divine rubbish caricatured."

MR. E. WILKINS, of the Cardiff Branch of the N. S. S., has just returned home from what he calls "a successful campaign" at Ilfracombe. During his holiday there he has distributed about 200 copies of this paper and a large quantity of our tracts. He tells us that the local papers threaten to take the matter up, which will be very kind of them, as it will only assist Mr. Wilkins

in advertising Freethought. The *Freethinker* may say with Robbie Burns, "The mair they talk, the mair I'm kent."

THE Sydney *Bulletin*, a smart sixpenny illustrated, says that Joseph Symes's *Liberator* promises well. It approves of Mr. Symes's "fair, open, well-worded, manly challenge to discuss the foundations of religion without bitterness or abuse," and thinks that his particular challenge to Bishop Moorhouse to meet him in the columns of the *Liberator* or on the platform is "so temperately worded, and so publicly, that it is difficult to see how the Bishop can ignore him."

In another column the *Bulletin* says: "Three Christians of Bourke were lately interrogated as to their mental position with regard to Good Friday. The first replied that he did not know what event that day commemorated. The second was better informed. He said it was the day on which Jesus Christ was born. The third replied that it was the day on which people eat hot-cross buns. And these were three of the most intelligent men in the town. Is it any wonder that rain so seldom visits Bourke?"

THE *Bulletin* also tells its readers, that "Joseph Symes, the Melbourne Freethinker, was lecturing in a little town on the Gippsland Lakes recently. He told the hop-pickers a lot of things they never heard before. He said a man had the same number of ribs as a woman. This startled the hop-pickers. They went outside to count. But when they had totted up each other's ribs they went about looking for women to test the truth of the statement. Nobody in the town slept that night, and the local paper asseverated next day that the hop-pickers should throw the villainous heresiarch in a horsepond. No fear, Joseph. If they did that they'd have to pay for burying you, and, although they'd like to kill you, they're not game to stand the subsequent expense."

It completes its claims to be regarded as at least a slightly blasphemous paper with a story of the "Last Days of King Solomon." Nabonasser, who partly gains his living by "writing lies for the religious press," falls in with King Solomon somewhere apparently in the celebrated but undiscovered realms of the "other side of nature." They find Nebuchadnezzar, the converted king—he was converted into an ox—hobbled, and up to his ears in clover, but lamenting the want of a tail to keep the flies off. They bribe his bovine majesty with a quid of tobacco, and saddle him. Presently they find him jostling with other cattle for a lick at a pillar of rock-salt in the shape of a woman, who is addressed in verse as "dearest Lottie." They also pass Samson, who, as a performing athlete or acrobat, is entertaining a crowd by pulling out the granite pillars of the Post Office, and "tossing the caber" with them. A little further on they find law students eagerly listening to the instructions of a serpent with a wig on, whose well-known history need not be further referred to. And finally the king introduces the narrator to a stump orator of the day who is addressing a huge crowd of cheering supporters and hooting opponents. "I bought him from Balaam," says Solomon, "and have set him up here that my people may receive their politics at first hand."

TOLERATION is spreading rapidly. At St. John's Church, Weston-super-Mare, last Sunday, there was a collection on behalf of the Church of England Temperance Society, and three gentlemen who went round with the boxes were in the liquor trade. We suppose we shall next hear that the compliment has been returned, and that the spirit merchants and the teetotallers have all got drunk together.

WE hear that one of the Christian Evidence Society's agents hired Milton Hall for a course of free popular lectures against "Infidelity." Of course they proved a rank failure, and the landlord had to sue for his rent. The Christians cannot fill Milton Hall with free admission, while the Freethinkers can fill it with payment at the door.

A CLEVELAND minister, charged with riding a bicycle on the sidewalk in defiance of city ordinance, claimed the right as a minister to obey a higher law and to "violate the law made by man" when so doing. The judge told him that when the alleged "higher laws" conflicted with the laws of the State they would have to come off second best. In future this clergyman will have to "keep in de middle of de road" like his fellow mortals.

ALTHOUGH by their vote of Saturday the Belgian Chamber of Representatives has overthrown the educational reforms of the late ministry, there are signs that the Roman Catholic majority are not in accord with national feeling. A petition representing nearly 3,000,000 inhabitants has been sent in against their retrograde policy, and many Liberal demonstrations and processions have taken place. The priests owe their present power to the discontent caused by the increased taxation on beer which the Liberal ministry had imposed to pay for the excellent system of Secular education which they had introduced and carried out. Beer and Bible can only succeed in winning temporary victories.

THE British Association for the Advancement of Science at Montreal, last Sunday, went, not to church, but to the Queen's Hall, to hear Prof. Felix Adler lecture upon the Societies of Ethical Culture of which he is the founder. Prof. Adler is by birth a Jew, but he has cast off, not only Hebrew old clothes, but all forms of supernaturalism.

THE Hibbert Lecture on the ancient religions of Mexico and Peru, by M. Albert Réville, has been published by Messrs. Williams and Norgate. M. Réville contends that these religions "give no indication of a primitive monotheism." It is true that the deities have each in turn the most exalted attributes ascribed them, but, says M. Réville, "It is the same with the worthy curés in our rural districts, whose sermons systematically exalt the saint of the day, whoever he may be, to the chief place in paradise."

CREMATION is making rapid strides in France. The Prefect of the Seine means to establish Siemens's furnaces in several of the cemeteries in Paris, and proposes to cremate all persons whose remains are not claimed by their friends. We are not sure that this is the best way of bringing cremation into repute, since so many object to a post-mortem examination for the benefit of science simply because the doctors take the unclaimed paupers.

PROFESSOR LANGLEY presents some astronomical truths in a striking light. For instance, he explains how we may realise the distance of the sun from the earth by stating that if an express train had left the one for the other on the day when the "May-flower" sailed for New England, and had run night and day at full speed ever since, it would still be several years from its destination. Supposing a soul freed from the body travelled as fast as an express train, the soul, say, of Oliver Cromwell would not have travelled as far as the sun yet, and as the bounds of the known universe are millions of times farther, Father Adam himself has not yet got to heaven. Even if the "grand old gardener" travelled as fast as light, he has not arrived at paradise unless it is an invisible place within the sweep of our telescopes.

THE *Christian Commonwealth* announced beforehand in large type on its bills "Zion's Sugar Plums" as an attraction in its ensuing number. We wondered whether this was put forth to counterbalance the *Freethinker* "Sugar Plums," and to show Christian readers that religious writing need not always be as dull as ditch-water. But by the time the number of the *C. C.* was issued this title had been modified into "Zion's Sugar Loaves." It is merely a leading article dealing with "ministerial emoluments," which it rightly says must be regarded as "one of the crucial questions affecting the whole progress of Christianity."

OUR Freethought contemporary, the *Philosophical Inquirer*, advertises a book called "The Cosmic Psychological Spiritual Philosophy and Science of Communion with and Absorption in the Holy and Divine Infinite Spirit," by "the Mahatma Brumha Gnyana Mavuna Gura Sabhapathy Swamy Rishi Yogiswer." "Those who never intend to study the author may console themselves with the thought that there is sufficient food for reflection in his name.

"A FOLLOWER of Lord Buddha" asks in the same paper the following pertinent questions of Christian missionaries:—"Can we honestly maintain that God is *just and merciful*, when we profess to believe that he created the Devil and man, foreknowing that each in turn was *capable* of sinning and *would* sin, thereby bringing about the damnation of millions?—Is it true that all perish except those who have had the means of accepting, and have accepted the dogma of 'Faith in Christ alone'? If so, what becomes of the infant souls of all nations? Does the hereditary course of 'the Fall' not affect them, or does the death of Christ in these cases work salvation without the concomitant 'Faith' in him?—If there be certain salvation for those who die sufficiently early, may not child-murder be regarded as self-sacrificing and meritorious?"

"CHRISTIANITY in its Cradle," is the title of Professor F. W. Newman's latest contribution to the literature of Rationalism. It is a very careful and solid piece of work, and fully worthy of the author's power and reputation. In its way it is scarcely less fascinating than "Phases of Faith," and it carries destructive criticism of orthodoxy far beyond the point it reached in that early work. A full review of this remarkable little volume will appear in the October number of *Progress*.

Apropos of an earthquake in the United States, the *Christian Herald* says: "Surely this is another of the predicted 'earthquakes in divers places,' heralding the approaching end of the age."

THE latest religious statistical authority ("O. Hubner's Geographisch Statistisch Tabellen aller Lander des Erde") for 1884 shows that there still remain 900,000,000 of heathens dark to the light of the Gospel, while the nominal Christians of all denominations number only 432,000,000. Of Christians, the Catholics take the lead with 218,000,000, the Protestants

come next with 123,000,000, the Greek Church numbers 83,000,000, and others 8,000,000. China, with a population of 371,000,000, is lumped as Buddhist, although it has sects within sects, the same as Christianity.



THE SWEET PSALMIST OF ISRAEL.

"My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise."—Psalm lvii., 7.

Our illustration represents the original form of praise invented by Jubal and used in the worship of Jahveh. According to Smith's Bible Dictionary, the "players on instruments (*Choelim* in Psalm lxxxviii., 7) were properly pipers." See 1 Kings 1-40, and Isaiah xxx., 29.

BUDDHISM IN CHINA.*

It is useless to take the report of a missionary concerning another faith than his own. Even when there is every desire to be fair, as we presume is the case in the book before us, the theological bias will creep in. In truth, the claims of Christianity are incompatible with the doing of simple justice to rival faiths. The Christian is bound to believe that his is the one divinely revealed religion; that Jesus brought into the world all truth necessary to salvation, and that "there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

When dealing with a religion which has undergone so many developments as Buddhism, an opportunity is given to the Christian advocate to expatiate upon the more degenerate aspects of the rival religion and to make Christianity shine by comparison. One of the most common of these attacks is to speak of Buddhism, in the words of our author, as "a gross and debasing idolatry."

Now it ought to be known that worship of any kind is no part of original Buddhism. The Singaliese priest who, as related by Sir J. Emerson Tennant, when asked if he worshipped the gods, replied, "No, the gods worship me," was strictly following the doctrine of the Buddha, who taught that if there were gods they were subject to the law of cause and effect, and that it was better to give homage for a moment to a worthy man than to sacrifice to the gods for a thousand years. Even the so-called prayers of the early Buddhists were but the open confession of sins to men and uttered aspirations to live a worthy life. The so-called idolatry of degenerate Buddhists is exactly like the image and picture-worship of Catholic Christians, only an accommodation to the weak and ignorant, and is universally repudiated by the educated. No religion can spread without such accommodation. Christianity did not

hesitate to transform itself into Paganism in order to win the Pagans.

Buddhism, as is well known, was adopted in China by the Emperor Ming-ti (A.C. 61), who sent for its sacred books from India and had them translated into Chinese. Mr. Beal rejects the statement that the Buddhist books were known in China before the time of the Emperor She-hwang-ti (B.C. 221). He rightly sets down as fabulous the narrative of the supernatural deliverance from prison of the Buddhist missionaries in this reign, but we presume he does not consider the Acts of the Apostles fabulous, because that document makes Peter and Paul supernaturally delivered from prison.

To nothing but Christian bias can we attribute the suggestion that the writings of Asvaghosha, a Buddhist patriarch, who lived about 50 A.C., are tinged by Christianity, and that "a fusion of foreign religious doctrines took place when the Christian dogma and ritual were first carried to the east by the apostles and their successors." The only evidence adduced for this is the legendary visit of St. Thomas to India. We incline to think the borrowing has been on the other side. Long before Christianity was in existence Buddhism sent out missionaries into all parts of the then known world. The Buddhist emperor, Asoka, records in his rock inscriptions (B.C. 246) the names of Antiochus of Syria, Ptolemy of Egypt, Antigonus of Macedon, Magas of Cyrene, and Alexander of Greece, as kings to whom he sent ambassadors of his faith. Though the statement that they conformed themselves to Buddhist instruction may be an exaggeration, there can be no doubt the Buddhist envoys were courteously received, and that they conveyed some knowledge of their religious doctrines and legends in the countries they visited. James Ferguson, our highest authority on ancient architecture, asserts that the details of the early Christian Church were borrowed entirely from the Buddhists. Relic worship, he says, was certainly borrowed from the East, and nine-tenths of the institutes and forms of Latin Christianity came from Buddhist sources ("Rude Stone Monuments," pp. 499-503; 1872).

The most valuable part of Mr. Beal's book is where he gives an account of the ritual services of Kwan-yin, the most common object of veneration among the Buddhists in China. Kwan-yin means the one who hearkens, or the compassionate being. He is supposed, like all the Buddhist so-called gods to have been a man, who, going through the moral discipline of Buddhism, attained sainthood, but instead of accepting Nirvana, the rest that remains for the steadfast follower of Buddha, vowed to be re-incarnate again and again for the redemption of all worlds. For this purpose he is supposed to visit the lowest purgatory. The Buddhist "hells," be it said, are not eternal, but places, or rather states, meting out the exact consequence, neither more nor less, of evil deeds. In one of the *sutras* quoted by Mr. Beal (p. 145) Kwan-yin says: "I am visiting the innumerable hells in the universe, resolved myself not to grasp the perfect knowledge of a Buddha until all beings have been not only delivered from punishment, but are settled in the world of Nirvana." This truly poetical conception of a compassionate being who resolves to be the last to be saved, seems to us to go far deeper than the legend of Jesus, who although he is said to have descended into hell, very speedily returned to sit on the right hand of God the Father. If Buddhism had given birth to no other thought than this it would deserve high rank on the roll of religious faiths. Another point upon which Buddhism will favorably compare with Christianity is that it inculcates self-reliance as well as self-renunciation. Thus in the service of Kwan-yin the devotee is told to reflect thus: "All the Buddhas are the same with myself; it is only because we are self-deceived that we think otherwise; to remove the obstacles in the right knowledge, I now come to worship the precious objects, and so desire to benefit all living things" (p. 148).

To a disparaging notice like this it is only fair to add that Mr. Beal's knowledge of the extensive literature of Buddhism in China is surpassed by none, and that even to those who possess the works of Edkins, Eitel and Johnson, the present work contains much that is of value. Had it been written in that broad spirit of sympathy which distinguishes the work of Samuel Johnson, as well as that of T. W. Rhys-Davids in the same series, its value

* "Buddhism in China," by the Rev. S. Beal: London; Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1884.

would have been much enhanced. As it is it confirms the belief that works dealing with other religions are best written by laymen.
J. M. WHEELER.

PROFANE JOKES.

A MINISTER who spoke at a Granger's meeting the other day in Worcester county, told his audience that it takes more brains to preach to an audience of farmers than to a city church, and the horny-handed agriculturists voted unanimously that the reverend gentleman was admirably fitted for city preaching.

A PAINTER one day was painting a Roman Catholic Church, and the second day he was there the holy priest came to see him. The priest asked the painter "if he had been all around the church?" The painter said, "No." "Well come on with me," said the priest, "and I will show you around." Off they went together, and when they came to Virgin Mary the priest stopped and said: "Now I can make Virgin Mary move if I like." "Can you," said the painter. "Yes," replied the priest, and immediately the image moved. "Well, that's very funny," said the painter, "for I was seeking somewhere to hang my cap yesterday and so I drove a nail into her back and she never moved then."

LITTLE MARY'S QUESTION.—The Bishop of Atlanta (Ga., U.S.), recently addressed a large assembly of Sunday-school children, and wound up by asking in a very paternal and condescending way, "And now is there any little boy or any little girl who would like to ask me a question?" A little shrill voice called out, "Please, sir, why did the angels walk up and down Jacob's ladder when they had wings?" "Oh! ah! yes—I see," replied the bishop; "and now is there a-a-n-y little boy or a-a-n-y little girl who would like to answer little Mary's question?" We do not know what answer, if any, little Mary received. The only reasonable explanation we have yet seen suggests that the angels were moulting.

"Ah, good! That'll do; it is all right," somewhat impulsively remarked Mr. Groggins, laying down the revised New Testament. "I see they have not altered it. I was afraid they would change the passage where Timothy is urged to take a little wine for his stomach's sake and often infirmities, by substituting lemonade or sarsaparilla for wine, and that would have robbed us moderate drinkers of the practice of quoting the Bible to prove that there is no harm in taking a 'nip' now and then. The revisers deserve great credit for their thoughtfulness."

Boy to old 20-per-cent: "What do you want to accumulate so much money for? You can't take it with you when you die, and if you could it would melt."

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